

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, June 11, 1987 2:30 p.m.**
 Date: 87/06/11

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Each day in this place each one of us is expected to face the ongoing challenge of representing the concerns of all Albertans.

May God grant us strength and wisdom to carry out these responsibilities.

Amen.

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill 56****Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 56, Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1987. This is a money Bill. Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is the heart of the financial administration of this government, setting in place all the controls, the way in which we operate in terms of investment and management of the resources of this province. This legislation includes certain changes to allow us to deal with the contemporary instruments in the financial markets, such as swaps and hedges, and ensures we have specific opportunity to do just that.

However, the main purpose of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, is to increase the debt limits by \$1 billion and to allow us to expand the total borrowing of the province to \$6.5 billion. This is in line with the moves which we made last year with respect to the amendments to this legislation and is in accord with our long-term budgetary plan presented March 20, 1987, which shows that the deficit this year and next year and through to 1990-91 will in fact require additional borrowings by this province.

[Leave granted; Bill 56 read a first time]

Bill 58**Dairy Industry Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill, being the Dairy Industry Amendment Act, 1987.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill provides for amendments which deal with pasteurization and the inspection of dairy premises, formerly covered in the Public Health Act. It provides for a producer security fund and makes certain changes to the section dealing with imitation dairy products. The Bill also contains certain changes dealing with clarification of terminology.

[Leave granted; Bill 58 read a first time]

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders for second reading.

[Motion carried]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table four reports for the Assembly today: first of all, the annual report, 1984-1985, of Alberta Environment; secondly, the annual report, 1985-1986, of Alberta Environment; thirdly, the annual review of the Alberta Environmental Centre, 1985-86; and lastly, the annual report for the year 1986 of the Alberta Environmental Research Trust.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table with the Assembly the annual report for the Health Disciplines Board for the calendar year 1986.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the annual report for the Northern Alberta Development Council for the year 1986-87 and file with the Assembly the Ambulance Service in Northern Alberta report and the Telecommunications in Northern Alberta report.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table for the Assembly a response to a request for information made by the Minister of Agriculture on May 1. It suggested changes to the registration of pesticides and a background paper explaining the need for those changes.

I'd also like to file with the Legislature three copies of the research that went behind that, including documents from the Environmental Protection Agency and alternative legislation from California and Texas.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file for the information of the members of this Assembly three copies of Breaking The Pattern, a publication of the Department of Social Services. I direct their attention to page 14.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce two individuals who are prominent in the agricultural community from the Lethbridge area. One is Mr. John Bekkering with Hi-Pro Products Ltd. and the other is Mr. Albert Van Genderen with Premiere Grain. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Member for Whitecourt I'd like to introduce 12 students from the Peers school. They're accompanied by their principal, Mr. Brian O'Kurley; a teacher, Miss Monica Taylor; and four parents: Mrs. Deane Hopwood, who doubles as the bus driver, Mrs. Laura McGuire, Mrs. Sharon West, and Susan Shantz. I'd like them to stand in the members' gallery and receive the usual welcome of the Assembly.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to

introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, a good friend visiting this afternoon, Mrs. Linda Melander, and her parents who are visiting with her from Florida -- I understand they're here to enjoy some of that good Alberta sunshine -- Mr. and Mrs. King.

DR. BUCK: I take great pleasure this afternoon in introducing 24 grade 6 students from the Rudolph Hennig school in Fort Saskatchewan. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Jim Kuzyk, Mrs. Alexandruk, and Mrs. DeMarre, and parents Mrs. Taschuk, Mrs. Beaudreau, and Mrs. Slade. They are in the public gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the recognition of the Assembly.

ACTING CLERK: Oral Question Period.

[Ms Barrett rose]

MR. SPEAKER: With the indulgence of the member, could we perhaps gain unanimous consent of the House to revert to Reading and Receiving Petitions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?
Member for Drumheller.

head: **READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the petition of Jimmy W. Chow for the Jimmy W. Chow Bar Admission Act be now read and received.

[Motion carried]

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 93, I have taken under consideration the petition for the Jimmy W. Chow Bar Admission Act and have to report to the Assembly that Standing Order 86 has not been complied with. The Private Bills Committee has considered the matter of that petition and recommends to the Assembly that the provisions of Standing Order 86 be waived to permit the Bill to be dealt with once the proper advertising has been completed. I request the concurrence of the Assembly in this recommendation.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the recommendation?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Private Vocational Schools

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the first question of the minister responsible for Advanced Education. Not just since yesterday but especially since yesterday, I've been contacted by many, many students of private vocational institutions. Their concerns, particularly with respect to the Computer Career Institute, are mainly that the curriculum that is given to the Department of Advanced Education looks fine on paper but isn't

actually delivered in the classroom, and they're paying \$5,000 a year for tuition.

The minister admitted yesterday that there are problems at some private vocational institutes. I wonder if the minister will now admit that in fact the lack of timely action from his department upon receiving complaints from students of such institutions has resulted in jeopardizing the credentials that these students now bear or their futures.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what more I can add to the responses I gave to the hon. member yesterday. We are currently investigating a number of complaints from students enrolled in accounting courses which are not recognized at the present time by the General Accountants' Association of Alberta. I understand that some of the students have transferred to NAIT and are being accommodated in an accelerated program, during which time one of the courses offered by the career institute is being recognized. But the point as to whether or not the students were misled at the time of their registration is one that we're having more difficulty determining.

MS BARRETT: Well, that wasn't quite the question, Mr. Speaker.

A supplementary to the minister. I'm not sure if he's aware of this, but the Computer Career Institute pays a commission to salaried and commissioned employees to enroll students; that is, they're paid additional money to get higher student enrollment. Now, I wonder how the minister can justify the use of taxpayers' dollars to be used in that way, when his own budget cuts funding to the recognized public vocational institutes of some significant merit.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, I'm not quite certain as to the thrust of the question, Mr. Speaker. The only public funds that are involved are equal in both cases, whether a student gets support from the Students Finance Board for attendance at a public school or at a private vocational school. The cap and the amount are equal, so the extent of public funds that is involved is the same in both cases. It's true that we are concerned about the amount of money in total going to support students enrolled in these high-tuition courses at private schools because of the high failure rate, and that is where the concern comes in. Frankly, the method by which the private institutes pay their instructors, whether it's on a course or a number of students, is really not the affair of the government.

MS BARRETT: Well, a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister has just identified the problem in a nutshell. The point is that these private institutions are encouraging people who might not be qualified to enroll just to get their money.

My question to the minister is: what steps is he going to take to make sure that the curriculum that they advertise and enroll students on is as good in delivery as it is on paper? What is he going to do?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I dealt with that issue yesterday when I answered the questions. I'll go through them again. The financial problem which the member has correctly identified has been spoken about by myself, and steps are being taken to allocate or put a cap on that because of the problem that's been identified.

The question of advertising is dealt with on an ongoing basis, and recently all the private schools were circularized because of

some improper advertisements that had appeared, and a stop has been put to those. The last issue, the recognition of accredited courses, is one which is an ongoing process and is under way at all times. The specific issue that the hon. member is dealing with through some of her constituents is whether or not students were misled at the time they enrolled in a course. We're presently looking at that, but it's not going to be an easy question to answer.

MS BARRETT: Well, a final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Recently when I wrote to the minister, I received a response not just from the Advanced Education minister but also from the Career Development and Employment minister, in which the latter noted, and I quote:

Some private vocational schools have used the department's involvement as a basis for their advertising, which is a contravention of their regulations.

Just last Saturday one of our researchers at the centre was encouraged to enroll if he had qualified because "Alberta manpower pays the entire shot; it's free." That was from an official at the institute.

Will the Minister of Career Development and Employment confirm that the CCI was one of those schools he referred to in his letter and now recognize that they're continuing to violate the very regulations that he identified?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, CCI was one of the schools that contravened our advertising regulations. It was not the one you're referring to. We were concerned about another instance of advertising.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Advanced Education. It would seem that once again it's caveat emptor or a licence of this government, like a day care means a hunting licence. Could the minister tell the House what procedures he has when he finds these schools are not delivering what they promise, what systems he has for prosecuting and seeing that the money is returned and their licence taken away?

MR. RUSSELL: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are two avenues which are open. In the cases of students who felt that they have been misled or didn't understand what it was they were buying, we usually are successful in arranging for the school and the students to get together and arrange a refund of tuition fees on a prorated basis, because sometimes the students bring forward their concerns at a very late date, after they've received in fact many hours of instruction.

But in other cases if a school is not performing the way it said it would, there are two avenues of protection for the public. The government, through our department, can withdraw the licence of the school and put them out of business. Secondly, there are bonding requirements which protect the financial involvement of the students.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Deputy Premier. Is the minister in a position to indicate if there's a review going on in the minister's department or the Minister of Career Development and Manpower's to monitor courses where federal and provincial funds are involved through bursaries and tuition encouragement to see if these funds are being expended properly and the courses are doing something for personal and career development?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I tried yesterday also to deal with that larger problem. Traditionally Alberta has had a number of very excellent private vocational schools which have offered courses not generally offered by the public institutions, and they fulfilled a very good role. They tended up until very recently to be involved in the beautician and hairdressing and personal grooming and life-style aspect on the one hand, and the other major category was in secretarial and office services.

We've seen in the last three- to four- or five-year period, because of the explosion in technology, a whole new family of these private schools grow up. Most of them are excellent, some of them are very good, and I suspect that one or two of them are not very good. It's the responsibility of our department to license them, bond them, and protect the students who buy services from them.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Acting Leader of the Opposition.

MS BARRETT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate the second question to the Member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Energy Prices

MR. PASHAK: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, due to this government's policies, we've lost our guaranteed crude market in central Canada, and we've witnessed dramatic increases in the profits the oil companies are making from their downstream operations, all at great expense to the Alberta Treasury and Alberta producers. Now, Albertans are paying more for gasoline at the pump than are residents in the city of Toronto. Can the minister explain why? Can he explain the evidence of this failure of his policies and now convince . . . Is this evidence . . . Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. Will this evidence of failure of his policies now convince the minister to take action to ensure that Albertans receive a fair return from their resource?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that as of June 1 we had a 5 cent a litre tax on at the pump in Alberta with the protection put in place for the consumers, the farm fuel allowance that we have in place. Also, I think it's important to note that the hon. member is not accurate in saying that prices are higher in Alberta than they are elsewhere in the country; as of June 3 there is considerable variation in the price of the gasoline at the pumps in Ontario and in the city of Toronto, ranging from approximately 42 cents per litre to 45 cents per litre. There's considerable volatility, because the previous week in Toronto it was as high as 46 cents per litre. In Calgary and Edmonton on June 3, the price was 43.2 cents in Edmonton and 43.9 cents in Calgary. So the price of gasoline at the pumps in this province is comparable with the price of gasoline at the pumps in Ontario.

I think the hon. member should be aware of the fact that competitive forces actually are such that in Toronto, because of the size of the market, you would actually expect to produce lower prices in most commodities, including gasoline. Also, the total volumes of gasoline sold are greater in large markets, and consequently the profit margin can be reduced. Another thing to take into account is the large number of retailers that are in existence, striving for a share of the market in Ontario. Finally, Mr. Speaker, the closeness of the United States is an important factor too with the movement of petroleum products across the border. With the larger number of refineries, there is greater

competition.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member says that gasoline prices at the pump here are higher than they are elsewhere in the country, that's simply not true. If you look at Saskatchewan, for example, they do not have a tax at the pump yet, but they also haven't had a provincial budget as yet. So we will continue to monitor prices. However, I think hon. members need to be aware that we have no intention to regulate pump prices and that the marketplace will determine those prices.

MR. PASHAK: Well, even with that, how can the minister explain that the prices in Ontario are still 2 cents or 3 cents per litre higher, even when you take into account the effect of taxes and the fact that gasoline, or the crude oil, has to be transported to Ontario?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the hon. member listened to all the reasons I gave a few minutes ago. My first response is an answer to his second question.

MR. PASHAK: I don't think it was an answer, because he certainly didn't take into account the cost of transporting crude from Alberta to Ontario in his answer. In that the minister helped initiate this present environment, will he now admit that the process of crude decontrol has served to exacerbate the negative impact on Alberta of the fallen world oil prices?

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Calgary Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Well, how can the minister justify the fact that the federal government takes more money from the sale of gasoline in Alberta than Alberta receives, and in other Canadian provinces it takes twice as much as the government of Alberta receives?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe he should direct that question to the federal government in terms of the amount taken at the pump.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, as a province we are taking a smaller share than we did previously because of the reduction in our royalties in this province. In fact, during the month of May on a litre of gasoline at the pump at a retail price of 38.2 cents, the provincial share of that was 4.1 cents and the federal share was 10 cents. That change on the part of the federal government was not great compared to what it had been in the past; it was relatively the same. If we compare our share with a year ago, it's considerably less, and the reason that we are taking less than we did before, as I mentioned, is because of the lower royalties. If the hon. member wants to make representations to the federal government, he should do so.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Outside of the Minister of Energy reading an Esso news release for the answer, he did say that there's more competition in Toronto. Mr. Premier. In view of that and the vertical integration we have here in Alberta, where we don't even allow the breweries to own bars, will the Premier introduce legislation in this House that will separate the ownership of service stations from that of refineries, so we can get some real competition in the marketplace rather than this charade that the Minister of Energy is condoning right now?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, most people in Alberta are familiar

with the fact that the hon. Liberal Party and the ND Party would like to have greater government influence and control, greater government spending, bigger governments taking away the freedom of individuals to make decisions, and we don't support that. We believe in free enterprise; we believe in individual freedoms and less regulation. Just because you folks are a group of socialists, we aren't.

DR. WEST: To the Minister of Energy, a supplemental. Could you indicate the amount of gas and oil used in Ontario that originates offshore or outside of this country?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the point to the question certainly is one of importance in terms of gasoline prices in the Toronto area in view of the fact that they are close to the U.S. markets, and also there is the ability to move some crude into that part of the country to compete with western Canadian crude. But the biggest factors in my mind are three: the closeness to the U.S. market and the larger number of refineries in the area and the fact that there are many more retailers in the area.

Government Pension Plans

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question now is to the Provincial Treasurer. We have evidence again of how this government has mismanaged finances with the deplorable state of the pension fund. Poor planning, irresponsible management, faulty legislation have resulted in a catastrophe for the growing number of pensioners that have devoted their services to this government.

AN HON. MEMBER: You're over your head.

MR. TAYLOR: The first question, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, you better worry, because there might not be anything left for you then.

There is a provision in the Pension Fund Act for the transfer of moneys from general revenue to cover any deficit in the pension fund. Will the Treasurer admit that the government had never intended to set aside a pool of moneys for the pension fund because we could always fall back on general revenues?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, there is no question, as I have said before in this Assembly, that the government has a fairly major concern about the size of the unfunded pension liability. But that was accumulated over not just one year or two years but over the life of the pension plans themselves. What has happened is that of course we have found it's far too easy to provide additional benefits under the plan, and to some extent governments generally are far too hesitant to increase the contributions by the beneficiaries. That doesn't mean, Mr. Speaker, what the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has suggested, that there's any problem or any potential for failure in this fund. Those people who are now drawing the pension benefits will continue to draw them, and those people who will anticipate pension benefits will get them. I think it's important that the kind of fear that is being publicized here by both the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark and the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon should be corrected. The obligations under all the pension plans administered by this government will in fact continue.

With respect to the policy, I did have an opportunity in the last two or three days to speak briefly about the policy questions. I've indicated both the concern and the determination to

deal with the problem. As I've said before, Mr. Speaker, this government, during the period of high oil royalties, did in fact transfer to those pension funds' \$1 billion, and that was to deal with, in part, the unfunded liability. More recently, my colleague the Minister of Education, as a matter of fact I believe this past Thursday morning, passed an order in council which dealt with some of the problems with respect to the unfunded liability there by increasing the contributions by teachers to their own fund, which is administered by the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, the policy question is open. As I have said before, I haven't seen many positive recommendations flowing from this Liberal socialist party across the way, but I do hope that instead of being critical and denying the importance of the pension funds, the long-term assistance which we are providing to the pensioners under these plans, they'd come forward with some positive recommendations.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the Treasurer. It's interesting that he's now thrown himself on the mercy of the opposition and asked us to keep quiet and not tell anybody of the screwup.

Would the Treasurer then go this far? He's already admitted that he transferred \$1 billion to the pension fund in good times. Will he admit that we're over half a billion dollars behind now? We have a \$542 million deficit in the pension fund right now.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would direct the member's attention to the annual statements, because in fact the unfunded liability is far higher than that. Let me say that we are not misleading at all; in fact, we're very candid about the problem we're facing, and contrary to what the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon would suggest, we are dealing with the problem. We're looking at remedies. We have a working paper, which my colleague from Edmonton Norwood attempted to file in the Legislature yesterday, and that policy paper makes some very significant recommendations, which we will be pursuing, as I indicated, with my colleagues in government.

Well, let it never be said, Mr. Speaker, that this government will not meet the challenge in dealing with the problem, will not provide alternatives to those boards, and will not meet the commitment to the future generations who will see benefits. That in fact is our commitment. It should be made very clear, because it is in fact this kind of negative reaction from the Liberals across the way that strikes fear in the beneficiaries under the pension plan, and that really is misrepresenting what is happening with respect to the plans themselves.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this government is very able at storing money aside for travel funds, lottery funds, and everything else, but not for the pensioners.

Would the Treasurer assure the Assembly that when he gets around to replenishing this fund, making it operate like a real pension fund should, that he will not do it on the backs of the government employees and past government employees?

MR. JOHNSTON: There you are, Mr. Speaker. You see, without really understanding the dimensions of the problem, he has shortsightedly taken one aspect of the problem and tried to take some political credit for that particular aspect of it. There are a variety of solutions which we could put forward. One of them in fact is to end the existing pension plans and start a new one but ensuring fully that those obligations to everyone covered by the existing plans are continued.

We know, as I said before, we could make the plan fully

funded tomorrow. There are a variety of possibilities that are open to us. We want to get the most equitable settlement, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to move on a quick and unreasoning position. We're going to have full consultation, we're going to carefully consider the options before us, and we are committed to make it work. The facile kinds of solutions that are given to us by the Liberal Party, including the often quoted use of lottery funds, are just irrelevant.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I have had a letter from no less a personage than Anders Aalborg, a former Treasurer, who used to manage this, I think, wisely, voicing disapproval and concern about the ex-government employees' pensions. So there's a very valid worry. Will the Treasurer then assure this Assembly that he will enact legislation to establish a pension fund which is separate from general revenue and is self-supporting and making money? Will he separate now? Would he give that promise to the House that he will go ahead and separate the two and put a decent pension fund into place?

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair must address a question to the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon as to whether or not the member cleared with that person mentioned as to whether the name and correspondence could be mentioned in the House. It's a . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to table it. I believe other members have had copies. I thought maybe even you had received one because it went to all the MLAs, and it was a very succinct damning of the present Treasurer's system.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I will not say anything but to commend the correspondence that many of us get from the former Provincial Treasurer of this province, who did manage the resource of the province very well during the period up to 1971, I would assume.

But what that letter does say, Mr. Speaker, points to one very significant element, and that is: by way of public policy how does a government deal with the question of COLA clauses and whether or not those COLA clauses and pensions should be built in as a matter of contract? Because of course what has happened is that the funding arrangements for the plans themselves do not reflect any COLA clauses. Therefore, the contributions by the employees are not based on any expectation of increase by inflation or by some kind of cost of living adjustment.

Therefore, this government has continued, since 1971, to increase the COLA or to increase the adjustments in the payments of those pensioners receiving benefits under the plan, and some years twice, as a matter of fact, during periods of high inflation. But it's that very fact that causes the pension funds to be underfunded, because the contributions do not reflect or do not have specific policy that would suggest that COLA should be built in. From my point of view, there is a great deal of peril in building in a COLA clause in these pension funds, because the contribution levels would be almost unbearable. And that's essentially what's happened.

As I've indicated, there are a variety of solutions. I could go on and talk about them, Mr. Speaker. I could give you five or six solutions, but I think that would be coming close to debating a resolution as opposed to dealing with question period. I simply close by saying that we know that we can find a resolution to this problem. We have the opportunity internally, within our government, to find the solutions, and we're determined to do just that.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the Provincial Treasurer. I'm not quite as worried about the provincial funding as I am about the federal. Can the minister indicate what comparison the minister has to indicate how our funding compares to the federal pension funds?

MR. JOHNSTON: As a matter of fact Mr. Speaker, Alberta's underfunded liability is really not as dramatically underfunded as in fact the centralist government's under the administration of the Liberal Party, which was very prolific in its spending, and obviously led that government down the road of unremitted debt. In terms of the deficit of that government, the Liberal government history, and the history of the pension plans themselves, in fact it's impossible to reverse it in the federal government sense. We have a chance to deal with it here, Mr. Speaker. I sense from all-party resolution that there's a determination to do just that, and we'll be making recommendations to deal with that problem.

MR. HERON: A supplementary question to the Provincial Treasurer, Mr. Speaker. Would he please confirm that the unfunded liability is a very complex assumption based on projected interest rates, inflation rates, and the world of tomorrow and that to hang the myth that we do not have the money today is perhaps a bit incorrect at this point in time?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, let me indicate that even through question period here today, whether we like it or not, we've essentially outlined a fundamental set of policy questions that have to be dealt with. We've talked about the COLA clause, we talked about the contributions, and we talked about the opportunity for additional government contributions to the plan. Now with an understanding of the future, my colleague from Stony Plain has indicated one of the other problems that is implicit in the plans, and that is that the actuarial calculations, given the new changes in the longevity of individuals, has in fact protracted the payoff beyond what we've expected. Therefore, because people are living longer and because the benefits are extended longer, obviously there is an additional problem for the funds themselves. As the new actuarial tables are completed, as the new age pyramids are reflected in the payoff matrix, in fact you'll find that the contributions will have to be increased as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see that this is not a simple question. This is not one which is a simple one-variable solution. It's one, as we've seen in this discussion here already, that requires a number of alternatives. They've been expressed; they've been addressed. I would welcome an opportunity from any one of those parties across the way to provide us with a resolution of the problem, their recommendations in particular, so we can weight and sense what in fact they have to recommend to us.

MS BARRETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, who talks so glibly about removing the COLA clauses for which future pensioners are already contributing and would thereby be impoverished. Will the minister now agree to table the document, the table of contents of which was revealed here a few days ago in the Assembly by the Leader of the Official Opposition, to allay the fears of people who might be involved and so that they can have their input to the minister?

MR. JOHNSTON: Ah, Mr. Speaker, you see, a little bit of in-

formation and they get ... They only hope there's another brown envelope around the corner. I mean, that's how they do their research. They would love to have an envelope a day. That would be a theme song for them, because of course it's the only effective research. The only effective policy positions are the leaked memos that come from the government side.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Little Bow, followed by Edmonton Glengarry.

Natural Gas Contracts with Manitoba

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is not with regards to my pension; it's with regards to the potential revenue of the province of Alberta and the future natural gas price in Alberta as it may be affected by the actions of Manitoba in terms of their purchase of Inter-City Gas. Has the minister had a current review of that situation, and is there a strategy in place to react to Manitoba in a positive way?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are assessing the actions that the Manitoba government has taken in the last few days with respect to being involved in the marketplace. As hon. members know, the agreement on natural gas pricing envisaged a more flexible and market-oriented pricing regime for natural gas within this country, and really what was contemplated was a regime where we had fairness for both the consumers and the producers in this country.

In fact, the specific clause in the agreement between the three western provinces and the federal government was such that there was to be respect for existing contracts with distributors, with their price renegotiations, and that those renegotiations would take place before November 1, 1986. That particular agreement stated that where a contract renegotiation between buyers and sellers, whether of price or volume, takes place in good faith and on a voluntary basis, governments will not obstruct the resulting commercial transaction. Therefore, the government of Manitoba is clearly acting to obstruct the renegotiated pricing arrangement between two bodies who are negotiating those contracts.

So as far as we are concerned in this province, Mr. Speaker, we are striving for fairness and equity between both consumers and producers. We will be assessing the situation in Manitoba and will then decide on how we would be dealing with the matter.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. In the early 1930s Alberta was given the right of ownership of the natural resources: oil and gas. As one part of the government's strategy is the government willing to implement that right of ownership and withhold the product under conditions where we lose our position in the marketplace?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I say, we are reviewing the situation in Manitoba, looking at the different options that are available. Certainly as owners of the resource constitutionally, they are our resources. However, we do not contemplate cutting anybody off from gas supply in this country, and I don't think that anybody is expecting that. The Manitoba government has taken this particular action obviously to try to get lower prices for natural gas. As I said, we will assess the situation and then decide how to handle matters.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. The minister hasn't been clear in terms of what options are available to Alberta under these circumstances. Could the minister be more explicit as to what specific steps can be taken to protect our right of ownership?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it would serve any useful purpose at this time to review all those options publicly. We are reviewing them right now, and once we've reviewed all those options, we'll decide how to handle the matter.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Is the minister contemplating any type format of meetings, such as the energy ministers of Canada coming together and agreeing on some type of a Canadian policy relative to this matter.

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, as part of the discussions we had last October with the federal minister, it was agreed at that time that the signatories to the natural gas pricing agreement would get together at a date around the end of June 1987, and it's our intention to follow up on that. In addition, I think it's important to add that I have had a number of meetings with the minister of energy in Manitoba and certainly plan on meeting with him again.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Calgary Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you. To the minister. I'd like the minister to know that I support efforts to keep the prices up, although I'm appalled at the mess the fumbling government has gotten us into. What I would ask the minister is: how can the minister challenge the right of Manitoba to refer the validity of the supply contracts to the courts, since Manitoba is clearly entitled to challenge under the deregulation process that you set in motion?

MR. SPEAKER: This is a question of legal opinion and can't be answered, hon. member.

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe in the ultimate objective of deregulation, and we feel that we can achieve that objective by having ongoing discussions with other provinces in this country. Certainly the steps taken by Manitoba to nationalize their gas distributor company and also to introduce legislation which sets in place a ceiling price for natural gas is obviously not in line with the original deregulation objectives. However, we will be having meetings, as I indicated, and trying to remove these barriers so that we can proceed to the ultimate objective of natural gas deregulation.

MR. PASHAK: To the Minister of Energy. How does he justify the fact that gas is currently being sold to U.S. utilities at \$1.80 an mcf, at least for the gas portion, and Ontario residents are paying \$1 more than that, Manitoba residents are paying \$1.20 more than that, and Albertans are paying 80 cents more than that for their consumer gas?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a gross misrepresentation of the facts. The facts are that the average price for Alberta gas going into the United States is higher than the average price for natural gas going into domestic markets outside of Al-

berta. There obviously is a difference between the price of natural gas in the industrial markets and into the so-called core markets, where the security of supply, longer term contracts, is in place. So when we're comparing prices, we have to be careful of the basis on which we compare them.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary McCall.

MR. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP complains that we don't get enough money for our natural resources; now their colleagues in socialist Manitoba want to rob us of their support. Will the minister ensure that he will not allow the socialist government of Manitoba to hold the free-thinking, industrious, hardworking people of Alberta up to ransom for a reasonable price for a resource owned by Albertans?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I started out by saying that we want to have fairness and equity in terms of dealing with the consumers and the producers in this country, and we'll try to work with Manitoba to achieve that.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Glengarry, followed by Edmonton Avonmore.

Monitoring of Special Waste Emissions

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the Minister of the Environment. I have been told that the Swan Hills hazardous waste treatment plant will be monitored for pollution-causing emissions by Western Research, which is owned entirely by Bow Valley Resource Services. In terms of serving the safety needs of the environment, this sounds a lot like putting a bank robber in charge of bank security. Is the minister not concerned that at worst this puts Bow Valley in a very serious conflict of interest and at best will create the public appearance of that conflict of interest?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, when the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation selects its consultants, it sets out to obtain the best possible quality and expertise. In this case Western Research is considered one of those.

Several years ago, Mr. Speaker, when the decision was made to gather baseline data with respect to the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, proposals went out to a variety of consulting firms in the province of Alberta. A proposal went out to three companies. One of those companies was not Western Research. Proposals were asked from these companies to provide the data and the criteria that would be used in providing the baseline data. After looking at the proposals that came from the three companies in question, the three basically were viewed to not have had the expertise required for the particular study. The board of directors then directed that a contract should go to Western Research.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that Western Research was hired by the board of directors of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation and, furthermore, that the work in question was subcontracted to the University of Calgary.

MR. YOUNIE: He quite missed the point of the question in that I was speaking of future monitoring to be done once they open.

This company also helped establish test protocols for the opening phase of the plant this summer. Why is it that the protocols were set only by those with a commercial interest in

the venture without input from qualified interest groups or members of the public?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, that simply isn't the case at all. There's certainly been more than one consultant than Western Research, which had subcontracted the work in part to the University of Calgary. One of the other directives that has also been provided to the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation is that a mechanism should be set up whereby the duly elected council of the town of Swan Hills should be in a position to hire independent consultants on their own to test all of the baseline data that has been gathered since 1983 with respect to four or five different components dealing with the air, the water, wildlife, and soil with respect to the area around Swan Hills.

The town of Swan Hills will be in a position to hire their own independent consultants to check on all of the consultants that have been hired by the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, and the government will provide to the town of Swan Hills the dollars to pay for those consultants. We will not be involved. The town will hire their own independent consultants to judge.

There's one other third mechanism of balance we've also put in place and, that is that the Department of the Environment will also check as well. So there'll be three checks.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, all baseline information has been made available to the public. Any person in the province of Alberta who would wish to go down to the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation offices, which are located at the corner of 109th Street and Jasper in downtown Edmonton -- the corporation there would be very happy to provide to any individual in the province of Alberta the baseline information gathered to date. Any individual can check it, so in fact there are four mechanisms separately and independently to ensure that the environment in the area close to Swan Hills, the environment in the constituency of Barrhead, in which I live with my children, will in fact be totally protected.

MR. YOUNIE: When I contacted the corporation, all I got were summaries written by your executive assistant, Mr. Thackeray. I'll go tomorrow to get the rest now that I have your assurance on that, and I appreciate it.

I would like to ask the minister to confirm, though, that Western Research will be entirely in charge of the future stack monitoring and monitoring of air quality around the plant when it opens up.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's considered inappropriate to use a certain word in the Assembly. I've used that word before, and I've been ruled out of order and have had to stand up on a point of order. But what the Member for Edmonton Glengarry has just said is totally incorrect with respect to any report written by my executive assistant. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a stronger word than "incorrect." The word is "liar"; the word is "gross something" that the Minister of Energy had to use a few minutes ago in response to a question raised by somebody from the NDP. But to suggest that summary reports with respect to baseline data that have been supplied by a Crown corporation of the province of Alberta, run by an independent board of directors, the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, that that summary report was written by my executive assistant is absolutely, totally 100 percent wrong. And that must be withdrawn in order to protect the integrity of a very innocent

individual.

MR. SPEAKER: With respect, an examination of the Blues will take place and some discussion between the Member for Edmonton Glengarry and the Minister of the Environment.

The time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to complete this series of questions and also for the Minister of Social Services to give some information in reply to a question as raised in the last few days by the Member for Edmonton Avonmore?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?
Member for Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you. I've always felt that to call a questioner a liar is the last resort of one without answers.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the question.

MR. YOUNIE: In view of all of this, how can the minister expect the public to believe that the purpose is not to hide any pollution that might occur and make it impossible to prove it if the truth leaks out?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate. Since 1983 we have indicated as a government and I had indicated before I was a member of the Executive Council that the most important objective behind the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation was public safety. For one of the first times in the history of our province, we have set in place a process whereby baseline data -- that is, data would be established, would be collected, would be evaluated, and would be made available to the public before a plant in fact came on stream. Since 1983, studies by independent consultants have been under way.

In addition to that, we are making available to the town of Swan Hills, a duly elected, independent municipal government, funds to hire their own consultants without any direction from the government as to who they have to hire. The government will provide them the funds to pay for those consultants to check the information that has been assembled by the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Environment will function as an independent analyst of all of the baseline data gathered. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, this baseline data is being made available to any citizen in the province of Alberta who chooses to go and get it at the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. That is all being put in place.

In addition to that, I want to assure the hon. member that in no way has an executive assistant in my employ by the name of Thackeray been involved in writing any of the information; not involved, period. Mr. Speaker, the only unsettling aspect of this is that the falsehoods and the allegations are absolutely nonsensical coming from the New Democratic Party.

MR. SPEAKER: Are there additional supplementaries on this issue? Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I'd like to direct a supplementary to the Premier. As you can see, this is another in a long line of boondoggles by the Minister of the Environment and his department. Consequently, Mr. Premier, in

view of the fact that this is a very serious question, hazardous waste and its disposal -- it's the first of its type in the province and many people are going to be worried. Would the Premier agree to have a cabinet committee review this latest decision to see that there's no conflict of interest and indeed that the public is protected and appears to be protected as well as being in fact?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member has just slept through the question-and-answer period.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Social Services and then Edmonton Avonmore.

Women's Emergency Shelters

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I have noted that in *Hansard* a series of questions initiated by the hon. Member for Edmonton Avonmore spoke to a number of things with respect to funding for women's shelters. I wanted to enlarge on the information provided at that time, first of all to say that the funding in the fiscal year ended March 31, 1987, had been increased by \$1.1 million, and the funding for this fiscal year remains the same as it was previously. There has been absolutely no cut in funding. The Council of Women's Shelters, Mr. Speaker, has worked very hard. I think they are probably one of the hardest working groups in this country, because they have also traveled other places in gleaning information. The president has told me about a number of those meetings, and they have evolved a model by which they thought the funding could be fairly shared amongst the shelters in the province. If there is any question at all with respect to the formula they have developed and the minister has subsequently followed, I know the Council of Women's Shelters would be most pleased to review it. As a matter of fact, the president has asked me for some assistance, which I have recommended flow to the organization to assess the model and to do a human resources inventory in order to speak to some of the questions that apparently have been raised by one of the other organizations.

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. In view of the fact that 2,300 women were turned away from Calgary shelters last year, how can she say that the funding is adequate?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, the funding for social programs in many people's minds is never adequate. The funding flows eventually and finally through the Provincial Treasurer of this province into all the programs. The money isn't printed in a magic place in the basement of this Legislature. It comes from the taxpayers, taxpayers who, I might add, care very much -- if the hon. member would listen -- about the social programs in this province and have indicated that by the kind of support they have given for the enhanced budget we have in so many areas this year.

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member representing the NDP in this province wishes us to follow the funding model and the dollars that flow in Manitoba, I just might remind the hon. member that Alberta stands third highest in Canada with respect to funding per 10,000 population at \$15,677. Manitoba, our great, wonderful image we have portrayed for us here, has \$9,335.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Deputy Premier.

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with some reluctance that I rise to bring to the attention of members on all sides of the House what I consider a very serious point of order which reflects directly upon your office. We listened carefully to the exchanges in the question period yesterday. I wanted to confirm them by looking at the final printed issue of *Hansard* for yesterday, and I'm now looking at page 1790, an exchange between yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of the Liberal Party. During that interchange the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, Mr. Taylor, said, speaking to you: "Yes, definitely. I think you're completely out of order."

I know that hon. members on all sides of the House are aware of the traditions of any House operating within the British parliamentary system, and the fact that you have attained your office with support from members from all sides of the House is important. Your office is our referee and our rulekeeper, and with that goes a great deal of respect and tradition.

The matter of respect and tradition notwithstanding, there are several citations to which I would like to refer dealing with the matter. The first one is citation 11 from *Beauchesne* dealing with Speaker's rulings, which says:

The interpretation of both the written rules and tradition is in the hands of the Speaker and his deputies, with their rulings forming a fundamental part of procedure.

Beauchesne, citation 52, referring to reflections on the Speaker, says to the members of the Assembly that

The Speaker should be protected against reflections on his actions.

Further on in *Beauchesne*, in citation 117 dealing with your office as the presiding officer in the House -- and I quote, because it's a long citation:

When he rises to preserve order or to give a ruling he must always be heard in silence. No Member may rise when the Speaker is standing. Reflections upon the character or actions of the Speaker may be punished as breaches of privilege. His actions cannot be criticized incidentally in debate or upon any form of proceeding except by way of a substantive motion.

The two citations following, 118 and 119, also deal with the behaviour of the hon. member. Section 118 says:

The Speaker should be addressed as "Mr. Speaker" or "Sir" . . . [or] "Your Honour"

not "you." Citation 119 says:

Speakers' rulings, once given, belong to the House which, under S.O. 12, must accept them without appeal or debate.

Those are from *Beauchesne*.

There are further citations, Mr. Speaker, from *Erskine May*. The 20th edition, page 234, section 2 says:

When he rises to preserve order or to give a ruling on a doubtful point he must always be heard in silence and no Member may stand when the Speaker is on his feet. Reflections upon the character or actions of the Speaker may be punished as breaches of privilege . . . His action cannot be criticised incidentally in debate or upon any form of proceeding except [by way of] a substantive motion.

No doubt there are other citations one could find if one went into a lengthy search. Mr. Speaker, but in view of the seriousness of that, I'm standing now and giving the hon. leader a suggestion and also the opportunity that those remarks directed at

you in yesterday's proceedings should be withdrawn.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, if I may comment on it, I first want to thank the hon. associate Premier for informing me that he would be bringing up the issue. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have a great deal of respect for the traditions of this House and a great deal of respect for your position. If I transgressed -- and I think clearly after reading *Hansard* I was certainly out of order in saying you were out of order, and in fact, in the heat of the argument I was carried away. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I apologize not only to you but to the whole House for taking against your position.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair wishes to express its thanks to the Deputy Premier for raising the matter and dealing with it in such a workmanlike manner, and also indeed expresses thanks for the graciousness with which the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon made the apology.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to the Assembly 33 grades 8 and 9 students from the Blackie school in my constituency of Little Bow. They are accompanied by three teachers, Mr. Eric Courtney, Mrs. Terry Wilderman, Mr. Tom Bown, and a parent Mr. Greg Rosell. They're in the public gallery, and I'd like them to stand and be recognized by the Assembly and welcomed at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has been notified of an additional point of order. Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to correct the record on a point made in question period today. I had somebody retrieve the studies I got from Special Waste Management Corporation at 2:00 today, and the name of the person on the bottom was not Thackeray but an almost identical name, and I would like to apologize for that error.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

214. Mr. Sigurdson asked the government the following question:
Will the Minister of Career Development and Employment tell the Assembly the cost of printing all of the material related to the employment alternatives program?

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Career Development and Employment.

There is a bit of a hiatus in the House while members quietly make their way to the lounge. Hon. minister, please.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond to Question 214, and the answer is \$46,086.31.

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

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

- (1) copies of all surveys and studies performed by the Department of Transportation between 1983 and 1987 on traffic volume, destinations, and cargo along the secondary road 794 from Westlock south to the intersection of Highway 16A; and
- (2) copies of any and all studies done during the same time period to determine the capability of secondary road 794 to adequately handle various traffic volumes.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, relating to Motion 202, I cannot accept this motion as written and would ask my colleagues to reject it. However, I am prepared to provide the hon. member with traffic volume statistics relating to the secondary road 794. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that is consistent with the hon. member's statement in the *St. Albert Gazette* that he was specifically seeking information on traffic volumes.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I don't quite understand the point the minister is making here. Maybe I missed something. Clearly highway 794, which of course got a great deal of notoriety in the last year because it has been involved in eight traffic deaths, which more or less lamentably emphasizes my point that it is a very dangerous highway and needs something done to it. But what we get from the minister is: "Well, there's not enough traffic; the studies show that it doesn't need paving." Yet when we ask for the studies, they're not available. So either the studies are there and show that it should be paved and the minister is concealing them, or he has no studies, in which case he should not be making the statement that the thing doesn't need paving. So I don't understand what the minister is trying to do here. This is a straight case of: if the studies are there, we want them. There should be no case of trying to postpone or hide or cavil or sneak out in any way.

MR. SPEAKER: The member has concluded debate, therefore there is a call for the question.

[Motion lost]

204. On behalf of Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents or reports relating to the ratio of rental costs to incomes which were the basis for the hon. Provincial Treasurer's statement on April 14, 1987, that "Here we have a case where in fact we have in Alberta, probably across all of the urban communities, the lowest ratio of rental cost to income. Now there's no question that in fact that is the case." *Alberta Hansard*, page 777.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the government will not be accepting Motion for a Return 204. There are obvious parliamentary proceedings which are reflected in the way in which this question is presented, in that during the process of debate it is quite usual for statements of fact to be put forward. There are obviously in some cases going to be differences of opinion about that fact, but that is why there is debate on principle and

debate on the position. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, as provided in *Beauchesne*, section 322, there are obvious opportunities for these kinds of statements to be made. But what we see is the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark obviously going through *Hansard* and looking for ways to dig out data which probably can be substantiated, but in fact if you examine the debates, there is no reference to reports or to citations. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate and certainly a change of precedent for the government to accept this motion.

MR. McEACHERN: Is the Treasurer then admitting that he often claims to be first or best or the lowest or highest or whatever without really having data to back it up? I mean, that is what he's really saying here. He goes on to say: "Now there's no question that in fact that is the case." Put it on the line. If you've got the documents, put them on the line. Show them. It's sort of like, put up or shut up. I can see no reason in the world why the Treasurer should get away with such a categorical statement of fact, as he claims it is, and then turn around and say he doesn't have the data to back it up. Oh, it's a matter of debate and sometimes we say things in debate that . . . That's not a matter of debate when he says it's a matter of fact.

So would the Treasurer reconsider and dig out the facts and show that he knows what he's talking about? Either that or be a little more careful and prudent in the future as to what he has to say.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Highlands, but the Chair had recognized Westlock-Sturgeon and Westlock-Sturgeon will be next.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, in recognizing Westlock . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Recognized hon. member, please commence.

MS BARRETT: Yes, but I just would like to point out that in recognizing Westlock-Sturgeon, it would be like recognizing the member to conclude debate, would it not, seeing as how he moved the motion on behalf of his colleague?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, are you dealing with this motion as recognized by the Chair, or are you now somehow trying to bring a point of order into debate?

AN HON. MEMBER: A clarification for the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Fine, The Chair is indeed giving due notice that the Chair had recognized Westlock-Sturgeon, was extending the courtesy of the House to Edmonton Highlands, and hopefully that would be carried forth with, and whatever else has been negotiated on that side of the room.

Edmonton Highlands, speaking to the point.

MS BARRETT: Well, to the point -- you bet I'll speak to it. I think this government is making a nasty habit out of making statements in the House which are meant to influence debate contrary to the rules of order as listed in *Beauchesne* and then deliberately not providing the information they refer to. I'm not sure what kind of a game is going on around here. Do government members believe that they have such power and such overwhelming rights that they can talk about anything they want without proving it and without ever being forced to prove it? Is that what they think they're up to?

Well, members of Executive Council, I remind each and every one of you that you too were elected. You weren't appointed to be in this Assembly; you were elected to be in this Assembly, and the responsibility, particularly of members of Executive Council, should be that if they're not informed on the real facts, Mr. Speaker, if they don't have it, then they should follow the advice I read 15 or 20 years ago on a podium. It made me laugh just before I was going to give a speech. It said: "Perhaps better to keep quiet and leave them wondering than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have here . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You opened your mouth, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, I did learn to do that, hon. backbencher. I learned that if I don't know what I'm talking about, I'd better not say anything, because it's better not to say anything than to be wrong or to be misleading.

This particular member at least has got the guts to stand up and admit that I am governed by the kind of mentality that says it's better to do that than it is to mislead. I believe, Mr. Speaker, the sort of game that's going on in this Assembly is that arrogant members of Executive Council in particular throw around a lot of arguments for which either (a) there is no substantiation or (b) there is no intention of providing substantiation. I think that's an irresponsible attitude for these members to take.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Now, let's go right to the issue that's being dealt with in Motion 204. It asks for the Provincial Treasurer to substantiate a statement that there is no question that across all the urban communities -- presumably he meant in Canada -- we here in Alberta have the lowest ratio of rental cost to income. Now, let's just ask for a little clarification on this point. Was that before or after he removed the renter assistance tax credit? Then we need to ask: where did he get such a study? [interjection] Listen, I'll take off the boxing gloves and meet you in the hallway any day, buddy, and especially when you think you have . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, the hon. House leader of that party knows better than to use language like "buddy." Now, will the hon. member please return to Motion for a Return 204.

MS BARRETT: With pleasure, Mr. Speaker. It's true. By the way, it's so profoundly true. I should never make such a mistake as referring to a Conservative cabinet minister with that word. I do apologize to all members.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair respects the hon. member's admission. Would the hon. member proceed.

MS BARRETT: I'd love to, Mr. Speaker.

Then let's have a look at the costs of rentals in Alberta. Let's assume this is after the change to the taxation structure within Alberta as contained in Bill 49 in the context of Alberta's minimum wage. Now, you might be wondering, Mr. Speaker, how the heck does she talk about minimum wage in light of this? It's because I happen to know that as of 1984 there were 107,000 families officially recognized to be living below the line of poverty and 89,000 individuals officially recognized to be living below the line of poverty. I also know that Alberta is

the province which has now achieved the record of time lapsed since the last increase in the minimum wage. As a renter, I also know what the rental markets are like. I read the reports, believe or not, that are sent out to us on a quarterly basis from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which do a breakdown, city by city -- well, many cities in Alberta -- and they do subbreakdowns.

In Edmonton, for example, they break the districts down to a total of 10 and analyze the average rental rates that go to apartments, town houses, and condos. I keep track of that. And I don't think the minister in fact can defend the statement he made in the Assembly noted on page 777 of *Alberta Hansard*. In my riding that just couldn't be the case. Not in Edmonton Highlands; no way. Now, it's true that part of Edmonton Highlands has such an inordinate amount of poverty that perhaps on the overall basis that inordinate poverty might distort the average. But I still don't believe -- let me be categorical to this guy that I would take on anywhere at any time over an issue like this. I still don't believe that what he said was true, Mr. Speaker, and that's what really important here.

How can it be that a minister has licence to say whatever she or he thinks might be appropriate, decides is fun to use to sway an argument, and then not even have to prove how it could be proved to be true. Now, this motion calls for it to be demonstrated that it is true. But there have been other motions on the Order Paper that even call for ministers to prove that there is proof that the statement was true, and we don't even have that from the Provincial Treasurer. The Provincial Treasurer assumes that his words are going to be believed by everybody in the province, but I don't think that's the case, Mr. Speaker, and I think the next election might just show that.

Alberta's income on average -- let's call it an aggregate average because that's the fastest way to deal with it. Well, the minister now says that there's no such thing. But I want to talk about how you add up the earned income in a province and then divide it by the number of people that are earning the income. Sometimes you divide it by all of the people, whether or not they were earning income. Very often what happens when you do these calculations is that you have income registered that's come from, you know, returns on investment which may be from outside the borders of Alberta, and sometimes there's a really small group of people with a really high level of income, and that distorts the whole picture as well. But the fact of the matter is that more and more Albertans are poor, and I believe that shows up in the statistics. I looked at the quarterly -- oh, as a matter of fact I have it right here. I just want to refer to something here. I just happen to have it here, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Statistical Review of the third quarter of 1986. I'm not sure if the minister would like to -- you know, without having his microphone turned on -- let me know if there's a more recent edition, but I'm not aware of it. I noted that the income of Albertans -- the industrial aggregate on the average weekly earnings has increased by 4.4 percent since 1983. That hasn't even kept pace with the rate of inflation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also found in here the cost of living increase in the same period, and although I don't find the exact page, I believe it was in the order of around 10 percent. I'm quite sure, in fact, that it was very close to 10 percent. So what that means is that Albertans are actually losing ground on their income. They're not actually on average getting wealthier; they're on average getting poorer.

Now, this series of statistics that I'm referring to talks about income that is related to work. In other words, it's earned in-

come, work-related income; it's not, you know, investment income or pension income or other things. Now, it is true that more people are out of work; that certainly is true. And if they're living on unemployment insurance, that consigns them to poverty. If they're living on social allowance, what does that consign them to? Subpoverty? Something like that, given the \$180 a month they get just for rent alone.

I know first hand, Mr. Speaker, that more and more Albertans are poor. I think the Treasurer's own statistics prove that. Therefore, why would the minister think that anybody is going to automatically believe him when he says the rents in Alberta compared to the people's income is the best ratio in Canada? I cannot believe that that is true. I'd like some proof of it. A few years ago I was visiting Manitoba. You know, they've got a higher minimum wage than Alberta has. Of course, everybody in Canada can boast that now. Anyway, I was visiting Manitoba and I couldn't believe how low their rents were. While I was paying -- what was I paying? -- \$400 for a three-bedroom house, and that's in Edmonton, some friends of mine in Manitoba . . .

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Hon. Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I know that section 299 of *Beauchesne*, Relevance and Repetition, is a difficult section for Mr. Speaker to make judgments upon, but with respect, the question before us is whether or not the House should accept Motion 204 for copies of documents. It's got no relevance at all to the hon. member's earlier life. Perhaps the debate could turn on the question of why the documents are needed, in a rather pertinent manner.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, surely the improbability of the proposition's being true reinforces a need for the documents, and that's what the hon. member is alluding to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, whether or not the point of order raised by the hon. minister relevant to *Beauchesne* 299 -- the matter of relevance is a very difficult matter to enforce. I don't think the hon. minister referred to the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands' life being a closed book. The Chair would simply request that in the interest of the motion before us, that periodically perhaps the hon. member could return to the substance, and that is the providing of documents by the government.

MS BARRETT: Oh, you know, I'm so surprised on this point of order. Surely the minister knows me well enough by now. I go through a million different angles on a particular issue when I get the opportunity to do that, and my point . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: We know you're always in your element.

MS BARRETT: No, no. Actually the Treasurer is wrong. My point in referring to the rates in Manitoba was to make the contrast and to deal with, as the Member for Edmonton Strathcona says, the improbability of the statement that the minister himself uttered being true, and therefore arguing that the minister ought then to give us the documents on which that statement was made.

Now, the comparison was that the rents I saw in Winnipeg were lower than what I saw in Edmonton even though -- and I think it was \$275 a month for a three-bedroom town house. That's all I was going to say. That's quite a bit of difference I think, and their minimum wage is higher. If that's the case, if that was my own personal experience, maybe the minister has got a personal note, maybe a postcard from a friend elsewhere in the country whom he happens to know earns a certain amount of money, whom he happens to know lives in a dwelling that costs X, Y, or Z dollars, and that's the basis upon which he's made this statement. If that's the case, I'd like to see that document.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I think the minister doesn't have the documents, and that's the whole point here. Why is it that ministers keep talking so loosely on the record about these studies and what they know as if they have a monopoly on information and they're not going to share it. Where's their sense of responsibility? Either you have it or you don't. If you have it, at least give the reason you're not going to table it. And if you don't have the guts to fess up and tell, you blew it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As someone who represents the good people of Edmonton Centre, the 20,000 of whom I think about 95 percent live in apartments and condos and town homes and so on -- they'd find the documents in answer to this question to be very, very interesting and very, very, revealing. I would love to go to my constituents with them to explain that the government in fact has the kind of data, the kind of information that is necessary, the basis upon which the Member for Lethbridge East across the way, the capitalist Treasurer from Lethbridge East, Mr. Speaker, has removed their rental tax credit assistance.

As familiar therefore as I am with people who live in rental accommodation, and as I'm coming to know a bit more about it in terms of the amount of income they have, it's news to me that, as the Member for Lethbridge East there is saying, he has documents to show that we have the lowest ratio of rental cost to income and, in fact, that there is no question that in fact is the case. As the MLA for Edmonton Centre, I want to get back there and tell the people that in fact they have very high incomes, very low rental rates, and the lowest ratio of the two and that this is the reason the good Member for Lethbridge East has come along and taken away their tax rental credit. Because otherwise I have no other reason to explain to them when they call me up and have written and visited. Of course, it hasn't all hit yet, since their '87 tax return hasn't been prepared. But those who have been made aware of it have come with great anger and distress about the fact that this move has been taken upon them when their incomes as well are being attacked.

Mr. Speaker, I know a number of the cabinet live in very nice accommodation here in Edmonton Centre, and the David Thompson provides very lush accommodation for members of the Executive Council who I think have a fairly modest income. I'm not entirely sure, but I'm sure the rent they'd have to pay, if they don't in fact already own their units, is perhaps a ratio that's pretty low. But they aren't the only ones who live in my constituency. In fact, a number who live in Edmonton Centre up along 107th Avenue are new Canadians, refugees, immigrants, and new Canadians, new to Alberta, who are struggling to get work, struggling to even have any sort of basic income. The unemployment rate in the Vietnamese community,

for instance, I'm told is at 35 percent -- 35 percent unemployment among the Vietnamese in Edmonton Centre. Now I don't know what sort of income they're assured through UIC . . .

MR. ORMAN: Let's see you back up those statistics.

REV. ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right. I'm working on them, Mr. Career Development.

AN HON. MEMBER: Put a motion on the Order Paper.

REV. ROBERTS: And there are others who move into Alberta and Edmonton Centre who are having a very difficult time, using the income they have through the kinds of work they're able to find and the other assistance they have, to pay for the rental accommodation they have in that district of the constituency.

A number of middle-income people work at hospitals, schools, the university, and so on, all of which, as we know, have been under attack for operating budgets. All are being told to freeze their income expectations if not to barely hold on to their jobs. They too live in the apartments of Edmonton Centre. So I think they'd be very interested to hear from the Member for Lethbridge East just exactly how it is that their ratio of rental cost to income is so low, and so on, Mr. Speaker. And those are also on fixed income. Now, I had a very -- I'm trying to pursue with a couple of women in their late 50s who do not fall under the safety net which the Member for Lethbridge East has put in that there would still be the rental assistance for people over 65. These are women in their late 50s, not yet 65, who are on fixed incomes and whose tax rental on their apartments is being withdrawn, and yet their income has remained the same. They're on AISH and other means, so it's going to be a further hardship for them.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I indicate, the number of people in Edmonton Centre -- in fact, the biggest mistake of my campaign was buying 1,000 lawn signs for the election campaign and then finding out there were only 200 lawns in all of Edmonton Centre because everyone lives in apartment buildings. I had to find a way to put them in the windows of apartments. But it shows you the density of people who live in rental accommodation in my constituency. The majority of them are low- or middle-income people. And there are the very nice units along 100th Avenue and Jasper Avenue and the Oliver district that probably have a low ratio of rental cost to income, but they would probably live in their own owned accommodation of condominiums or whatever anyway.

So for those who are on a fixed income, low-income or middle-income, all of the thousands in Edmonton Centre who fall in those categories who are in rental accommodation, I'd like to go to them and say: listen, the good Member for Lethbridge East who has made this statement, here are the facts, here are the data to back it up, and to explain to them the rationale and the compassion with which the Treasurer has in fact found it necessary to remove the rental tax credit.

So I don't want to berate the minister as my colleagues have in terms of whether there's any dishonesty at play here, Mr. Speaker, or whether in fact he just doesn't have it, or whether members of cabinet should make statements that they can't back up. I mean, I think in the give-and-take in the play of this Chamber, we turn a blind eye very often to statements that are made, particularly for the minister of career development in terms of statements he makes which are not backed up by any proof and so on. So that's the kind of give-and-take which

we're getting quite used to.

It's going to be a different matter to enable our constituents to get used to the fact that the members of Executive Council and cabinet make statements which we can't, for the life of us, dig out the proof around and present to them, in terms of the credibility behind the cabinet decisions. Maybe the question that's at the root of this whole motion for a return, Mr. Speaker, is the question of credibility, and that's certainly a question which will have to be decided at the next election. And in terms of the next election, I would like -- because he doesn't have the facts with this and because he has removed the rental tax credit -- to certainly thank the Member for Lethbridge East for securing at least my position in the good constituency of Edmonton Centre, where I'll be for a long time, with statements like this and policies of the government's with such a lack of credibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WRIGHT: This is another one of those requests for proof that is caused by statements which appear to lack some congruence with reality, if that's the way of putting it, Mr. Speaker. When it comes from a backbencher, then it's not so worthy a remark as when it comes from a minister, and particularly when it's such a categorical statement:

Here we have a case where in fact we have in Alberta, probably across all of the urban communities, the lowest ratio of rental cost to income.

It's just as if it were spoken by a chartered accountant or someone . . . Well, so it was! And so we are entitled, Mr. Speaker, to believe what such a responsible person says. But since on the face of it it is improbable, and anyway we think it is not so, it is reasonable of us to ask for the proof, and it's all the more reasonable since there have been several cases where we have asked for the very documents that are cited as proof, in fact, and it's been refused. So now, I'm afraid, we are getting the impression that the ministers cannot be trusted on their statements.

So one is torn between leaving it that way and taking electoral advantage from it, I suppose, or trying to get the proof, get the documents so that we can make sense of what the minister is saying. So the rationale behind this motion for a return is the same as the earlier ones, 176 and 178, that were unsuccessful.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that this is not a mere flourish or something that really doesn't matter. A large proportion of our constituents live in rented accommodation; a number of them are faced with increases in rent. We in the New Democrats believe there should be rent control but have been saying recently that because there has been a marked decline in rents in general in the cities of Alberta in the last three years, perhaps it isn't necessary. And I think that's probably what the hon. member is aware of; that there has been this decline. But he is winging it in a categorical statement that we end up with the lowest ratio of rental costs to income.

Now, of course, being a very particular man, perhaps we are not reading that correctly when we suppose that he is saying it's the lowest ratio of rent to income. He says in fact, "rental cost to income." So that means something more than rent. What does it mean? I suppose it might take into account the things that many tenants pay in addition to rent, which nonetheless represents a cost of being in the accommodation, such as utilities or, I suppose, the damage deposit -- that sort of thing -- so that again the statement is implied here that it's the whole package that is the lowest in relation to income.

At the same time, though, that rental costs have been dropping, or at least rents have been dropping, income has been

dropping faster, Mr. Speaker. So it makes it all the more improbable that the statement is true and therefore all the more necessary that the proof be supplied, all the more reasonable that the return be made, and all the more unreasonable that the return should be refused.

I think the logic of that is fairly impeccable, and I find myself at a loss to know why the impeccability of it is not also recommended to the minister.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the motion for a return of my colleague the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark. I'd just like to read, before I comment, the hon. Provincial Treasurer's statement. It says:

Here we have a case where in fact we have in Alberta, probably across all of the urban communities, the lowest ratio of rental cost to income.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Provincial Treasurer reinforced the statement by saying "there's no question that in fact that is the case." He didn't leave it with just one statement; he reinforced it. So I have to assume from that that the hon. Provincial Treasurer in fact not only has the information to verify it but he has consumed that, he has analyzed it, he is comfortable with the information, he is quite prepared to make those kinds of statements in public, and he's prepared to substantiate them in public as well.

Now, this is part of a whole pattern, as I see it developing, where this government is fond of making rather grand statements about life in Alberta. And let me make it clear, Mr. Speaker; I'm the proudest of all of our province. I care about it and I'm very proud of what we have here. But I try to be realistic and to be straight and to be honest. And I am concerned, as are many Albertans, when we hear the government making statements about life in Alberta that are slightly tangential to the reality -- that was kind, wasn't it? -- that I meet everyday.

The government is fond of talking about the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and the billions that are there for the rainy day for Albertans. The government is fond of talking about the most expensive and the most wonderful health care program in Alberta that they presumably are now going to destroy. The government is fond of saying that we have the best day care standards in the country, which we know, Mr. Speaker, is not the case. Those things are not the case. So here we have a government that is happy to make these grand statements, these sweeping generalities about life in Alberta that lack some credibility.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Provincial Treasurer says "there's no question that in fact that is the case," I wonder if he can make the case with these single unemployed employables and the ratio of their rental cost to income. I wonder if he can make that case. I wonder if he can make the case stick with the working poor in our province, because that ratio, in my understanding, has crept beyond what we believed when we attempted to create housing authorities and provide low-cost quality housing for people in Alberta at rent to income, and we understood what that ratio ought to be.

Now, those units in many cases, Mr. Speaker, are vacant. They are vacant, and people are not able to get into them. Where in fact their ratio of rent to income would be satisfactory, they are forced into the open market. They are forced in fact into the open market because they don't qualify for our precious units. They're forced to use a disproportionate amount of their

income to cover their rental cost in often substandard circumstances in accommodations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just back to some generalities. Why should I be surprised when the government declines to give the basis for this, to substantiate this very firm reinforced statement? Why should I be surprised, as that has been the characteristic all through this session? Each one of these questions we come to, and suddenly there's a kind of mystery, a kind of hiding, a kind of hunkering down; you know, circle the wagons.

Mr. Speaker, I don't comprehend. If we're prepared to stand up in the House and make statements of this kind, we should be prepared to say what is the basis, in fact. Otherwise, all of our statements begin to lack credibility. And that lack of integrity in our statements in the House and credibility will gradually infiltrate and will infect all of our activities. We call into question what we say if we are not prepared to bring to the public light the basis and the facts that gave rise to the statement in the first place.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I see absolutely no reason, if the speaker is prepared to get up and make such a firm statement, that he is not prepared to tell us where, from what source, he gets his information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: May the leader of the Liberal Party close the debate on Motion 204? [interjections] Order please.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. In my rush to run over and get the corpse before all the bones had been picked clean, I didn't realize I was infringing on anything.

I rise and feel -- although I never thought I would -- slight feelings of mercy or forgiveness for the minister after the terrible roasting he has taken, Mr. Speaker. I could smell the leather shoes being -- although I thought at least the opposition would take the shoes off before they lit the match underneath. Nevertheless, I don't think there's much question that the feeling of the House has been put forward very clearly and that the minister, as is often his wont when he is in full flight -- because I know it sometimes has happened to me before I acquired the maturity to not get drunk on my own words. I would charge on, sometimes blissfully unaware of what it would sound like the next day.

You know, maybe spending most of my life as a geologist and prospector I've always thought there might be a mother lode or a diamond mine just over the next hill, and although I had every reason to realize that in this case it was probably just another grassy vale on the other side of the mountain, I thought there just might be a possibility that the minister had discovered something we weren't all aware of. Consequently, I thought it would be worth while, and I'm sure our caucus thought it would be worth while, to find out, because there's a lot more involved here. I know the other members of the House talked about possibly being misled, or in the exuberance of the moment, or maybe he has discovered some facts that we didn't know about.

But what's more than that Mr. Speaker, is that any analyst of this government can see the almost heartless way Social Services has approached the question of helping people out whether

they be a student, a senior citizen living in their own home, a disabled person, or a single unemployable -- that something maybe had to be wrong, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it wasn't a case -- as it appeared to all and sundry -- of a cruel, heartless group of right-wingers who figured God was punishing these people for being poor. Maybe there was a factual reason for it. Consequently, this is what I want to find out. Because if it is indeed true that this government this front bench, was basing their policies on sets of figures and statistics that indicated we had the lowest rental, with reference to income, of any place in Canada, then it would explain the almost inhuman attitude they've had to many of those that need work. So, Mr. Speaker, I was very much like the little boy lying in a room full of manure: I was sure there was a pony some place. But really, I guess, all it was was that rather inedible commodity that had been spread so thinly through this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I was just hoping against hope it was there and that somehow we could explain the almost unexplainable attitudes of this government. But I'm afraid it's not to be and we'll have to sit back and wait and see.

[Motion lost]

206. Mr. Younie moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of every purchase order issued by the departments of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife; Transportation and Utilities; Public Works, Supply and Services; Environment; and Recreation and Parks between September 1, 1986, and April 30, 1987, for the purpose of securing stocks of herbicides and/or pesticides manufactured by DuPont, Monsanto, CIL, or any other manufacturer.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the government has decided in the case of Motion 206 to accept the motion.

[Motion carried]

208. Mr. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing documents showing which companies received government moneys and when they received those moneys under the small business equity corporations program from April 1, 1985, to April 1, 1987, inclusive.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, with respect to Motion 208, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I have previously provided to the member a copy of a suggested amendment to this order. If that amendment is accepted by the Assembly, then the motion would be accepted as amended by the Legislative Assembly. Essentially it reorganizes the questions so as to allow us to provide the data to the member.

Mr. Speaker, I have copies of that amendment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: With regard to Motion 208 as amended, all those in favour, please say aye. [interjection] As amended. Order please.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: With regard to the amendment hon. member.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I've read the amend-

ment, and I had done earlier with the minister. It's acceptable. I don't know just what I do on that one amendment. I'm speaking for the amendment. I am in favour of the amendment, yes.

[Motion as amended carried]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, the time for this order of business having been concluded, we'll go to the next order of business.

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

**Bill 202
Code of Ethics and Conduct Act**

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rising to speak to Bill 202, the Code of Ethics and Conduct Act, I'd like to make some general comments to try to lay out why I believe it is important to have an Act like the Code of Ethics and Conduct Act.

Mr. Speaker, we debate and deal with obviously a lot of important economic and social issues in this Legislature, but I have to tell you that the way we conduct the public business and the way people perceive our conducting the public business is just as important and perhaps more important than the actual issues that we deal with here. So I believe that this Bill 202 is an extremely important Bill, and I would say to hon. members across the way that all of us in political life avoid this type of Bill at our own risk. If we're under any illusions about the popularity and esteem that politicians are held in, then we're just not listening, because how often -- I'm sure it's happened to everybody -- you hear that it doesn't matter who you put in, they're all the same: they're all crooks; they're just in it for themselves. I don't think that in the history of this country -- especially with the scandals that we've had, especially federally and all the rest of it -- have I heard people so disillusioned with politicians and political life, Mr. Speaker. I think we can all agree, regardless of one's political stripe, that this is not particularly helpful in a democratic society.

I don't know if many people may have noticed it, but, for example, the leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party, Bob Rae, had a very good article in the *Globe and Mail* of March 26, 1987, and I would advise the hon. members that they should take a look at it. One of the things that he says in there was a quote from a book. He says:

"And so I had a choice," the writer friend confided as she discussed her relationship with her publisher. "I could either deal with him in a straightforward way," she paused, and her eyes narrowed ever so slightly, "or I could deal with him politically."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the words "politician" and "politically" are almost invariably used in a very negative way now. We can hear cabinet ministers routinely denying they would ever stoop to anything for political reasons. Speakers of democratic Assemblies chastise members for letting their discussions descend to a political debate. The word "political" has come to mean devious and manipulative, the opposite of upright and straightforward. Hence, following from that, politics is a sordid activity to be scorned by ordinary honest people who are better off cultivating friendships, raising families, and coping with life's private triumphs and failures, free from the corruption of

public life.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a healthy skepticism about politicians is a healthy one, and democracy depends on that to some degree, just as I suppose it's healthy, if I may say so, to have some skepticism about doctors or lawyers or journalists or clergy or any other group of occupations that we might want to look into. But I think the point that can be made that I expect all members would agree here is that public life is no more corrupt than private life, and political ranks contain the same proportion of the able and the dull, the honest and the crooked, the heroic and the ordinary, as any other. As I've often said to other people, when you get this type of argument that we're all the same, we're all in it for devious reasons, I say that politicians are as good and as bad as the people that elect them. And I think that pretty well sums it up.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

I noticed that there is a new bumper sticker, I think, which shows the cynicism, Mr. Speaker, that politicians in political life have now in a democracy. There's one bumper sticker that says: "Vote for someone new. He's no better, just new. After all, he needs some too." I think it sums up that view that is so pervasive that politicians are people who get rich while in office, and they're all interchangeable. I'm sure that some of you have young sons and daughters and want them to be proud of what you do, of what their father or mother does. But when they hear this all the time in school, that politicians and political life is sort of corrupt and negative, that it's not what good people go into, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that it affects us all. [interjection] If some hon. members aren't listening and don't hear that, then I say they're really not listening, because you get that all the time, especially in Stettler when I'm there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we are suggesting by this Bill is that we need -- I wish we didn't have to have the Bill; I wish it was self-evident, but life is not that simple anymore. We believe we need new rules, and we need them quickly. The rules should be laws, not guidelines, and they should set out standards not only for ministers but for all Members of the Legislative Assembly, senior public servants, and any lobbyists, the so-called lobbyists doing business with government.

The point that I make is that we can sit back on our hands and say that it's all okay, that there are no major problems, that people think we're all doing a great job, they respect us, they all wonder what we're doing here in the Legislature but they know it's great and wonderful, and they respect us all. If you believe that, Mr. Speaker, then you're just not listening. That's why I think it's so important that all of us in political life, regardless of which political stripe we hold, start to take this matter much more seriously.

Obviously, all of us decided at one point or another in this Legislative Assembly to run because -- I believe the majority wanted to contribute to public good. We may disagree on the means from time to time, but I think all of us, at least the majority of the people that I know, are in public life not to become rich, as many people think, but because they honestly believe they can make a difference. But, Mr. Speaker, it's just not good enough that we know that in this Assembly; it's important that that perception be out in the public. Because if that perception is in the public, then how we do our job is made much easier in the Legislative Assembly here.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill I think is fairly straightforward. Just to sum it up quickly, the Bill prohibits an MLA, cabinet minister,

or senior staff from accepting any payment or benefit for performing his public duty -- in large measure I will agree that this is already covered in the Legislative Assembly Act -- in sections 3, 4, and 5. The more important part for our purposes here is to look at section 6. This particular section prohibits an executive staff member or head of a Crown corporation from carrying on a business other than a family farm or getting public money other than his regular pay and any benefits generally.

I think it's time that we look at this particular occupation that we're in. I think in simpler times it probably was a part-time occupation, but I believe the pay is high enough now and the work is onerous enough and there's enough to do that we should begin to take a look at this. [interjection] Mr. Speaker, I know the guy running the store over there that made all the money in tobacco probably doesn't agree with me, but I think this is what Albertans want.

Also, to flow along from there, Mr. Speaker, we think that a period of four years after the employment is another crucial time. We see the spectacle of people just getting out of government and getting all sorts of gifts and patronage and all the rest of it. That doesn't only affect all of us; again, that perception is out there. So we're suggesting that for a period of four years following the employment, no minister, executive staff member, or head of a Crown corporation can become a director of a company which was regulated by or received money from the department or agency for which he worked, or on behalf of a person or a company with whom he had a personal and substantial involvement on behalf of his department or agency, or lobby on behalf of any person with his former department or agency.

Mr. Speaker, this is not unreasonable. If we are going into public life because we want to do the public business and we want to participate in public good, and surely if we believe in the private sector and all the rest of it, when we're finished with government, we should want to walk away. It's only for four years; it's not forever. It seems to me that's a reasonable cooling-off period.

We're also suggesting that no M.L.A. who is a member of the Standing Committee on Private Bills at the time a private Bill for a company is considered can thereafter become a director of that company for, again, at least four years. Again, Mr. Speaker, the same analysis, the same reasoning I gave for the previous four years: a cooling-off period. The same logic would follow.

To go on, for a period of two years following his employment, we suggest that no minister, executive staff member, or head of a Crown corporation can accept employment with any person with whom he had significant direct official dealings during his last year on the job, or act for any person with regard to any matter that came under the authority of his department or agency during the last year of his job, or [give] any advice for commercial purposes about anything directly related to his department or agency.

Mr. Speaker, this seems to me to be fairly obvious, that it should be done this way. Otherwise, there's a perception that there are the ins and the outs, that if you have close connections with government, especially if you were there in the last two years, you're going to get some lucrative contracts, and other people who didn't have that advantage, whether it's true or not -- maybe it's not true, but the perception is very much there in the public. So there, in that case, at least the two-year cooling-off period.

Mr. Speaker, the last part of the Bill prohibits appointment of a former minister, executive staff member, or head of a Crown

corporation to a position in the public service for two years following their employment, regardless, and thereafter unless -- and this is a key point -- unless they win an open public competition for the job. How often have we seen -- we didn't even know there was a position there, and all of a sudden there's an announcement that somebody's been appointed. We're always told that they were the best person, but how would we know? Because there was no open competition.

Again, this adds to the cynicism that there are certain people on the ins and certain people on the outs, and if you have friends in the right places, then you're going to get these contracts. And again I say that when this happens, it reflects on all of us -- all of us, not just the government, but people on the opposition side. Because they say, "That's what we expect from people." They're not happy about it, so they grumble and go away and say: "They're all the same. We don't need to vote. We don't need to do anything, because they're all in it for their own good."

Mr. Speaker, there have to be penalties, and we've set in this Bill -- it could be negotiable, obviously -- fairly stiff penalties. Upon conviction there would be expulsion from office or employment and prohibition of any further public office or employment for up to seven years and a fine of up to \$10,000.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what would this Bill have done in the last little while? Well, I hate to say this, but Mr. Planche would not have a job, Mrs. LeMessurier would not have a job, Joe Dutton would not have a job, and I could go on and on. But I say to this government that if they continue to not see this as important or to think it's not important in the public eye, they eventually will pay the political price for this.

I might comment that we've been trying to get through a code of ethics Bill since immediately following the 1979 general election on May 28. It was first introduced by Grant Notley; it was reintroduced three times thereafter by Grant Notley, for a total of four times. Following the 1982 election, when Grant Notley was the leader and I was the caucus, I took over the onerous responsibility of this particular Bill, introducing it for the first time on March 17, 1983, and so far twice again since that first introduction.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that like a good wine, the Bill has improved with age, making changes over the years from the 1979 model. Some of the changes from the first introduction, just very briefly. We've now brought in longer prohibition periods, increased from two to four years and from one year to two years in most instances. We've also included new provisions, specifically like the one about M.L.A.s taking directorships with corporations created by private Bills, and we've deleted some provisions that were made redundant by other changes, mainly the Legislative Assembly Act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to just conclude by saying to the government that like most private members' Bills, if this were adopted, I would probably die of a heart attack. So maybe if you want to get rid of me, you might adopt it. But I say this in all sincerity, as I can to the opposite side of the House, that Bills like these are precisely what the public wants from us. And I say to hon. members: if they are not listening and if they have not heard the things that I have about politicians and those negative connotations of what politicians do. I just honestly don't believe they are listening, because it's there in the public. And it's leading, I think, partly to that apathy that we experience in municipal and federal and provincial elections. We wonder why we were down to 50 percent of the vote, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the reasons. There's a feeling of alienation there, that

that's somebody else's business, that they don't listen and they're just in it to become rich for themselves.

And I say to the hon. members, surely -- surely -- this is not the image that you want as you sit in here and we do the government's business. Surely this is not the particular way you want to be thought of; I'm sure it isn't. And I would say that I hope members would say -- I expect they will get up, if I may anticipate one of the arguments, and say, "Oh, we're making it too hard for people to get into politics; it would be too rigid. Mr. Speaker, and we'll lose some good people." because I've heard this argument; remember how many times we've brought the Bill in. I just don't believe that. I suggest that a lot of good people are now shying away from politics because of the perception they have of what politicians do -- at least the public's perception -- when they hear about all the scandals and when they hear about what's happening in public life. I think that's what's frightening good people and keeping them away, not a code of ethics, because this code of ethics isn't going to affect most people because they're not going to involve themselves. And I really say that that's why good people are staying away from politicians: because they don't want to be tainted with that brush that many of us are who are in public life right now.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I say to all hon. members: we don't need more or less politics; we need better politics. We need citizens determined to make politics better, not by running away from it but by recognizing it as the essential activity it is. The only way I think we can do this at this particular time in our history is to say loudly and clearly that we need a new Code of Ethics and Conduct Act like Bill 202. If there are other ideas, bring them out, but let's not hide our heads and pretend that it isn't a problem, because I think all of us deep down know it is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against Bill 202, Code of Ethics and Conduct Act. In so doing, I'd like to identify the provisions that are currently contained in either statute or ministerial statement or Standing Orders of this Assembly or in fact provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada. I'd like to then take a look at how other provincial Legislatures handle code of ethics matters and then turn my attention more specifically to this legislation. I think it's important that in so doing I very quickly enunciate some of the provisions that are currently in place to provide the kind of protection which the hon. member suggests he would like to see so that the public indeed can restore their faith in the process and in politicians in general.

First of all, the Legislative Assembly Act of Alberta in the revised standing edition 1983 is a foundation upon which this Assembly operates and which we as members conduct ourselves. There are from time to time amendments made to that legislation. We've dealt very clearly with the question of conflict of interest in the legislation, and that can be reviewed, as I've indicated. There's the election finances and disclosure Act, 1980, again which indicates the provisions which members of this Assembly must make in disclosing interests, public information. There's the May 1983 ministerial statement by former Premier Lougheed which clearly goes to some length describing provisions that must be made by members of the cabinet. Standing Orders of our Assembly, and Standing Orders 2 and 33(1). (2). Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta clearly goes into the specific areas of how we as members of the Assembly must conduct ourselves. Again, a ministerial statement of April 1982 by former Premier Lougheed. The Criminal Code of Canada and the code of ethics

for public servants. These seven provisions which I've referred to, Mr. Speaker, set the legal framework and guidelines by which members must conduct themselves, both elected members and in some cases members of the public service, and provide a framework.

I was then curious, Mr. Speaker, to see how the proposed legislation, Bill 202, would relate to that of other provinces in Canada, because I think there are times when we want to know how we compare. We can do a comparison, and we can look at the legislation. I paid particular attention to those jurisdictions which have had in the past socialist governments. I've also looked at Manitoba today with particular interest to see how their current legislation deals with the matter. I find in my review that none of the Legislatures have legislation as restrictive, as punitive, as that being put forward by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. [interjections]

Let's take a good look at Manitoba, hon. members who want to pipe up. If you'd like to speak, Edmonton Mill Woods, you'll have your chance, and I hope you talk about Manitoba. I hope you get into it and tell us why a government that's been in office for some time doesn't seem to share the concerns that you have. Is it because they're idealistic, they're coming from those on the outside looking in, such as yourselves? I rather suspect, Mr. Speaker. And I'd welcome the suggestion going to your colleague Mr. Pawley and see if he will introduce similar legislation, because he certainly has made no indication of doing so to this point in time.

MR. MARTIN: How do you know? I just talked to him.

MR. BOGLE: Oh, you did. That will be interesting, to see if you're right. We'll look forward to his legislation.

Clearly, we do not find the kind of restrictive, prohibitive legislation as has been suggested in this Bill.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition went on to talk about the way we conduct ourselves, and just as importantly, the way people perceive that we conduct ourselves. He talked about the fact that in his view the word "political" is associated with something that is devious and that politicians are held in disrepute by many members of the public. I would suggest to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the first thing he and his colleagues can do is clean up their act in this Assembly in question period, because that's the way the public perceives televised debates and the way the public of Alberta see the disgraceful performance of a number of members -- in the way they ask their questions. The decorum of this Assembly is important, and respect for the Speaker is equally important.

One of the real keys in this whole process . . . [interjections] It's good to see that we've got your attention, hon. members. One of the real keys is our strength and our ability to draw members from a wide cross section. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said, "Oh, I've heard those arguments before," -- that we might in some way dissuade people, possible candidates from becoming involved in the political process. Well, one of the things that impressed me when I first became a member of this Assembly in 1975 was the fact that in the Assembly -- and that's been the case over a period of time -- we've seen members come from a wide variety of backgrounds and interests. And with the exception of one political party where most members seem to come from one particular profession, we see a strength that comes -- and I now refer specifically to the government caucus, where we've got people who come from all walks of life, where we've got individuals who will bring the strength

of their small business background, their farming background, their banking business background, their legal profession, the medical profession, and others. That's a strength when you're debating issues in caucus, and to suggest in any way that that's not important is, again, overly simplistic as to what this legislation could do.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Yes, I would be concerned, Mr. Speaker, about any move that would cause people to believe that they want no part of the process because of the restrictions that are being placed around it by actions that we would take. I look back to the whole process and I ask -- and it's a fundamental question -- who is the best judge of our performance in this Assembly? And clearly it is the electorate.

MR. PIQUETTE: [inaudible] the PC Party.

MR. BOGLE: Pardon me, hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche? Something you wanted to say? Or are you just mumbling as usual?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. BOGLE: Clearly, it is our electorate in our own constituencies. They are the people who decide, and they are the people -- and that's one of the beauties of *Hansard*, one of the real beauties of *Hansard*: we can go back and we can show members in respective constituencies across this province where we stand on key issues and where members of the opposition stand on those same issues. It's important, and they'll see and they'll make up their own minds.

The hon. member referred to scandals. I noticed that he went over it very quickly because he is obviously trying to tie Alberta in with what may be happening elsewhere in other parts of Canada and around the world. The only thing that's scandalous is the actions of the hon. member by trying to bring down the decorum of this Assembly, because it's so important that we come back to the fundamental principles.

I notice in this Act that the member is very careful to carve out the sacred cow. We're going to indicate under section 4 that

No minister may carry on business other than as a Minister, except

(a) a family farm.

Well, I happen to have a small family farm, and I'm getting tired of the way the hon. members try to use that, suggesting, "Oh, it's all right to operate a family farm, but it's not all right to operate a small business if you're a minister." I'd like to know from the hon. member, in his summation, how he can conclude that, that it's somehow all right for one hon. member to operate a farm, and it may be a very large farm, but it's not all right for another member of the cabinet to operate a family business that he's involved in, possibly with other members of the family. And then of course he goes on to suggest that the business can be carried on through a blind trust. So there should be some consistency and there isn't.

In point 8 we go on to suggest that those who are former ministers should not be appointed to any positions for a period of four years, and he goes on to cite Mr. Planche. Well, I think we're very fortunate, Mr. Speaker, in being able to draw on the talents and the integrity of a man like Hugh Planche, who served in the key portfolio in this government of economic develop-

ment, and he's now working on behalf of Alberta farmers in trying to develop a concept that would see the Crow benefit paid directly to the producer. I think we're very fortunate being able to draw on this gentleman's talents, and I would not want to see any action that we would take to take away from that process.

I would like to go on by saying that it is inherent in our democratic system, the principle that people should be the final and ultimate judges of those who have been chosen to represent them. Back to my earlier comment. Our constituents will decide; that's the ultimate court in terms of our own actions and conduct in this Assembly.

Every elected member is also answerable to the Legislative Assembly. Every member has the right and the responsibility to censor a member who has forsaken his public duties. Existing legislation, policy statements, and guidelines are sufficient to protect against conflict of interest. Beyond those provisions no amount of legislation can guard against a public official intent on abusing the privileges of his office.

In short, Mr. Speaker, we can't, through passing legislation, legislate morality. We can't develop a system that's going to prevent a fail-safe blanket of coverage that will ensure that no one will abuse it. The ultimate test in the democratic system is that fact that our constituents will hold us responsible, and they have the ultimate responsibility. That is the way the system is developed over time, and I'm proud of it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the comments of the Member for Taber-Warner. In supporting this Bill, which is sponsored by the Leader of the Official Opposition, I'd like to reply to some of the comments that the Member for Taber-Warner made because I think they do not actually undermine any reason at all for supporting this Bill.

He talked about the various Acts that are in place, Mr. Speaker. It's true, some Acts are in place: the Legislative Assembly Act, much of which is good but which could certainly stand improvement; the financial disclosures Act, the same way; the ministerial statement from Premier Lougheed. Now, a ministerial statement is not an official edict. It's not a statute. It carries weight inasmuch as the member making that statement, the minister, can be held accountable for that statement. But if it's not in statute, that's where the accountability ends.

Now, if I'm not mistaken, the Member for Taber-Warner -- when he referred to the Standing Orders, did he refer to Standing Orders 2 and 3?

MR. BOGLE: Two and 33.

MS BARRETT: Two and 30?

MR. BOGLE: Thirty-three.

MS BARRETT: Okay, thank you. Was it subsection 2 of 33? Because Standing Order 2 is procedure in unprovided cases. It says:

In all contingencies unprovided for, the question shall be decided by Mr. Speaker and, in making his ruling, Mr. Speaker shall base his decision on the usages and precedents of the Assembly and on parliamentary tradition.

And that has nothing to do with ethics as far as I understand.

Now, I would like to talk about Standing Order 33(1), which

says:

No member is entitled to vote upon any question in which the member has a direct pecuniary interest and the vote of any member so interested will be disallowed.

Subsection (2) says:

If a member feels that the member has a direct pecuniary interest in a matter to be voted upon, the member shall so declare to the Assembly and shall leave the Chamber before the vote is taken.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is Standing Order 33.

Those Standing Orders do not address what this Bill addresses, and that is basically having access to develop an awful lot of contacts while holding public office and being able to profit from those contacts thereafter. It's basically like saying that -- you know, if you're in the planning department of a municipality and you know that certain land is going to be purchased by a municipality, it would be pretty wrong of you to go out, buy up the land from an unsuspecting person who currently owns it who doesn't know that it's going to be bought by a municipality, and then flip it to the municipality at a very high rate of profit. That's the sort of thing we're talking about here. I don't believe that those Standing Orders really take this into account at all. They have only to do with declaring a pecuniary interest on a vote that goes to the entire Legislative Assembly, have nothing to do with decisions being made by cabinet, for example.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Taber-Warner also said: "How come we don't have this kind of legislation in Manitoba? After all, isn't Manitoba held up as the Utopia of Canada?" It's true; it's certainly a better place to live, given the current government, than Alberta is. But the point is that maybe these kinds of measures aren't needed in Manitoba. Maybe the track record of that government is not to appoint, one after the other in succession, defeated cabinet ministers to unadvertised, high-paying public positions. That's the point.

Now, it has been argued that the electorate are our best judges and that they'll be the final judges in all of this. Well, that's true. But what happens, you see, is that the electorate judged in the instances of, say, Edmonton Avonmore, Edmonton Centre, and a number of other ridings which were previously held by cabinet ministers. They wanted to turf those cabinet ministers, but it was a government decision that said: "Oh, no, you don't. You can't suddenly unemploy these people. We are going to re-employ them and send them off to wherever on the planet we so choose. If it happens to be culturally or climatically comfortable and interesting, well, tough luck for the rest of you unemployed sods. You can just take a number and stand in line." Now, Mr. Speaker, without this sort of legislation in place, this government, if it gets re-elected -- and I'm not so sure about that -- could continue to do the same thing.

As a matter of fact though, let's just say that this government isn't re-elected, and that the New Democrats are elected after the next election. You know, we've sponsored this Bill since 1979. This would be an example of us being hoisted on our own petard, so to speak, which I know is a wrong derivative of Shakespeare, and to him I do apologize. But in any event, we are prepared to live with the provisions of this Bill. If elected as government, we will introduce and pass this Bill. We do know that ...

MR. YOUNG: You'll probably nationalize gas companies.

MS BARRETT: The hon. minister for telecommunications, re-

search and technology -- and I do apologize; I got that in the wrong order; I often refer to him as TRT, though -- has just said something that might not have been picked up by the microphones; that is, nationalizing an oil business. Well, Mr. Speaker ...

MR. MARTIN: Gas, he said.

MS BARRETT: Gas, pardon me. That's right. Certainly it wouldn't be by confiscation; it would be by good old purchasing methods. Secondly, I'm not so sure that the minister knows what he's talking about. Maybe he ought to go back to microchips.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that we wouldn't be so persistent in sponsoring this sort of Bill if we didn't intend to live by it when we become the government. And we will sponsor this Bill.

The Member for Taber-Warner said, "Now, why are you picking on poor Mr. Planche?" I mean, here he is. He's going out and advocating, you know, that the Crow benefit now become a direct payment to the producers.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, the poor guy. Is he doing this for nothing, Mr. Speaker? Is Mary LeMessurier living in a bed-sitter in London? I don't think so. I understand that Joe Dutton's moving expenses are enough for me to live on for like 10 years. They're not impoverished by those very precious appointments. The previous minister responsible for international trade is basically carrying on his old job with a new title.

Now we hear that poor Mr. Planche has gone out to work his guts out to sell the idea of the producer-pay concept with respect to the Crow benefit. Well, you know, the Crow benefit is a transport subsidy, Mr. Speaker, and let's get it clear. If we don't have provisions, I believe, in statute or regulation which talk about changing that subsidy altogether to a different one, a different concept, then I'm not so sure that Hugh Planche is out doing anybody any favours.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Taber-Warner concluded by saying that you can't legislate morality. That reminds me. I mean, it is true; you cannot legislate public morality. But you can legislate guidelines with respect to people who enter public life for the purpose of serving the public such that they will not have access to contacts, information, knowledge, strings, by which they shall later profit unduly. That's all we're calling for here.

You know, there's some big cases in the United States right now with respect to insider trading. I'm sure you've heard of them, Mr. Speaker. I think a couple of people are going to be sued massively and spend a very long time in jail over this sort of thing. During the growth of arbitraging, insider trading has become a scandal on the stock exchange. Wall Street has been rocked by it, and it has even come to the Canadian borders, right into Bay Street.

We talk about how we need to improve regulations and monitoring and watchdogs with teeth so that the arbitragers are not unduly benefiting from their knowledge and so that they're not actually breaking the law and the spirit of the law, not just the letter of the law. That's all we're calling for here. What we're calling for -- we're not saying to all Albertans, "You can't do this or that," because we know that that doesn't make sense. But we certainly have the power to say to cabinet ministers that if you leave your public office, you're going to have a cooling-

off period before you're going to be appointed to a government position, unless you won it by open and fair competition. We're telling people who are the heads of Crown corporations or executive staff members that they too are going to have a cooling-off period. Because there's inside information to be had from being within those offices and one should not be able to use that information to profit unduly, whether it's to become an unofficial lobbyist -- we don't recognize those things yet in Canada or at least in Alberta -- or whether it's to do handy-dandy deals by which you actually put a lot of money in your pocket. That's what we're calling against.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Taber-Warner said aw, gee, your section 4 -- you carve out the sacred cow; that is, the family farm. You know, you're willing to do that, but what about all these other reasonable exemptions? Well, the other reasonable exemption, the only one that I can see is if you have a business and if you put the conduct of that business into blind trust. That's what we call for. It is true that members of the Executive Council must do that. They do assign their business interests to blind trusts, and we're just calling for the singling out of that provision so that no other business could be carried on.

Let's have a look at one of the reasons why that should be the case, Mr. Speaker. Cabinet ministers are paid additional money, and I remember hearing various cabinet ministers state in public meetings a couple of years ago why it is that they are paid additional money. They're paid additional money because they have additional duties and those duties are considered worthy of a full-time job such that they shouldn't really be doing anything else. Either you're a cabinet minister and that's your full-time job or you're an M.L.A., and under current regulations an M.L.A. is not considered necessarily a full-time job. All we're saying is that you subject yourself to those provisions. What is the problem with that? How could it possibly hurt to do that?

I think the provisions of this Bill are very good. It is true you cannot legislate morality in the public, although you can legislate standards for morality, you can legislate codes by which immorality shall and can be tested in the courts, and upon conviction sentences may be levied. We do that all the time. Every time we create a law for the Criminal Code, that is exactly what we do. We uphold the right to do that as a society that is governed by common law. It is appropriate and proper. But it is true that you cannot legislate morality by saying that you shall not do this or that unless we put it into the Criminal Code. So we're pretty careful about how we deal with the Criminal Code obviously. But surely we can legislate the confines of benefiting from holding public office in order to restore the confidence of the electorate in the entire process and in those whom they elect.

The Official Opposition Leader in sponsoring this Bill noted the low voter turnout in the 1986 election, about 50 percent, and he said, government members, it is at your peril that you do not adopt this Bill. I would like to reiterate that point, because it is my contention that if it is the government's assumption or the assumption of anybody in this Assembly that the reason so many opposition members were elected was not because the people out there weren't true-blue Tory but because they just didn't go to the polls, if you fail to adopt this, maybe your voter turnout is going to be even lower and we will be the government.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion existing legislation, policy statements, and guidelines are sufficient protection

against conflict of interest. I find the presentation from the Member for Edmonton Kingsway a typical oversimplification illustrating the socialist view that people cannot look after themselves, they are basically dishonest, and their conduct should be regulated all the way. It ignores even further, completely, the fact that we can't legislate what people think.

Mr. Speaker, in reality the Member for Taber-Warner has thoroughly reviewed in detail the many provisions that are contained and embedded in both the legislation and the operation of this House. We have had them in place for many years, and it is, in my opinion, the way that we can. Beyond these provisions I don't think any amount of legislation is going to guard against anyone who is intent on abusing the privileges of this office.

I would also like to take the time to correct an error in the statement from the Member for Edmonton Highlands. People are not required to take a blind trust. It is utilized as an option. So I feel that that is very important. And further to what the Member for Taber-Warner says, if cabinet ministers are paid this sumptuous amount of money, why then is the family farm exempt? There are so many errors in that pattern of thinking.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to get into a global view of the conflict-of-interest laws that we are talking about today. It appears most conflict-of-interest laws can be traced back to an English statute enacted in 1782 as a result of some scandal involving the supply of money and war materials to the American revolution. Grappling with these laws 173 years later, Winston Churchill said that

The law may strike here and there by accident or caprice without any reference to any principles of logic or reason or constitutional doctrine.

Therefore, in my opinion our parliamentary system has a long and honourable tradition of self-discipline, and Canadians, Albertans, possess a high level of respect for the law and their legislative and judicial institutions. Men and women, therefore, that seek public office must be respected for their integrity, their honesty and understanding, and must have withstood the close scrutiny and rigorous demands of winning a nomination and getting elected. And it seems an anomaly to me then that an elected member who has worked hard to gain such public respect, once having taken the oath of office is instantly suspicious and must be subjected to laws that assume they will abuse that trust that they worked so hard to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, when you assume a public office -- and I know that members opposite, the same rules apply to them too -- you must publicly expose your previously private lives and even be divested of decision-making power over your own future and your economic well-being. These stringent rules, however, will not deter unethical practices of members who wish to do so. Otherwise, we would have no use for policemen and courts.

I find it objectionable that the Member for Edmonton Highlands has impugned wrongdoing in the roles of former members in this House that perhaps did not win the last election for whatever reason. I find that highly objectionable.

The major effects of the laws on conflict of interest would be to encourage the professional politician or extremely wealthy candidates and discourage successful persons of ability that are willing to enter public life for a short period of time. Mr. Speaker, many successful people will choose not to serve if they're required to disclose all for public scrutiny and divest themselves of everything.

In addition, just as the parliamentary system here benefits from the wide variety of knowledge and expertise that is in this House, that every individual brings, so can society benefit from

the understanding and experience of the legislator as they return to private life. When one thinks of the calibre of people entering public life and the personal sacrifice that must be made in leaving a successful career, in my opinion it is therefore important that members leaving public life are not penalized in their career but respected and recognized for the service they have provided for our country.

Mr. Speaker, as the government intrudes increasingly into our private lives, we cannot exclude a member because of having an interest in government affairs without making that member a second-class citizen. As a parent, a homeowner, a consumer, a member cannot debate issues that affect their daily life or without thinking of the benefits to his or her children. Health care, environmental concerns, taxation: all of these things involve every one of us. We all have vested interest in all of those issues. The really important things touch our daily lives, and because of our different levels of investment in all of these areas and their importance, further legislation to protect members from public criticism could be crippling in terms of fulfilling the obligation of representing our constituents.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, we're deceiving ourselves if we think comprehensive conflict-of-interest laws such as in the Bill -- the Code of Ethics and Conduct -- are going to be legislated without destroying our freedom of speech and our values and our credibility to those we represent. Every legislator is now subject to unwritten norms and standards of practice as well as the Standing Orders of the Legislature or the Parliament we represent. These moral rules, both ancient and modern, set high standards for good conduct in public affairs and can be enforced only by the members and the strong example set in our communities.

If members of a Legislature are obsessed with developing rules to deal with every imaginable use of their power, we will eventually lose sight of who is really entitled to make the decision over whether we hold office or not, and that is the people. The people grant us the legitimacy, or they withhold it, to any of our decisions. It's the people that establish governments to give order to our lives. Their representatives must ensure that as politicians we do not covet the function of government more than the basic responsibilities of life itself.

Mr. Speaker, we use the technology of the information age to distribute information, and now it is being used to ensure that the electorate is aware of the quality of our representation. We are really living in a glass house, and I am sure the electorate will be able to make some judgments after watching our question periods.

I urge members to support the defeat of this Bill on the grounds that it is not necessary or desirable to write a complex set of laws that will restrict the ordinary activities of a legislator or expose personal and private concerns and finances unnecessarily. The trust and honour of members cannot be questioned

without casting suspicion or doubt on the repute of the whole Assembly.

How freely, Mr. Speaker, we tend to surrender so much that really matters, and how often we trespass on the rights of others by increasing legislation. I feel it is wrong to place obstacles in the path of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the hour I beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary Foothills has moved to adjourn the debate. All in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Ady	Getty	Osterman
Betkowski	Heron	Payne
Bogle	Horsman	Reid
Bradley	Hyland	Rostad
Cassin	Johnston	Russell
Cherry	Koper	Schumacher
Clegg	Mirosh	Sparrow
Cripps	Moore, R.	Stewart
Day	Musgreave	Webber
Dinning	Musgrove	West
Downey	Nelson	Young
Elliott	Oldring	Zarusky
Fischer		

Against the motion:

Barrett	McEachern	Strong
Fox	Pashak	Taylor
Gibeault	Piquette	Wright
Laing	Sigurdson	Younie
Martin		

Totals	Ayes -- 37	Noes -- 13
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[Motion carried]

[The House recessed at 5:37 p.m.]