

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, April 28, 1988 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 88/04/28

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country.

Amen.

head: PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. PIQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table for the information of the Assembly the wording of a petition presented to the Premier today and signed by 4, 800 Albertans concerned about the effects of last year's 5 cents a litre fuel tax on commercial truckers.

head: READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, I request that the petition of the Calgary Municipal Heritage Properties Authority for the Calgary Municipal Heritage Properties Authority Amendment Act, 1988, be now read and received.

[Motion carried]

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill 267****Injured Workers' Day Act**

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 267. This Bill is the Injured Workers' Day Act.

The purpose of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is to declare this day as the Injured Workers' Day, inasmuch as there is a great deal of injuries in the workplace. The purpose is to encourage Albertans to remember those Alberta workers who were killed, injured, or disabled while on the job and to reflect on those actions which they may undertake individually and as a society to reduce the frequency and severity of accidents and injuries on the job. The injuries and fatalities on the job are an invisible plague, and I think it should be dealt with.

[Leave granted; Bill 267 read a first time]

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature, some 60 grade 6 students from the Keheewin school in Edmonton-Whitemud. I had

a chance to meet with these students, and I'm sure they're enjoying their visit to the Legislature. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Ken Tranter and Mr. Bill Hanley. They're in both the members' and public galleries, and I'd ask them to rise and be welcomed by the Legislature.

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, 55 energetic grade 5 students from Baturyn elementary school located in the Edmonton-Calder constituency. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Bojecho, Mrs. Hardy, and also Catherine Alexander and Gina Albo. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you 27 grade 6 students from the Woodbridge Farms elementary school. They are here with their teachers Mrs. Anne Williams and Mr. Alex Newhart, along with parents Mrs. Margot Gaglione and Mrs. Bonnie Pollock. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask if they would rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

MS McCOY: Sitting in the members' gallery, Mr. Speaker, is a native Albertan who for the last decade or so we have regrettably missed from the province. He's given great service to this province in past years and continues to do so now from Ontario. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, Mr. Jack Lyndon, who is president of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and I ask you all to give him a warm welcome to Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, approximately 20 members from the Alberta Gravel Truckers Association and truckers involved in the Whitemud dispute. I'm especially pleased to introduce Mr. Gerald Wawryko, president; Mr. Neil Kulchisky, general manager; and from the Whitemud dispute Mr. Pat Durand, Mr. John Sherban, and Mr. Dennis Couture. Would all members representing these truckers please rise and be warmly received by this Assembly.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Labour Relations Code**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. The Premier should recall that section 81 of the government's new Labour Relations Code makes it an offence for average Albertans to launch consumer boycotts or help out on a picket line in support of striking workers. It seems now that the Minister of Labour has launched a disinformation campaign regarding this particular provision. In fact, even though the wording is clear, the minister is claiming that the intent of section 81 is somehow to provide legal protection for workers involved in a labour dispute.

My question to the Premier will the Premier now break his vow, it seems, of silence on this issue and clarify the true intent of the government?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as we've said at least four previous times in the Legislature -- and I bow to your discretion whether

I can repeat it for the fifth time -- the government's position is that they are presenting labour legislation that will provide an equal basis for both management and labour to negotiate between themselves agreements that they both support and are happy with. The legislation is intended to do that. I draw to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's attention that the legislation will be up for second and third readings and committee study, and it will be interesting to hear the debate. The hon. member and perhaps members on our side of the Legislature may well want to raise amendments, and we shall see how the House will deal with them.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. The Premier is supposed to set the tone of the government. This is a major Bill taking away civil liberties, and it's up to the Premier to answer the questions. I say to the Premier: your credibility suffers when you refuse to answer questions. But my question to the Premier: if the Premier doesn't take questions seriously on this issue now, what is to transform him and say that he will take the debate seriously in second reading? What's the difference?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't seeking credibility with the NDP. That would worry me, if I was able to do that. But I do wish to encourage the Leader of the Opposition to make his amendments. As I said, there may well be some from the government side or from the Liberal Party or from the Representatives, and the House will consider them. I think that is the way our democracy works in the Legislature, and I'm pleased that we have that. It has been established over many years on the British parliamentary system, and it means that our legislation is looked at in a serious and detailed way.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you for that grade 4 civics lecture, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe we'll go to the Minister of Labour, because he has said some things. He said on April 25 in *Hansard*:

In no way does the Labour Relations Act affect people who are not party to or people who do not have a primary interest in the dispute.

My question: would the minister admit that this is in fact a falsehood and that section 81 in fact does apply to average Albertans?

DR. REID: I think, Mr. Speaker, it depends on the context in which you take the comment. The situation is that there are certain civil remedies that are normally available to people. The purpose of the immunity that is given to certain people under certain circumstances in certain locations from those civil remedies is a well-established concept in the laws of parliamentary systems. That concept continues in the first part of section 81 of Bill 22.

But, you know, if we're going to get into the context of debate upon the Bill in the question period, then we should be doing the whole job in the question period, and I'm not sure that that's proper, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: We're not prepared to do that. The Chair is getting very concerned at the repetitious nature. The issue has been raised on April 21, 22, 25...

MR. MARTIN: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you... 26, 27, and 28.

The Chair looks forward with keen anticipation to see what this next question is. Supplementary.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we asked about a quote from *Hansard* made by this minister. Surely that's in order.

Now, my question to the minister, because he didn't answer the question when I asked him... And it was a falsehood. In subsection 3 it clearly states that

no trade union or other person shall, in connection with any labour relations difference or dispute...

It makes it very clear, Mr. Minister. Would the minister, following from that, indicate to this House how it is that he is not misleading the House when he makes that statement?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, obviously the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the NDP, has not read the current Labour Relations Act. The parenthetical remark in relation to a dispute is a narrowing of the restriction, not a broadening of it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Supplementary, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. Could the Premier explain to the House what kind of double standard he operates on when it's okay for the Premier to cross the picket line but it's not okay for another MLA to go out and walk a picket line?

MR. GETTY: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, there's no comparison between the two acts. There's nothing in crossing a line that has to do with walking on one.

But, Mr. Speaker, I should draw attention, too, to the member that the report that the hon. Minister of Labour filed, which was supported by three members of labour who were on that committee, recommended this very thing.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Labour.

DR. REID: Perhaps I should augment the remarks of the Premier in relation to that answer. It was quite clear in the recommendations of the committee that I chaired that they specifically recommended removing the provision for those authorized by the union to take part in picketing. They specifically recommended the deletion of those words from the existing Labour Relations Act provisions.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Member for Calgary-Millican, supplementary.

MR. SHRAKE: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As this is question period and we can't debate or put any amendments on the Labour Act that's not here yet, would the Premier give us his solemn promise that when it does come on the floor, all members of this Assembly will be able to debate and put all the amendments in that we want to?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the House controls itself, and you control the House. So subject to those conditions, yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Second main question, the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate the second

question to the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

Gravel Truckers' Concerns

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, just outside the Premier's riding a labour difference is taking place that clearly illustrates the problem faced by gravel truckers across this province. Several factors have combined to force more and more gravel truckers out of business and create economic pressures that threaten public safety. Last year's 5 cents per litre fuel tax was imposed after many truckers had already signed contracts. More road construction is contracted out where government hauling rates do not apply, and these rates have remained virtually unchanged in the last six years.

To the Premier. Will the Premier take the opportunity today to announce a reimbursement to truckers who had already entered into contracts when the government introduced its fuel tax? They deserve the same fairness given to innkeepers.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Utilities met with the group that the hon. member's referring to today. I'd ask him to respond to that question. I would only say, too, that I would like to have met with them. I only wish the arrangements for their visit had been handled a heck of a lot better than the way it was handled by that member.

MR. ADAIR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did meet with the hon. member, as a matter of fact, and about six of the gravel truckers, including the president and the executive director, I believe it is, Neil, and Gerald Wawryko, and that particular issue did not come up.

The issue that we did discuss, however, was the issue relative to the Whitemud project and the fact that that project is a city of Edmonton project that was awarded to a contractor by the name of Standard General, who subbed it to a contractor by the name of Whissell, and then who got into the hiring of the trucks. They expressed some concerns over the fact that there were some overloading capacities going on and some speeding, in essence, to meet the hourly rate they hoped to obtain. I gave them the commitment publicly that I would write to the mayor of the city of Edmonton and express my concern over that.

MR. PIQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell the Premier that that's a cheap shot, and I don't appreciate that kind of response. It was related to a petition.

Now, to the Premier. Many contractors working for the province and municipalities do not calculate a fair haul rate into their bid. They bid low, squeeze their profit out of the truckers. Now, will the Premier direct at the provincial level and make it a top priority of his new municipal issues council to encourage municipalities to change this system and ensure that the truckers working for both levels of government receive a fair hauling rate in all their work?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, that particular issue was discussed, and I expressed a concern over the fact that we have over the years had discussions with the municipal authorities relative to the fact that we do not provide, in their opinion, enough unconditional grants. Of course, what happens is that they are elected the same way as we are, and we provide funds on the basis of a percentage, in this case 75/25. They designate where those projects are going to occur and then who will be the contractors. They issue the tenders, and they go on with the work. I am not

prepared -- and I indicated that to the truckers who were there and to the president -- to interfere with the particular system at this time.

However, I should point out, Mr. Speaker, at the meeting that the Gravel Truckers Association president and executive director had with Harvey Alton, my deputy minister, and I on April 8, one of the concerns expressed was a number of things relating to prices for gravel haul and the likes of that. We've established a working committee, and I suggested to them that that could be presented. I did think that the hon. member was there, but I guess he didn't hear it, or he wants to grandstand.

MR. PIQUETTE: No grandstanding, just simply information to make it public.

By their own admission, truckers who are getting squeezed reluctantly overload and drive at excessive speeds to make up for low rates. Are the Premier and the minister aware of this problem, which I have seen right outside his riding, and if so, what steps has this government taken to help truckers and protect public safety?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I answered that question a moment or two ago.

MR. PIQUETTE: The last supplementary. No, it wasn't the same question I asked.

After seven years this government finally told Albertans their work was worth a minimum of \$4. 50 an hour. Truckers have been waiting six years now for an increase. Their minimum take-home wage is approximately \$3. 50 an hour, according to calculations given by the Gravel Truckers Association. When does the Premier expect to announce an increase in hauling rates to the minimum wage for Alberta gravel truckers?

MR. ADAIR: Well, Mr. Speaker, we talked about that particular one at the meeting, and I guess I find myself repeating within less than half an hour. But I'm more than prepared to do that so the public understands exactly what we're doing as well.

I indicated to them when there was a request made some time ago -- as a matter of fact, twice in my term of office they have suggested that we increase the government rates for trucking. I expressed to them that I had a great deal of pressure from my colleagues and from the public at large to remove that particular rate schedule and to go to the tender process. Then if you go to the tender process, obviously you take your pencil out, you include all your costs, and you put the rate down. If you get the job, okay; if you don't, then you sharpen your pencil the next time. That particular system is the one I would prefer, but I have indicated to the president and I indicated again today that I was prepared to at least hold that for another year.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Westlock-Sturgeon, main question.

MR. TAYLOR: No, it's a supplementary, Mr. Speaker, if I may.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

MR. TAYLOR: It's a repeat of a question I asked not this year but last year. So I think it's all right.

The minister at that time gave me the same answer within a year. It was a different trucking dispute at that time; it was out

near Barrhead. But he said that within a year he would go to the system. Now he says it's another year. When is he prepared to make his decision?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I've already made the decision. I indicated that the general work that we as a government provide has a government rate schedule, and I'm prepared to keep that in place for another year. There is also some other work that runs around 8 to 10 percent of the total project work that we do; that is, what is called contractor supply or in place, where the contractor provides everything down to the asphalt in place. Those particular ones are tendered by the contractor to in fact include everything. He then makes a deal with you, if you're able to deal with him.

MR. SPEAKER: Main question, Westlock-Sturgeon.

Small Business Assistance

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to two ministers, one of Agriculture and one of economic affairs. The taxpayers of Alberta have become quite used to seeing millions given out in guarantees to poor, rundown companies like Cargill and Gainers and Mr. Pocklington, but they're also used to seeing the federal government grants from DRIE go to Quebec and Ontario in greater ratio than they do here, so they were probably reasonably pleased when they saw \$25,000 go to the Zibblons bakery in Hinton.

But one question I have, and it's to the Minister of Agriculture. His input to the federal government on the DRIE grant was a concern. Did he know that when DRIE and his department gave that \$25,000 grant to a new bakery in Hinton, or a bakery that changed its name, there was already a \$60,000 loan outstanding to another bakery by the Alberta Opportunity Company?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is probably aware, under the Alberta processing and marketing agreement there is both federal and provincial input to the extent that there is an economic analysis done prior to any funding given. The only ones that come directly to my desk, and then again for more input from our Executive Council, is anything in excess of \$1 million. We sign the contract form that will allow the money to follow through, but we rely strictly on the basis of the economic analysis that is done both at the federal and provincial levels, and that was the basis on which this payment was made.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'm informed by DRIE that there is a fifty-fifty committee then.

After all, million-dollar people can usually look after themselves; it's these smaller loans. What kind of mechanism is in place between the two ministers to see that one department isn't undermining the other? An innocent person could have his business ruined here because the minister is approving a grant in one case; another department has approved a loan. What system are you using?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, there is a very close liaison between the ministers and the departments, and as I indicated to the hon. member, there is an economic analysis done. The economic analysis that was done, as it relates to the concern that is being expressed by the hon. member and has been expressed to me personally in a very strong and forceful manner by the Min-

ister of Labour, showed that there was the opportunity for more bakeries to exist than what were presently there. On that basis they offered that funding. Now, I agree that it is questionable as to whether that was right or whether that was wrong, but the economic analysis showed that it was a legitimate and worthwhile project to support.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary, this time to the minister of economic affairs.

MR. SPEAKER: Economic development.

MR. TAYLOR: Economic development; I'm sorry.

To the minister: has he made a study of any similar conflicts such as this that have happened in the past? What is the minister doing to make sure that the over-enthusiastic Minister of Agriculture doesn't go out and undermine his efforts in some few other areas as far as Alberta Opportunity Company is concerned?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I've had a number of discussions with the chairman of the board of the Alberta Opportunity Company, which is involved in most of the communities in Alberta and has been over a number of years, and discussed similar situations that have arisen in terms of how the AOC does its evaluation when it receives an application. The board and the staff of the Alberta Opportunity Company do take into account the companies that are in business in a similar geographic area, that are in the same sort of business. That is a part of the evaluation before an offer is made to provide financing either by way of a loan, loan guarantee, or venture financing.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable. Surely one business wasn't doing so well that you had to penalize it by giving the competitor \$25,000.

Okay, supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. The Premier has from time to time occasionally shown a sense of justice, a kind of social justice. Here is a case where two of his ministers have undermined a businessman by a \$25,000 grant to his competitor. Would he look into that? Would he give a \$25,000 grant to the other businessman so that we have a level playing field?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the hon. member is making a representation that I check into something on behalf of an Albertan, I will do it.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yes, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Given an undertaking to investigate this situation, where liaison is obviously not working, will he report back to the Assembly what corrective measures will be taken to prevent this from happening again?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member is being hypothetical, because we don't know the results of the checking into, although I did say that I would check for the hon. member, and obviously, having checked for him, I wouldn't keep it a secret from him.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Leader of the Representative caucus, followed by Lloyd-minster, Edmonton-Beverly.

Water Supply Assistance

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Last evening, I understand, he met with a number of farmers in the St. Paul area with regards to drought conditions affecting them directly and certainly financially. Could the minister indicate what decisions will be made following that meeting in terms of financial assistance, as was requested?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm more than happy if you'll allow me, sir, the opportunity to respond to the hon. member as I responded to the farming population when we met in Goodridge along with the minister of public works and the hon. Member for St. Paul.

We met with close to some 400 farmers. We reviewed with them the program that the Premier announced last Thursday as it related to our water supplies program. We reviewed with them that it did include, as the Minister of the Environment indicated, the hauling of water. They indicated to us their desire to have additional measures to the extent of some \$2,000 per quarter or a \$25,000 interest-free loan. We also reviewed with them, in turn, the excellent support that this government has given to them by way of reduction of input costs, the safety nets we've established, and our added emphasis on market and research development.

As it relates to the brief that we did receive, I indicated to them that it will go through its proper procedure. I did have an opportunity to discuss it with my caucus colleagues this morning. It will be forwarded to the hon. Minister of the Environment, who is the chairman of the water supplies committee, under whose jurisdiction these ongoing representations will be reviewed.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister. Could the minister indicate what date a public announcement will be made or what target date is in place for an announcement to be made with regards to the policy or any new policy that is to be announced? Are we waiting one week, two weeks, a month?

MR. ELZINGA: I had indicated to them last night, Mr. Speaker, that it was my hope to report back to them within a period of three to four weeks. I had the opportunity to report to the two members who were with me last night some success that we already had made as it related to the representations.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, supplementary question. Will the policy that is put in place, if a new policy is developed, be available to all farmers across the province of Alberta? Will all farmers have equal access to that policy change, or will it be localized?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I should indicate -- I don't want to leave any question in the hon. member's mind -- that the farming population that was there was very supportive of the \$20 million water supplies program that we have brought forward on a provincewide basis, which is comprised of five key components, to offset some of the difficulties that water shortages might cause. They were very supportive and acknowl-

edged how forthcoming the Premier was with his announcement last Thursday. I indicated to them, as was endorsed also by my colleagues who were present, that we did have some concerns with specific designated areas. It is our hope that in the event that a policy is developed, it is applied equally to all parts of the province, such as our water supplies program is.

MR. R. SPEAKER: To the minister. Could the minister, then, say to this House that the final criteria is that the policy will apply to all farmers in the province; we will all have equal access; it will not be localized? Is that the clear answer of the minister?

MR. ELZINGA: No, Mr. Speaker, that's not my answer. I indicated to the hon. member that we will assess what has been presented to us with the hopes of developing something of a universal nature. The hon. member is aware that we do have some specific target programs. He's asking for targeted programs himself as it relates to the ADC, so there is an inconsistency as it relates to his question. But it is my hope. Because I do support the premise that the hon. member has advocated to me today, whereby there should be a universal application, but I cannot say in a blank statement that we will not target in the event that we feel targeting is required.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that the minister has had a firsthand opportunity to see just how serious the drought is in northeastern Alberta, I wonder if he will now make a commitment to reinstate the feed freight assistance program so that cattle producers who can't put their livestock out onto pasture can have a little help with the cost of transporting hay in to feed those animals until it starts to rain.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, that was discussed at the meeting last night. There was also a general acknowledgment at the meeting last night that because feed costs are so low and there is a considerable availability of feed supplies in the near surrounding areas, it would be very much premature to establish a program like that at this date.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. It's on the same question but to the minister sitting next to the minister, the Minister of Energy. Has the Minister of Energy contacted the conservation board with a view to asking them to shut down or to cut back the use of fresh water in this area by the oil companies in the water flood, so that the water can be used for the drought areas and for the farmers?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I've had discussions with the ERCB and also the Minister of the Environment, and the water situation is being monitored very carefully. The Minister of the Environment may want to add to my comments.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the area of Alberta that we're talking about is the Goodridge Lake area. There is really no great water flooding going on there. One would have to go a few miles further east of that. I'd be very happy to meet with the leader of the Liberal Party later in the afternoon and go over a map of Alberta with him just to point out to him once again the geography of our province. His question really does not relate to the area in the series of questions we're talking about in terms of the shortage for farmers. The area where the flooding

does take place is considerably east of the area we're talking about today. I'd be very happy to take him...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for the generous offer.

Lloydminster, followed by Edmonton-Beverly, then Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ethanol Fuels Industry

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the Minister of Agriculture. Could the minister indicate what progress is being made regarding the results of the studies in the ethanol industry?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I released today by way of a news release and the executive summaries the two reports we had commissioned both from the Alberta Grain Commission and Touche Ross. They have been released, and those individuals who wish to have the in-depth report, as it does indicate on the news release, can contact the Alberta Grain Commission.

I should share with the hon. member that the authors of both reports have indicated that the benefits would be less than the direct costs as it relates to the agricultural community in the event that we were to give some type of direct support to the ethanol industry.

MR. CHERRY: Supplementary to the minister. Could you tell the House what the positive aspects would be?

MR. ELZINGA: When one analyzes the reports, Mr. Speaker, the direct positive benefits would accrue mainly to the individuals constructing the ethanol plants themselves. The benefits that would flow through to the farming population, in fact, would be less than the benefits that would be required for the government to invest to make it a viable industry. I throw that out to the hon. member because the hon. member is aware that we were hoping the study would be such that it would prove economically sound, but the economic benefits are not there as it relates to support as it relates to the government. In fact, it indicated that there would have to be a consistent subsidy of some 29 cents a litre on ethanol in the event that it was to prove viable. That was the Touche Ross report.

Our own report indicated you would have to have at least a subsidy of some 25 cents per litre on ethanol to make it viable. It would only be viable in the event that oil rose to the price of some \$50 a barrel.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the minister defending his contention that it's not viable to the agricultural sector, but I'm wondering if the reports took into consideration the important long-term benefit of us moving closer towards a renewable source of energy rather than depending on an ever-depleting source. Surely that's got to be considered as well.

MR. ELZINGA: First, Mr. Speaker, I wish to correct an inaccuracy on the hon. member's part. We're not about to defend or advocate these reports. They're independent reports that we asked so that we would have a sound information base so that we could, on a sound economic base, make a judgment as to whether we should invest in something that would be beneficial

to the agricultural community. If we are to invest in the agricultural community, we want to see those benefits flow through. I recognize that the New Democratic Party has no concern for spending money, but in the event that we do, we want to make sure the benefits go to those people we're wishing to offer support to, especially the agricultural community.

I should indicate, though, to the hon. member, also, that notwithstanding the fact that there are severe questions as to the economic viability, we are going to continue discussions at the national level, as has been advocated by a number of individuals, so that we can have a consistent policy in the event that a policy is developed. Also, we are going to work with Unifarm in having informational meetings so that we can receive input and share information with the farming population throughout the province of Alberta.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. I had a quick glance at the report, and I thought it was reasonably shallow. Could the minister assure the House that he would go a step further and commission possibly yet another study, to find the economic benefits of burning alcohol and subsequently reducing the level of carbon monoxide in our urban centres, the economic benefits to our health and to the industrial structures in our urban centres? That was not touched in this report.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I genuinely appreciate the concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. There was an urgency as it related to this. We commissioned by the Alberta Grain Commission a report; I was not quite happy with that report in recognizing the time lines and the urgency as it related to the farming population. To have some type of information out there, we commissioned on a fast-track basis Touche Ross to re-examine the report and the validity of it. We are going to continue on with our examination in conjunction with the federal government, and I want to leave the hon. member with the assurance that we have had discussions already. I have had personal discussions with the Hon. Charlie Mayer. We are also hoping to have this, on a priority basis, on the agenda when the agricultural ministers meet in Toronto in July.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar. Then Dunvegan, if there's time.

Workers' Compensation Board

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To mark what is still only unofficially Injured Workers' Day, I would like to direct my questions today to the Minister of Community and Occupational Health. Earlier this month the minister announced that the long-established structure of the Workers' Compensation Board would be junked and replaced with a corporate-style board of directors. This proposed change was not included in the discussion paper and was never previously mentioned properly by the minister. This will exclude working people from participating at the board level. Now I'd like to ask the minister why was this change not included in a discussion paper, or has he already made up his mind to force this change on the board no matter what the working people may want or what Mr. Millard's inquiry may recommend?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, as usual I have to take some question with the hon. member's preamble, because the

arrangements that we've made by creating a corporate board of directors -- we will have on that board three representatives from workers, three from employers, and three from the general public. So the workers of Alberta, I believe, will be very ably represented in the governance of that organization, setting policy and making decisions as to the benefits that will be delivered to injured workers.

But no, Mr. Speaker. We did a very thorough review in our directional planning process and came up with two sets of recommendations, one set that we felt should be included in the Shaping the Future document which focuses on rehabilitation and claims and appeals and assessments. Those are items that we believe should be consulted with Albertans, with injured workers, and with chambers of commerce. Then there are other organizational decisions that we felt obliged and felt it was our responsibility to make because up to now, I believe, the board has not been able to manage its affairs as effectively as it should. It's only by splitting the claims process from the administration and management process that that effective management could take place, and that is why we made the announcement about the corporate reorganization.

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, the minister reviewed the WCB with a secretive internal process and appointed a one-man task force instead of a representative one. Can the minister offer working Albertans any reason to believe that this entire review process isn't rigged in favour of the corporate sector and ignores the injured worker?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, once again I take exception with the member's preamble. This was a process whereby individuals from the board participated in a directional planning team that went out and met with a variety of Albertans including representatives of workers, including labour unions; representatives of business, including chambers of commerce; and other individuals across the province. So it was not an internal process; it very definitely included the views of a number of Albertans.

As for the one-man task force, I believe that when Mr. Millard begins his hearings in Calgary on May 5 -- he will run for three days, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, to be followed the following week in Edmonton by two days of hearings on May 12 and 13 -- injured workers, chambers of Commerce, and all other interested Albertans will have an opportunity to make their views very well known to Mr. Millard.

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. The five-month time frame that's been allocated for the public hearings I believe is unrealistic. Does the minister not agree that this deadline is insufficient to allow injured workers and their organizations to research, prepare, and present thoughtful recommendations?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, I do not, because the very numerous Albertans with whom I've had contact over the last 20-odd months have made their views very clear to me as to the positions they hold about how the Workers' Compensation Board should be a more effective and more efficient organization. That includes injured workers' associations, employer associations, and individuals as well. I am convinced that after a short period of time when they can collect their thoughts perhaps in a more formal way, they can put those thoughts down on paper and will have an opportunity to express them in Edmonton, in Calgary, and in the likes of Fort McMurray, Lloydminster, and numerous other centres in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, followed by Vermilion-Viking.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might add that the people will be also responding to the discussion paper, not merely their opinions about the board.

Last year the minister's directives cut claimants off and forced hundreds of appeals. This year he has launched a phony review. Can the minister blame Alberta workers for thinking he has much less concern with injured workers' compensation than he has with corporate balance sheets?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to finally be able to answer questions, even though they are of a rhetorical nature. It's a typical kind of rhetoric from the NDP.

But no, Mr. Speaker. I think what we've put in place is this discussion paper, which we view as a vision for the future. We believe we've hit the mark in rehabilitation, in a more effective service-driven organization, in an improved case-management approach, and a more simplified assessment system. We've put that in the paper. We're now going out to Albertans and asking them if they agree with us. If Mr. Millard comes back to us with better recommendations, better ideas, we'll look at them and we'll implement them.

DR. WEST: Supplemental to the minister. In view of the fact of the tremendous cost loads to the program, would the minister look at a program for those employees who would wish to supplement their coverage through a voluntary group plan and have it administered by the Workers' Compensation Board? Would the minister consider that type of direction if it was to come up in the discussion?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we've asked Mr. Millard to take the discussion paper out and have the items and the recommendations in that paper reviewed with interested Albertans. Also, I've made it very clear in his mandate that he should be considering any other issues that might come to his attention during his review and provide recommendations to us on those issues. So that is just one more item that Mr. Millard could consider and perhaps bring back recommendations on it.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar, supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Supplementary, yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister explain to the House and to the workers in Alberta his justification for this two-stage operation? Why make definite administrative changes when we've now just launched a full-fledged study to hear from the public?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I partially answered that in an earlier exchange. I believe we must make some changes to the organizational structure of the Workers' Compensation Board so that it does run more effectively and it does run more efficiently such that when Mr. Millard comes back to us with recommendations, the organization will have changed from a structural point of view. We'll then be ready to respond to those recommendations that he will make to us and be able to implement them right after we receive them.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, main question.

Employment Standards

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April of this year -- this month -- the government introduced employment standards legislation, and we're going to be debating them later on. That legislation clearly doesn't provide adequate protection for women in the work force in Alberta: 68 percent of women in paid employment are non-unionized and tend to be employed in lower skilled positions. Minimum provisions of employment standards, then, often become the actual working conditions for women.

My questions, Mr. Speaker, are to the Minister of Labour. The present employment standards legislation makes no provision for sick leave, education leave, or leave for relatives who are sick. What is the reason that such provisions won't be included in the proposed legislation?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the preamble of the hon. member was not entirely accurate. The Employment Standards Act as it exists currently and the new Employment Standards Code, once implemented, are both of a nondiscriminatory nature. The intent is that the standards shall be applied without discrimination across the whole of employment.

When it comes to matters of discrimination, of course, there is the Individual's Rights Protection Act which applies, in addition to the provisions of the Employment Standards Act as it exists and the Employment Standards Code as it will be.

The matters of sick leave and other allowances are, of course, in the non-unionized sector a matter of individual discussion between the employee and the employer, and in most cases they are granted. Indeed, there is sometimes more flexibility with those arrangements than there is with the arrangements under a collective agreement, where both sides tend to follow the collective agreement as it is written, no more and no less.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I realize the legislation is nondiscriminatory. However, some groups are at greater risk than others. Will the minister provide by some means protection against unjust dismissal, which at present doesn't exist in employment standards legislation?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is in error. Unjust dismissal -- there is protection under the Employment Standards Act as it exists, and in some ways those protections are enhanced in the new Employment Standards Code.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, given that 28 percent of all employed women have held their positions for less than one year and are temporary workers, how will the minister ensure that temporary workers receive protection such as notice of termination and severance pay, which are presently not offered to these workers?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, we're getting into debate on the Bill once more. If the hon. member reads Bill 21, she will find protections against dismissal at the end of the... [interjections] Well, we'll get into the debate later on, Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

There is in the statute provision for notice after a certain period of time of work. It's right in there.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Yes, Mr. Speaker. These points are not in the proposed legislation. That's why I'm raising them now.

Mr. Speaker, the Canada Labour Code provides a statutory right for women to take 17 weeks of maternity leave and a further 24 weeks which can be taken by either parent for a newly born or adopted child. Can the minister incorporate these changes, or how does he explain the disparity between his legislation and the Canada Labour Code?

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we complete this series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Minister of Labour.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, if the intention of the Fathers of Confederation had been that everything in this country was equal from one ocean to the other, then we would have had one government in the centre of Canada dictating to the whole country. This is a confederation. The standards that exist and the new standards are felt to be reasonable in the economy of Alberta and in the industries and occupations that are covered by the labour legislation of the province. What they choose to do in Ottawa, they choose to do.

Now, the member can make all the representations she wishes and put forward amendments during debate on the Bill; that's her opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary to the minister. How can the minister say that his new Employment Standards Code is fair when it still contains a 44-hour straight time work week for working Albertans not fortunate enough to be covered under a collective agreement?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, this is getting more and more difficult, as you know, about the subject of debate in advance of the legislation. This matter is going to come up for debate within the near future -- about two weeks from now, I hope -- and at that time the hon. member will have all kinds of opportunity to address these issues. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister, the Chair can't hear any answers, so... [interjection] All hon. members should indeed refer to *Beauchesne* 363(2): "An answer to a question cannot be insisted upon." Those challenges across the House really are contradictory to *Beauchesne*. The Chair could not hear what the minister was saying because of the noise. Perhaps the minister wishes to continue?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the provisions of the 44-hour week, the flexibility that is available in the Employment Standards Code, as presented to the Legislature, for condensed work weeks, for time off in lieu, have all been well debated around this province with a very large number of Albertans individually and representative bodies for an even larger number. The provisions that were there are ones that have been well discussed with

Albertans, and they've been well accepted by Albertans.

The individual Member for St. Albert may have a view that he wishes to express. He will have that opportunity in debate upon the Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order? Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I know the government is trying to hide behind second reading, but in terms of section 359(8) it says that "A question that has previously been answered ought not to be asked again." It does not say anything about a topic, and we can bring up a topic day in and day out as far as the rules of this House go.

If you noticed the questions today, first of all, it was to the Premier. It was about the vow of silence, not answering questions. The second one followed along that same line. The third one was about a *Hansard* statement that the minister had made in regard to section 81, and question four was following that. None of those questions was asked before. Just because the minister says that they're asked does not mean that that is, in fact, the truth in the House.

MR. GETTY: Speaking to the point of order, it was not the government that called the opposition to task; it was you, Mr. Speaker. The government was not saying, "Stop asking the questions." We continued to answer, and it was you whom the hon. Leader of the Opposition objected to, not the government. It is you that he's bringing his argument up with, and I suppose it is you he is challenging.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, to the point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to address this point of order by arguing the case that there is room for Speaker discretion on this particular issue provided for in *Beauchesne*: one, room for discretion in judging the nature of questions generally; and two, there is specific case indicating very strongly that discretion should be exercised when analyzing whether or not questions can be repeated.

Under *Beauchesne* 357(1), section 357 being that section which refers to written questions, admittedly it is clear that such questions must not

- (c) multiply, with slight variations, a similar question on the same point.

If you go to *Beauchesne* 357(2), it says:

- (2) Many of the traditional limitations on questions are now applied more strictly to written questions than to oral questions.

This suggests that there can be -- in fact, should be -- discretion exercised in the application of restrictions to oral questions. Is there room to apply your discretion with respect to oral questions and particularly with respect to the question of repeating questions? Yes there is.

Under *Beauchesne* 359 it says:

- (8) A question that has previously been answered ought not to be asked again.

Two points apply to this argument. One, that statement begs the very question of what is an answer and what is not an answer. If a question has not been substantively answered, then there is room under section 359(8) to argue that it has not been previously answered and therefore could be asked again. Secondly, the operative verb there is "ought," which is not prohibitive but,

again, allows for discretion in determining whether or not a question could be asked again.

If we proceed from 359(8) to 363, it says, with respect to replies for question:

- (1) A Minister may decline to answer a question without stating the reason for his [referral], and insistence on an answer is out of...

[interjection] Sorry -- refusal. Referral is an interesting tactic used as well from time to time by that government.

... refusal, and insistence on an answer is out of order, with no debate being allowed.

Insistence on an answer is different than asking the question once again. If you go to 363(2), the only specific reason for which

an answer to a question cannot be [continuously] insisted upon [is] if the answer... be refused by the Minister on the ground of the public interest.

Any other reason for refusing an answer would therefore be subject to more leniency and the possibility of continuing to ask a question.

To summarize, the argument therefore, is that there is room for your discretion generally in interpreting which questions should be asked, and secondly, there is much discretion specifically with respect to the issue of repeating questions.

MR. SPEAKER: If hon. members wish to continue this tomorrow, perhaps we could, in light of the rest of the day's agenda, but it's a bit irregular.

Calgary-Buffalo, on a point of order. But first the Chair must point out that there are two separate points of order that have been raised. The first, by the Leader of the Opposition, is regarding the repetition of questions. The second issue is by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, which is insistence upon an answer, which is the basic thrust of his argument.

Speaking to which point of order, Calgary-Buffalo?

MR. CHUMIR: I'm speaking to the repetition issue, and I understand that both the Leader of the Opposition and Edmonton-Meadowlark were addressing that particular issue.

I've sat in this House for two years, and I must state that I understand it to be the most orderly in the country. I don't believe there has been any abuse, either in fact or in spirit, of any rule relating to repetition. The heart of the matter is that the brandishing of this repetition concept can only serve the purpose of preventing the opposition from focusing continuing attention on important issues which the government is evading. I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is any benefit to the proceedings of this House from the Speaker's admonitions other than to prevent concerted criticism of the government when an issue warrants a concerted focus. Such a focus doesn't happen often, and when it is warranted, it must be permitted.

Now, to suggest Mr. Speaker, that this in fact is such a case -- the government's proposals with respect to picketing and boycotting in this instance deserve concerted attention in the absence of a proper answer, and we haven't been getting a proper answer in this case. It's obvious that the government of course, doesn't like continued focus on its mistakes. The Premier and his ministers like to signal for help by moaning over the repetition of questions, but I believe there is little support in the rules set out in *Beauchesne* and in other authorities for that approach.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing I like better than arguing a point of order, especially one as principled as this and

one that is as important as this to the fundamental nature of democracy.

On the other hand, I wonder if I could move that we debate this motion tomorrow or at the earliest possible convenience, given the agreement that all members have to be over at McKay Avenue school. [interjections] I understand that, but if... Mr. Speaker, I'm following the hint that the Speaker left with the Assembly, and I'm trying to be responsible, Mr. Premier. Do you mind?

MR. SPEAKER: Dealing first with the point of order about repetition as raised by the... [interjection] The Chair will recognize Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't understand that you were going to actually rule on the question. I was hoping we could facilitate getting out of here to go to this anniversary at the school. If you want to entertain the rest of the argument, I'd be pleased to proceed with your nod.

MR. SPEAKER: There is a motion before the House. Is there a call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Those in favour of the motion.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? The motion carries. The matter will be dealt with tomorrow.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we have unanimous consent to revert briefly to the introduction of special guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the hon. Solicitor General I take great pleasure in introducing to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 29 students from the Queen Elizabeth school... [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please in the House.

MS McCOY: ... in grades 10, 11, and 12, all of whom are from the lovely constituency of Camrose. They are here today accompanied by their teachers Mr. R. Blane, Mr. Thor Clausen, Mr. G. Dickie, Mr. Ed Matheson, and by parents Mrs. S. Anderson and Mrs. F. Gabert. I would ask them to rise, and I would ask the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn, pursuant to a decision taken on March 18 by the Assembly, until this evening at 8 p. m. and that this evening at 8 p.m. when the House assembles, it assemble in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

[The House recessed at 3:37 p. m.]