

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 5, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/04/05

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue to work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of the Friends of the West Country. It has been signed by over 630 people who are very concerned about the choice of location for the Sunpine Forest Products Ltd. project and who are requesting a full, open, public environmental impact assessment into that project.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I will rise today following question period to move under Standing Order 30 that the ordinary business of the House be adjourned so as to discuss a matter of urgent concern; that is, the jeopardy that I believe Albertans face with respect to the Pocklington empire and the inability to get assets out of that empire.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 244

Residential Care Giver Training Act

MS MJOLSNES: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 244, Residential Care Giver Training Act.

This Bill would set a minimum requirement for training of care givers of physically challenged individuals who are living or who wish to live independently.

[Leave granted; Bill 244 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Bill 266

An Act to Ensure the Right to a Day of Religious Observance

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 266, An Act to Ensure the Right to a Day of Religious Observance.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Bill is to ensure that Albertans are allowed their right to observe the day of their religious belief and other religious holidays.

[Leave granted; Bill 266 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table brochures, Alberta's Threatened Wildlife, for all members.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MR. MAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today four copies of these annual reports for 1988-89: the Glenbow museum, the Alberta Art Foundation, and the Alberta Foundation for the Literary Arts. As is custom, everybody will get copies to read.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure, sir, to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly students from Haythorne junior high school in Sherwood Park. These students are representatives of the conservation education program at the school and are accompanied by their principal, Mr. Carbol, and their teachers Mr. Fildes and Mr. Bill Brennan. It was Mr. Bill Brennan who introduced conservation education to the school in 1974, and since then nearly 2,000 students have passed the conservation/hunter education exam. This morning my colleague the Hon. LeRoy Fjordbotten had an opportunity to visit with them and to acknowledge on behalf of this government their unique contribution. I would ask the students and the teachers to rise so that they could be extended the cordial, warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure, sir, to introduce to you and through you another group of students we had the pleasure of visiting with prior to question period. They are from the Mills Haven elementary school. They're joined by their teachers Etty Cameron and Wayne Mayes. I would ask them also to rise to receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to our colleagues in the Assembly today eight visitors; four from the great constituency of Edmonton-Parkallen, the Browns: Percy, Shirley, Ron, and Eric. Visiting from Newfoundland, the Hostetters: Roy, Margaret, Laura, and Carla. I believe they're seated in the public gallery, if we could give them a warm welcome.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I would like today to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly two individuals who have served the province of Alberta with great dedication and responsibility over the years. They know the trials and tribulations of this House. They're seated in your gallery. I would like John Batiuk, MLA for 15 years for the Vegreville constituency, and his wife, Rose, to rise, please, and receive the warm welcome of this House.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 25 students in grades 5 and 6 from the Myrnam elementary school. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Orlene Unland and Mrs. Esther Polishuk, parents Mr. Orest Yackimer and Mr. Orest Krywiak, and bus driver Mr. Wally Roth. I was speaking with the students earlier and mentioned to them that I had not seen them here previously, and Mrs.

Polishuk indicated that it has been some 10 years since they visited the Assembly. So with that, they are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly Mr. Larry Pempeit from the Canadian Paraplegic Association; Mr. Bill Bissett from the Easter Seal Ability Council; Dr. William Clark and his care givers, Hendrick Nicolajsen and Jason Ropart; Connie Clark and her care giver, Donna-Mae Griffith; Happy Moir and her care giver, Laurie Payne; and Gaye Oxford. They're seated in both of the galleries, and I would ask that they either wave or stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to introduce to you and through you a gentleman seated in your gallery. He's the mayor of Turner Valley, where Alberta's oil industry all began. I'd ask His Worship Jack Petter to rise and receive the warm, cordial welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly 10 members of the group Friends of the West Country who are here in support of the petition I introduced earlier. Included in the group are spokespeople Dell Collins and Shelley Thomas. I would ask that they all rise in the gallery and receive the welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

Legal Aid Funding

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Attorney General. This government has shelled out over \$2.5 million to cover the legal fees of Mr. Cormie and other impoverished Principal Group jet-setters. It certainly contrasts with what's happening with the legal aid program and brings this government's priorities into perspective when you compare that with the 1990-91 budget of just \$15.6 million in legal aid funding. A very serious crisis is occurring in funding for legal aid. The Law Society is so concerned that it is bringing in a resolution at its June annual meeting. They are suggesting in that resolution that they might even withdraw from the legal aid program. This would have a very serious effect in that it would accelerate a trend to a two tiered system, one level of justice for the poor and another for the rich. My question then. In view of the seriousness of this matter, will the minister commit this government to providing adequate funding for the legal aid program so the poor in this province have some chance of getting justice?

MR. ROSTAD: First, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition brings forth a preposterous idea of trying to compare the legal costs of a public inquiry to legal aid for those indigents that need assistance to get access to the legal justice system. The Attorney General's department together with the Law Society and the Legal Aid Society commissioned a task force which reported and came forward with approximately 25 recommendations. With the exception of two or three of those recommendations they've all been implemented. We are under

dialogue with the Law Society in preparing a plan that will give everyone in need access to legal aid.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, he may get exercised, but \$2.5 million went to their friends. Their total budget is \$15.6 million, and that was a freeze from last year. My question is, then: how does the Attorney General justify this sort of double standard, \$2.5 million to the Principal Group, \$15.6 million to the poor in this province? How does he justify that?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, again, preposterous comparisons. A public inquiry is a totally different thing from supplying legal aid for those in need. The dialogue that's ongoing between the Law Society and the government, who are the partners in our legal aid, is to ensure that the program is retrofitted and instead of spend, spend, spend, ensure that the money is spent efficiently and effectively. That's in fact what's being done.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that answer is totally unacceptable. I agree; they are two different things. They're quite prepared to spend millions of dollars on people who don't need justice, but you're not prepared to spend money on the people who do. There's no doubt about that.

But my question is to this minister. It is going to take some money whether he wants to recognize it or not. I'd look at Ontario. We're always told that we're the best. I ask the Attorney General: if we're the best, how is it that Ontario, with about three to four times the population that Alberta has, spends nine times as much on legal aid as this province? How do you justify that?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, there are many ways you can measure those who are in need and how you access those who are in need. The program is well under review. The hon. member forgets that there is another \$6 million that's spent in addition to the \$15 million in terms of legal aid. If the hon. member has a constituent or a person who hasn't been able to access legal aid because they don't fit within the program or who can't get in it because of some other reason, I'd be more than happy to take that into consideration and discuss it with the Legal Aid Society.

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

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't seem to realize that this is coming to fruition in June. [interjections] I know they're a little nervous because they've got a convention coming up.

I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Environmental Assessments of Pulp Mills

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the government members that our thoughts are with them as they travel to Calgary and attempt to convince their federal cousins to axe the tax and that if they vote for it, they'll vote them out of office.

It seems there's some interest as well in the convention: a resolution brought in by the good folks from Calgary-Fish Creek calling for a moratorium on pulp mills until proper environmental impact assessments are done. I wonder if in view of the

interest in this matter the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife would take this opportunity to assure the House that there will be no permits issued to build pulp mills until there are proper environmental assessments, including the new Al-Pac, and that those assessments will cover the important question of whether the timber harvesting can be done in an environmentally safe manner.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, environmental impact assessments are under the responsibility of the Minister of the Environment, who isn't in the House today.

MR. McINNIS: Well, the Minister of the Environment is conveniently not here today. I just wonder if the Government House Leader, then, would amplify a matter that was covered in the throne speech. Whereas there was no attempt to worry about the hypothetical or the future, there was a specific commitment for a natural resources conservation board which would review resource projects, and I presume that includes pulp projects. I wonder if the Government House Leader can assure the House that the natural resources conservation board will be in place before any new pulp mills are licensed in Alberta.

MR. HORSMAN: The hon. member, like everyone else in the Assembly, will have to await the tabling of legislation at an appropriate time.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, if you won't table the legislation, I will. I have a draft of the legislation. I'd like to file four copies. The draft states that the cabinet can exempt any project it wants to, that the board is not required to hold public hearings. It's not even required to advertise.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. The Bill is not here to discuss. Get the question in, please, on the supplementary. Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: More importantly, it restricts intervenor funding mightily. I simply want to ask the Government House Leader if these important deficiencies in the legislation will be fixed up before it's tabled in the Legislature.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place is offensive in the extreme in the way he continues . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. HORSMAN: Oh, my goodness. You know, they can dish it out, but they can't take it. You know, they don't like any criticism.

The hon. member is offensive in the extreme by continuing to make statements when he should be asking questions. Legislation . . .

MR. MARTIN: You didn't listen. You were too busy yelling.

MR. HORSMAN: The Leader of the Opposition is feisty today, isn't he?

MR. MARTIN: Don't be defensive, Jim. Come on; speak up.

MR. HORSMAN: Noisy, anyway.

When legislation is tabled in this Assembly it will be up for consideration. Amendments can be brought forward by any member of the Assembly at committee study. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place will await the tabling of actual legislation brought forward by a government minister, which is the appropriate thing to do, then he will have his opportunity to bring forward amendments if he doesn't like what's in the legislation. In any event, it's impossible to comment on material which I haven't seen and which may or may not be draft legislation. The hon. member is clearly anticipating events, and I would suggest that he just take it cool. It'll come along in due course.

Education Funding

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Education. There are a number of ways the government could cut spending so as to provide additional moneys to areas of greater priority like the education of our young people. It is a fact that a kilometre of paved highway costs about half a million dollars. We know that about \$250 million exists in the lottery slush fund, and we know from an entrepreneur in our province that the government has made some "damned poor" investment risks in our province.

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. Yesterday another member was guilty of swearing a couple of times, and it really is inappropriate to this House to be doing that.

MR. DECORE: D-a-m.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government's commitment to primary and secondary education has fallen. At one time we were at the top in terms of per capita grants for operating. We now have slipped to seventh position. Most of the Atlantic provinces spend more on operating grants than we do. We now spend nearly as much on servicing our debt as we do on educating our young people. My first question to the minister is this: does the minister find it proper to spend as much on servicing debt as we are on looking after and training and educating young people in our province?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member once again has not done his homework. He knows, as all members of this Assembly know, that Albertans send two very important messages to this government and to all members of this Assembly. One is to keep and to maintain the best quality of health and education services for the people of this province. Secondly, they've said very clearly to this government, "Reduce the deficit, balance your budget, and get your fiscal house in order." Well, if the hon. member is asking, "Have we got our priorities straight," you bet we have our priorities straight. We have put 3 and a half percent, 73 million new dollars, into grants, financial assistance to schools in this fiscal year, which began the other day. That is a significant contribution by all Alberta taxpayers to the number one priority of this government, and that's the education of our young citizens.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this is a fact: we have fallen from the top to seventh position. In per capita allocation for operating grants we are seventh. The Atlantic provinces spend more money on education than we do for our young people. I'm asking the minister whether he will commit to impress his

colleagues in cabinet that more has to be given to the priority area of education in our province.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate for once hearing from the leader of the Liberal Party for the first time in this Assembly talking about the importance of education. He talks about a bunch of other issues, but he's now picked a nice, opportune time to raise the education issue. I believe Albertans would say that when they contribute about \$5,100 per student, to every student's place in our province's schools – that's about \$150,000 per classroom of 28 or 29 students – that is a significant contribution by Alberta taxpayers to a quality education for our young people.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, given that we're in the process of paving every secondary road and probably after the next election we'll be paving ... I suspect that the next promise, likely to come out of the convention in Calgary, is to pave back alleys.

MR. SPEAKER: Question. Let's have the question.

MR. DECORE: The question is this: will the minister commit to a plan, a process to provide more moneys for the educating of our young people in Alberta? Yes or no?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we have said very clearly in our throne speech, and it's reflected. We've told Alberta taxpayers where our priorities are. Our promise is to make sure education is our number one priority.

MR. DECORE: You're not doing it. You're way behind.

MR. DINNING: I say to the hon. member across the way that when...

MR. SPEAKER: Order. This is not a shouting match in this House.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, when this government contributes on behalf of all Alberta taxpayers over \$150,000 per classroom, that is a significant contribution by all Alberta taxpayers.

MR. SPEAKER: Innisfail.

School Trustees Conflict of Interest Rules

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education. The issue of school board trustees being in a conflict of interest in negotiations because their spouses are teachers in the same district was an issue during the recent Edmonton Catholic school board negotiations. Three of the seven trustees could not take part in the negotiations or in the vote. Now, I realize that this didn't cause a problem in these particular negotiations. However, I'm aware that there is one district in the province, and there could be others, that have a majority of the trustees in a conflict of interest. My question to the minister. Is there any provision in the School Act that deals with this situation should it arise?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say on behalf of the Minister of Labour and myself and all of our colleagues

in the Assembly how pleased we are that the Edmonton Catholic teachers and the Edmonton Catholic board settled their agreement so that school children were in classes yesterday and today and the teachers are teaching in those classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, it is regrettable that in the case of Edmonton and in the case of a number of school boards across the province there are trustees who have a pecuniary interest, a money-related interest, that under the School Act requires them to absent themselves from discussions and, in fact, the voting on some very important matters. We're faced with a dilemma in this province. Those individuals chose to run in an election; they were successful. Regrettably, they have a pecuniary interest. We have a number of things we can do as we explore the options. One is that we could do what the Municipal Government Act or the Local Authorities Election Act require: that anybody who has that kind of pecuniary interest is barred from seeking office. That's one option. The other option is to say that we'll limit the scope of the conflict of interest so that this isn't a problem for trustees.

Mr. Speaker, I've said publicly that it concerns me, that clearly it's something this Assembly should be discussing and debating, that I would want to hear from trustees, teachers, voters, and taxpayers as to how they see that conflict of interest and how it ought to be dealt with. The estimates of the Department of Education are up for debate tomorrow morning in Committee of Supply, and I could think of no better time and no earlier time to debate and discuss this important issue.

MR. SEVERTSON: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Education is: what would he do now if such an occasion arose that the majority ...

MR. SPEAKER: Hypothetical.

MR. SEVERTSON: Could I reword it, then? Is there any provision in the School Act if it did happen? Sorry ...

MR. DINNING: The hon. member raises a very legitimate point: there is a concern amongst school boards, voters, and taxpayers in this province, very important ... [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order. Order. Let's have a little less shouting back and forth as if it was a kindergarten or primary grade or something, please.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter this Assembly will have to debate. Today there is a provision in the School Act which might allow the Minister of Education, if it's necessary, to allow school boards with trustees who have a conflict of interest and may upset the quorum to reduce that quorum. But again, I think this is something that all members of this Assembly, trustees, parents, teachers, and taxpayers alike should be carefully considering well in advance of the next municipal elections across the province.

Goods and Services Tax

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Twenty votes, Mr. Speaker. Twenty Conservative votes in the House of Commons against the GST can stop this unfair tax. We know Albertans can count on our New Democrat member, Ross Harvey, to vote against the GST. He campaigned against it in 1988. We certainly hope that the Liberals, despite their flip-flops, will vote against it too. But the

key is those 20 Conservatives votes. To the Provincial Treasurer. What plans does this Treasurer have to use at this weekend's Tory love-in to get those 20 votes and convince Alberta's Tory MPs to stand up against the GST?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are again. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, so we can at least start to hear the answer.

MR. JOHNSTON: The question of influencing the federal MPs, Mr. Speaker, is of course always before us. I think we have taken the time over the past year or so to ensure that all MPs together with their constituents understand very well the position on GST. I notice that the position of the Alberta MPs is not unanimous; there is a difference of opinion there. But I can say that we can't tell them how to vote. It is their responsibility as elected officials to vote by their own conscience, and I imagine they'll do just that.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, the grass roots in Alberta are burning. They're on fire. Yesterday a senior citizen in Calgary gave a message to Brian Mulroney: if the GST is passed into law, she'll never again vote for those who supported it. The message is loud and clear: enough is enough. Will the Treasurer now commit to what he wouldn't do during the '88 election when he helped to re-elect Mulroney and his gang and use this weekend's political convention to tell Alberta Tory MPs that if they vote for the GST, Alberta Tories will never again support them at election time; they'll campaign to defeat them at the polls? Yes or no?

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Sunpine Forest Products Ltd.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sunpine Forest Products Ltd. has proposed to build a wood treatment and sawmill facility in the Strachan-Rocky Mountain House area. It will utilize chromated copper arsenic. It will involve a two and one-half million acre forestry management area, and it will involve as well as many as 10,000 logging truck trips through that rural community each and every year. Up until about two months ago or two weeks ago the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife was happy to say that no, we don't need environmental impact assessments into forestry management areas. Today he very conveniently says it's somebody else's responsibility. To the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. Will the minister please commit today, right now, to undertaking a full, open, public environmental impact assessment process into the Sunpine Forest Products Ltd. forestry management area, or at the very least . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. [interjection] Thank you.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it just goes on and on and on. It'd be really interesting to know what the position of the Liberal Party is with respect to any development that takes place in Alberta. They can get up and chirp a lot, but you don't see much substance.

With respect to whether or not there will be an environmental impact assessment at Sunpine, that is something he can ask the Minister of Environment when he's in the House. With respect to the forestry management agreement area, I don't know how – I have to draw him a picture. I made it absolutely clear that we are coming out with a full, public, open process to review, have input into forestry management agreements and harvesting plans throughout the life of the project, which will be 20, 30, or 40 years. It'll be an ongoing, a living process. If he's just a little patient, keeps his voice down and listens, he'll hear when it happens.

MR. MITCHELL: So the Premier does the job of the Minister of the Environment, and the Minister of the Environment does the job of the Forestry, Lands and Wildlife minister.

Will the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife please tell us, in light of recommendations by the Al-Pac review panel to have forestry management agreements considered under proper environmental impact assessments before the projects proceed and in light of recommendations by the Environmental Impact Assessment Task Force on exactly the same point, how he can continue to refuse to undertake proper environmental impact assessments before . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. member. We're not going into three paragraphs.

MR. MITCHELL: And why does he take . . .

MR. SPEAKER: You're cut off, hon. member. [interjections] Order.

Hon. minister.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark just doesn't seem to listen very well. It's absolutely clear that no one answers for this minister but this minister in areas that are my responsibility. I've explained to him, and I don't know how I can draw him a picture to make it any clearer, that an environmental impact assessment on a forest management agreement area is not good enough. It's one snapshot in time. The forest is a living ecosystem and needs to have ongoing planning, ongoing input year after year after year after year by the public, who will have that opportunity. We're going to provide it to them in a full and open way. Just be patient.

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River.

Honey Producers Assistance

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The honey industry is coming out of its winter hibernation, and Alberta has long been known as the land of milk and honey. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, and I hope the urban Liberal members will allow me to ask this rural question. Mr. Minister, what actions are you prepared to take to allow this industry to resume, to bring the honey back into Alberta so that we can once again become the land of milk and honey?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, while the milk industry in this province is doing quite well, the hon. member has identified a sector of the agricultural industry that is not doing well. It's

been impacted by low commodity prices but more dramatically impacted by the border closure to prevent the bringing in of new bee supplies. We've been working with the industry since last fall. Last fall we announced a sugar price reduction program to assist and encourage beekeepers to over-winter their hives in an attempt to keep breed stock. We've got an advisory committee out there working with the industry, trying to resolve some of the long-term problems. We're applying, shall I say, encouragement to the federal government to . . . While we recognize the problem with bringing in the bees from the mainland U.S.A., we feel that queen bee stock could be brought in from Hawaii. We're still pressing the government for a positive relaxation of the controls on Hawaii, but as yet we haven't received it. But we will continue to work with the honey industry so that we can bring back that balance of milk and honey.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: My supplementary is to the Minister of Agriculture. Since a large part of the responsibility for the downturn was the enactment of federal legislation, will the minister assure this House that he will be pursuing the federal minister who is in charge and responsible for the enactment of this legislation to indeed allow this industry to access Hawaiian queen bees so that we can get back into the situation where we once were, a proud industry?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to pressure the federal government in that direction, and if not successful we'll pressure the federal government to work jointly with us in re-establishing the industry.

Park Privatization

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, Albertans care deeply about protecting Alberta's parks and wilderness areas, as shown by the tremendous public response last weekend to the Endangered Spaces Rally in Edmonton. Meanwhile, this government has within it a minister who is totally at odds with the wishes of Albertans to conserve and protect the provincial parks system in Alberta. To the Minister of Recreation and Parks. Why is the minister beginning the process of commercializing the provincial parks system by privatizing Rochon Sands park in the Premier's riding?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, over the last several years the Department of Recreation and Parks and this government have had a policy of privatization, where it warrants and where it can be feasible, throughout the province. At the present time we have five provincial parks throughout the province that are privatized, and we will continue to look at opportunities where we can do that in order to save dollars for the taxpayers of this province and more effectively and efficiently deliver the services that the people of Alberta want.

MR. DOYLE: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the minister, then, could explain how having private companies running parks is consistent with the preservation of the ecology and values of the parks that Albertans so treasure.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, when we develop contracts with the private sector in various areas, whether it's the total operation of the provincial park area or garbage collection or cutting the grass, we ensure in those contracts to protect the environment

to the best of our ability, and we'll continue to do so in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Westlock-Sturgeon.

Travel Agency Default Insurance

MS BARRETT: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for flimsy excuses; that is, the minister of corporate and corporate affairs. Yesterday in the House another member asked the minister what it was that the minister planned to do to protect consumers against their travel companies' going belly-up, and he came up with this ingenious answer, which was: we'll let the consumers take out optional insurance fees. In other words, they get to pay the insurance fees that the companies should pay. So I had a look – he says that, well, Alberta companies are too small compared to B.C. and Ontario, where they do have to pay their own insurance fees. What do you think Statistics Canada found out but that on the prairies the average family spends \$162 on package tours; 10.9 percent of prairie families buy tours compared to 9.8 percent of B.C. families. So my question to the minister is this: if the British Columbia government – and God knows they're not a particularly exemplary government – can ask the insurance companies to pay their own insurance fees, why can't this government?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, the member is both naive and unknowledgeable if she thinks that anybody except the consumer is going to pay for the cost of any insurance plan that we have in this province or any other in the country. The selective use of statistics that way does not do the member any merit. Yes, perhaps Albertans travel that much more than British Columbians. There are more British Columbians. There are more people who travel to and from there. If the member wants to look at statistics with respect to the number of travel agencies, the number of travel packages, the number of travel tours, she will well find that British Columbia has more.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will well find that the plan put into place in British Columbia has, in fact, been used all up at one time or another and taxpayers – taxpayers, those who may not have the money to travel, to go to Hawaii – have had to put dollars into that system. Is the member suggesting that our first choice should be that members of the public on a minimum income or who are not traveling in fact should pay for these travel packages?

MS BARRETT: Oh, Mr. Speaker, the minister knows better than that. What I'm asking the minister is that the insurance companies pay their own bills instead of bilking the traveling public, and he also knows that fares out of B.C. are cheaper than they are out of Alberta, so his statistics are nonsense.

My question to the minister is this then: given that he doesn't want to go and protect consumers, why doesn't he at least request of his good buddies in the travel industry that they bond themselves and put the money that they may have to pay downstream into trust accounts, like any other responsible industry would do?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, the member's preamble to her question is both unfair and inaccurate. In fact, this government . . .

MR. MARTIN: Unfair to you.

MR. ANDERSON: As for the heckling by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, if he wants to hear the answer, I'll continue.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this government has taken action to have the travel industry agree that there would be an insurance package offered to every consumer, an insurance package which would give you the choice . . .

MS BARRETT: For which they'll pay.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. ANDERSON: . . . of either safeguarding that investment or not. What could be, in fact, fairer to the consumer or in fact more opportune than to allow each individual to make that choice? Therefore, individuals would not have to – be it through an insurance scheme by the agencies, which obviously would cost all consumers in the travel industry, or through some government scheme – pay for that unless they want the insurance. What could safeguard consumers more or be more accurate?

I might say, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question of travel agencies, that is going in the direction that's in the best interests of consumers. Tour operators: we still have some work to do, and they may have enough volume that that kind of insurance plan or that kind of pool might be appropriate, as it is in several other kinds of insurance. But the member's entirely off track if she is suggesting that this method of operation is not in the best interests of consumers. In fact, we are allowing those to pay who want to and who can.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Westlock-Sturgeon.

Power Lines Health Hazards

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

AN HON. MEMBER: Going after secondary roads, Nick?

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, somebody is rattling their chain over there again.

Nevertheless, in the early 70s the New York state public commission, later followed up in the late '70s by the University of Colorado and then again in the late '80s, came out with some very interesting statistics in that the rate of childhood cancer for people living within 100 feet of power lines over 700 volts was double the rate for those outside that area. Even in Houston, Texas, the year before last year a court case awarded \$25 million in damages against a power company that had built a power line through a schoolyard. Now, what I'd like to know from the minister: is there any monitoring or any studies being done by the utilities branch here of the effect of high power lines on the health of people? That's the area . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjection] Thank you.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy would be the one to give you the more technical answer to the question that I think was asked. I'm not sure exactly what the question was.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Button, button, who's got the button, Mr. Speaker?

Would the minister, then, not only if he's going to look into it and refer it to the Minister of Energy – I don't see the connection with utilities – go so far as to consider putting a moratorium on any new high power lines in residential areas until such a study has been checked out?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I will pass that question on to the Minister of Energy as well.

MR. TAYLOR: He doesn't have anything to do with it.

MR. ADAIR: He will have.

MR. SPEAKER: Lesser Slave Lake. [interjections] Order.

MR. TAYLOR: Give it to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order, Westlock-Sturgeon. Perhaps we should cut off the power supply of some people here.

Housing Programs in Lesser Slave Lake

MS CALAHASEN: I think they're pretty hungry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been receiving many calls from Slave Lake and during many meetings with the municipal authorities in Slave Lake – there's been a real shortage of housing, particularly for the low- and mid-income families. Despite many meetings I've had and particularly many queries I've had with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I haven't received any indication of how this particular situation is going to be handled. Will the Minister of Municipal Affairs provide me with information of any plans which will deal with this situation?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I thought when I moved to this side of the House that I wouldn't have my own members picking on me.

Mr. Speaker, I'll try and be as brief as I was on that side of the House. [interjections] Okay. The hon. member has been pressing me the last month or two consistently and persistently, and I didn't think it would come into the Assembly and become a public event, but I guess it has. I've given the hon. member the commitment that I'll try and do everything I can in terms of my community housing program and rent supplement program. I know that general answer doesn't satisfy her, and the persistence will most likely continue, but I'll work on it.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you. Speaking of persistence, Mr. Speaker, I'm beginning to feel like I've been picked on too. However, I would like to . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aw.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, thank you.

I've heard this particular promise made, and my constituents are really concerned, particularly in the Slave Lake area, since it's an accelerated-growth community. I would like to know if there's anything on what kind of plans we may have within the

next little while which will accommodate this particular situation – if I can have some time lines.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, one of the projects that started in the planning stage in 1989 was a community housing project of 18 units, and that program will continue. It's our intent to complete that during 1990. I know, though, that there are other people who need transitional housing in the Slave Lake area besides the rent supplement program, and I think that's an area I'd like to supplement as well for the hon. member. I would urge her to be persistent and to continue to apply the pressure to this ministry.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

Pensions for Singles

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Attorney General. There is a real need for this government to amend legislation which discriminates on the basis of marital status. A clear example of this is the Widows' Pension Act, which refuses assistance to needy individuals simply because they are single or divorced. Government inaction, however, has meant that a group called Single & Divorced Speak Out is being forced to rely on the court system to challenge this blatantly unfair legislation. As a quick and just resolution of this issue is clearly a matter of public concern and as this government appears determined to have this matter settled in the courts rather than in the Legislature, will the minister at least commit this government to covering the costs of this legal challenge?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, the government does not fund challenges of any legislation. If the group would like to consult with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, perhaps they could find legal aid.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the Treasurer justifying \$1 million in legal fees for Mr. Cormie by saying, "Albertans wanted the process, we paid the bills to ensure that the fullest possible examination of the issue was undertaken." Well, Albertans want the fullest possible examination of why this government is refusing assistance to many who are in financial need on the basis of their marital status. How can the Attorney General justify spending \$1 million in legal fees for Mr. Cormie when he fails and is unwilling to assist Single & Divorced Speak Out with \$5,000 to \$10,000 to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Thank you.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General did not supply any funds to the public inquiry, to any lawyer through the public inquiry. If the hon. member perhaps would like to support this group on their caucus . . . The government does have not a facility to fund private individuals or groups that take actions.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

Disabled Assistance Programs

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A long time ago, approximately more than two years, the Premier announced the

formation of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. That was done in conjunction, of course, with Rick Hansen coming through the city. The Action Plan came down very recently, and I for one believe all of us should be commending the Premier's council for that Action Plan. The Action Plan, as I said, was excellent.

My concern now is: where do we go from here? Very little has happened in the last two years on improving the life-styles of Albertans with disabilities; the assured income for the severely handicapped, for example: eight years frozen, eight years. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Education, who is responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities: will you assure this Legislative Assembly that you will come down with a specific time line prior to this session ending as to when the recommendations will be implemented?

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
The Minister of Education.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I totally reject the hon. member's suggestion that very little has been done to support and assist those Albertans with disabilities in this province. My colleagues the hon. Minister for Family and Social Services and the associate minister may want to supplement the answer. The council's Action Plan recommends and acknowledges the significant work that has been done in this province on behalf of those Albertans with disabilities. As for how we will implement the Action Plan, it came down five days ago, and I will be discussing with my colleagues in the days ahead exactly how we will begin to respond and how we will begin to implement this plan. I'm delighted with the commitment by the chairman of the council, Mr. Premier, to help us to implement this visionary plan so that all Albertans, no matter what their ability, have an equal opportunity for a quality life in this province.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough for me. To the minister. Is the minister prepared to tell this Assembly that he'll go to his cabinet colleagues and fight for some improvements in the immediate, such as addressing the eight-year freeze on the assured income for the severely handicapped now?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I will work with my colleagues, including the Minister of Family and Social Services, to implement this far-reaching, visionary plan. I agree with the hon. member when he says that he is excited about and in fact proud of the tremendous work done by the Premier's council and the various task teams that came up with the recommendations. Now we want to study the report and respond as quickly as we can to put in place many of the excellent programs which they have recommended. But I might ask my colleague the minister of transportation to supplement the answer as to how many of the recommendations in the report in the transportation area are already being implemented. In the Department of Education we have already begun, just as it is recommended, conducting a special education review. We're doing that to study both the cost and the funding of

special education and the co-ordination of services – so it's not just done by the Department of Education or by school boards but that it includes Family and Social Services and the Health department and community agencies – and also the evaluation of the effort and the work that's done by school boards to ensure that special education students' needs are properly met.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Before we move on to this request under Standing Order 30, might we have unanimous consent to revert briefly to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

(*reversion*)

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure, sir, to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly 14 students from the Archbishop Jordan high school. They're joined by Miss Yolande Joly and Miss Shelenko. I would ask that they rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to the Assembly seven more members of the Friends of the West Country group. They are accompanied in the gallery by their president, Henry Collins, and another spokesperson Steven Haupt. I would ask that they stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Request for Emergency Debate**

MR. SPEAKER: With respect to a notice given earlier today under Standing Order 30, the request by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, the Chair, having examined the wording of the request, rules the entire matter out of order under the sub judice rule, Standing Order 23(g)(i).

Orders of the Day.

MR. DECORE: Well, point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: No; I'm sorry. No, sir. That's the decision of the Chair. It's straight across.

MR. CHUMIR: Under Standing Order 13(2), Mr. Speaker, apparently you're entitled to ask for an explanation from the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Under that Standing Order the explanation is abundantly clear, and as mentioned yesterday in question period, statements of claim are already here. We have seven of them here. The entire issue is sub judice.

Orders of the Day have been called.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: How can they ask questions on it? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: They didn't.
House leader.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. HORSMAN: I would move that the questions standing on the Order Paper retain their places for today.

[Motion carried]

MS BARRETT: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The point of order . . . We've just done Written Questions.

MS BARRETT: It's okay. I'll wait.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. HORSMAN: I would move that the motions for returns on the Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

MR. SPEAKER: Now we have a point of order.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is related to a couple of citations to which I briefly referred yesterday with respect to the Peter Pocklington statement. I'm seeking clarification, because I understand that when the matter is of a criminal nature, the sub judice convention is fairly strictly applied. On the other hand, when it is of a civil nature, the rule is more frequently relaxed, and I would particularly point out the *Beauchesne* reference 507(2).

In civil cases the convention does not apply until the matter has reached the trial stage.

The other citation I'd like to refer to is *Beauchesne's* 510.

The Speaker has pointed out "that the House has never allowed the sub judice convention to stand in the way of its consideration of a matter vital to the public interest or to the effective operation of the House."

Now, I'm not taking up a particular issue here, Mr. Speaker, with the exception that should the matter be of sufficiently urgent concern – I'm not arguing in favour of proceeding especially with the prior motion – but should it, would these not be references that would be useful in relaxing the rule that would ordinarily apply to particularly criminal matters under the sub judice convention, but especially under the civil matters?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for the comments. We will look at them with respect to question period and any other items that might arise.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: It's a convoluted matter for the whole House, there's no doubt about it. Thank you.

**head: Motions Other Than
Government Motions**

204. Moved by Mr. Martin:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to undertake a comprehensive reform of the provincial tax regime specifically aimed at ensuring that wealthy individuals and profitable corporations pay a greater share of the provincial tax burden, including

- (1) the removal of the Alberta flat rate tax,
- (2) an increase on a progressive basis to the Alberta high-income surtax, and
- (3) the implementation of a minimum corporate tax to be applied to large, profitable corporations operating in the province,

and to request the federal government to redress the shifting of the federal tax burden from corporations to individuals and from wealthy individuals and profitable corporations to low- and middle-income Canadians.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FOX: Go easy on them, Ray; they're nervous.

MR. MARTIN: I know it's not a particularly pleasant time, so I will be gentle, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk for a few minutes today, Mr. Speaker, about taxation: unfair taxation, fair taxation, whichever side you want to look at.

AN HON. MEMBER: A taxing speech.

MR. MARTIN: Yes. It'll be almost as taxing as your budget.

Mr. Speaker, in Motion 204 we talk generally about taxation and then suggest two or three measures that would make it at least fairer than what we have in the province. But before I get into those particular areas, I think we should talk generally about taxation.

In our system, as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, there are three recognized principles of taxation. Number one in our system, both provincially and federally, it is supposed to be progressive; in other words, it reflects our ability to pay. It's been recognized for many, many years in this country that that was the ideal. I would say that both provincially and federally we're a long ways away from that, and I'll come back to that. The second principle of taxation is one of fairness. In other words, there are legitimate services that all governments have to provide, so you try to collect a fair amount of tax from each sector of that economy. I do not think that is happening. And again, I will come back to that. The third and very important principle is this: that is should be simple both to calculate the tax you owe as an individual or business and for the government to collect.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of discussion in this Legislature and Canadians are having a lot of discussion generally about the GST. I think it's well on record how we feel about the GST because it fails in all three of those aspects. But I want to say to this government that while we agree with them on the GST – and I'll come back to them – we should look right here in our own government to see what's happening, because I would suggest that both levels of government, provincial and federal, are failing on all three of those recognized principles.

Consumption taxes that we just had in this budget – and I'll come back to that. A consumption tax like the GST is intrinsically regressive. It takes proportionally more from those with lower and middle incomes. It's unacceptable. Just as the GST is unacceptable, I'll come to some of the other regressive taxes in this province that are unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. What has been happening provincially here and federally across the country is that increasingly the taxes have become unfair. We find, for instance, comparing what individuals pay to what the corporate sector pays, individuals and families – this government talks a lot about families – have been paying an increasingly larger proportion of all the taxes collected while corporations are paying less. Mr. Speaker, that's the evidence. It's there. At one time in the '50s the goal was to collect roughly 50-50 from both sectors. Even in Alberta when this government came to power, it was roughly 60-40: 60 percent came from individuals and families and 40 percent from corporations. In the '80s, under the leadership of this government, that got distorted worse: 85-15. In 1989, perhaps the worst it was, it was at 92-8, even with the limited amount that he taxed corporations. I'm not talking about small business. There's a token amount coming from the financial institutions, Mr. Speaker, but even taking that on this budget, it will still be a 90-10 figure. So clearly this government has failed on the fairness.

But let's just look at what's happening, Mr. Speaker, to that average family that this government likes to talk about. When you take what's been happening both by Conservatives federally and provincially, from 1984 to '88, \$1,200 has come out of the pockets of an average family of four: \$1,200 just from the federal government. But in 1987, that infamous provincial budget, another \$850 came out of their pockets. In the 1989 federal budget another \$710; with GST another \$1,000 will be coming out. But even if you look at this latest taxing budget by this provincial government – depending, I suppose, on how much gasoline, how far you have to go, and all the rest of it – there'll probably be another \$400 to \$450 taken out of the families here in Alberta.

Now, the point I raise is that over the last number of years it's getting harder and harder and harder for people of middle income and lower income to get ends to meet. If we want to talk about pressures on the family, that's one of the major pressures they face. And the reality, Mr. Speaker – perhaps we can agree on this; at least the government, I take it, still agrees on this; we're not sure after question period today – is that the GST, when it comes, will make it worse, much worse, going into the next year for that average family I'm talking about.

Mr. Speaker, I'm often amused by this government. I'd laugh if it weren't so sad a lot of times. But when you see the Provincial Treasurer stand up and say, "Boy, we're fighting the GST," I ask him: where were they during the federal election? Especially this Provincial Treasurer, who was trying to get a hopeless candidate by the name of Thorkelson elected. He was out knocking on doors, Mr. Speaker. And the reality – and give credit to the federal government – is that we knew the GST was coming. They were very clear about it. In fact, Ed Broadbent talked about that during the thing. I didn't hear anything from the provincial Conservatives. In fact, Don Getty said Brian Mulroney was a friend of Alberta. That's when we could have had some impact. And even today we're still trying to keep the pressure on this government to say to those Conservative MPs in Alberta, "Enough is enough; you're not going to get re-elected, and we will work against you," if they feel strongly about the GST. But I wanted to move and say perhaps they don't

want to talk or do that much about the GST because maybe people will start to scrutinize and look at what is happening right here in our own province.

Mr. Speaker, if we go back to the last time we have figures from Stats Canada – these are unpublished as yet – it's 1987. I'm talking now strictly about provincial income tax. We notice that in 1987 – as I said, these are unpublished figures – there were 600 wealthy Albertans, 600 of them, who did not pay one red cent in tax. Not one penny, Mr. Speaker. Talk about fairness. At the same time, this government collected \$50 million from people making less than \$15,000. Now, I say to this government: how in the world is that fair? How is that acceptable, that the richest don't pay and the poorest do pay taxes? It doesn't make any sense, and it doesn't make any economic sense either. The other point I want to make is that during that time – and I alluded to this earlier on, but those are the last figures we have – when you compare again the corporate sector, what they're paying as compared to ordinary families and individuals, it was at 93 to 7.

What is happening, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this latest budget? It is going to make it much worse for ordinary individuals. When I look at the budget, and I have it here in front of me, I notice the Treasurer with his taxing budget: tax here, tax there, tax everywhere; if it moves, tax it, especially if it's for ordinary people. But don't tax your friends; don't tax the rich and the powerful; don't tax the corporate sector. Even as they're talking about fairness, I notice by the Treasurer's own estimates – now, these may be totally out of whack, as they usually are – but by his own estimates another \$410 million is going to come from individual Albertans and families, and even by his optimistic figures, only \$247 million from the corporate sector.

You know, I was amused by this Budget Address – again, if it weren't so sad. When they said, "No new taxes," well, the only thing they didn't tax was income. Income tax at least is supposed to be based on some form of progressive taxation, although it isn't in this budget. But they got us in every other way. A health tax: another regressive tax. If a GST is regressive, so is a health tax, because if you make \$20,000 or \$200,000, you're paying the same. That's the reality of it. And often the wealthy have it paid, as MLAs have half of it paid. But it's the people that are at the lower end that pay it all. So we increased that for a family from \$39.50 to \$46. Blue Cross premiums: more health taxes, Mr. Speaker. Then, as my colleague from Edmonton-Centre talked about, the long-term care resident fees in hospitals and nursing homes; the sin taxes; motor vehicle registration; utility rates, which is another tax; taxes on small business – not big business, small business – and of course we talked about the gasoline tax.

Mr. Speaker, if you figure that out, that's a lot of taxes. And it's making it even more regressive than when I brought this motion in. As you know, it was before the budget. So I'd say to you that it's even more important now, since we brought this motion in, because people are hurting and hurting worse from this last provincial budget that was brought in.

I think we need a whole change of the taxation system, federally and provincially. I remember the last major overhaul federally was the Carter commission. I believe it was in the early 1960s, where the federal government spent – I don't know what it was – 3 and a half million dollars at that time, which was a lot of money. They came back and said, "Look, if you make a buck – it doesn't matter how you make that buck,

whether you make it out of the sweat of your brow or you do it by clipping coupons – you should pay taxes on it." In other words, Mr. Speaker, a buck is a buck is a buck. But of course the Tory friends, the corporate sector, big business, didn't like that; they'd have to start paying some taxes. And, of course, eventually with the Liberals it was watered down to Benson's report, and now it's even worse than ever before. So I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, that it's clear that we need taxation reform, and perhaps it's time to look at how we can achieve overall a fair taxation system.

But in saying that, I think there are some things we can do. We don't need a commission for 25 years to go around the province, Mr. Speaker. With this motion we're just touching on, if I may say, just a few things that would at least go some ways in terms of making it fairer. First of all, the flat tax. Well, I remember when the flat tax was brought in in 1987. And do you remember that the Treasurer said: "These are tough times. This is just temporary, just temporary"? Well, whenever a Treasurer says taxes are just temporary, I think all Canadians, and especially Albertans – you know, a red flag goes up, and rightfully so, because what has happened . . . Admittedly, they've cut it by half, but just to give you the type of information about what that 1987 flat tax meant. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's regressive. A flat tax means that everybody pays it; it doesn't matter whether you make \$250,000 or \$25,000. It's very much like the GST, very much like the health taxes they've brought in this time.

Now, the reality is that in that 1987 budget year, the 1 percent flat tax, there was \$204 million collected, Mr. Speaker. Of that, 1,183,000 Albertans paid tax. It represented 11.6 percent of the total provincial personal income tax at that time. Two hundred and twenty-six thousand Albertans who didn't have to pay basic personal income tax – and this is how regressive it is – still had to pay that flat tax, because, as you're well aware, flat tax is calculated on income, not tax payable; that's the regressive part of it, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know the government members will say, "Well, gee, we've been good to the people of Alberta because we've halved that." But it's still there; half of 1 percent is still there, and it's still a significant amount of money being collected from people that can least afford it. That is the reality of it. And as you'll notice in the motion, Mr. Speaker, I'm suggesting that's one of the things that should go: "(1) the removal of the Alberta flat rate tax." I'd say to members here, if you don't believe that the GST is a fair tax, if you believe it is a regressive tax, if you believe it's an unacceptable tax, then surely you should believe that the removal of the Alberta flat rate tax falls into the same category. Starting with that would at least go a small way to making the taxation system a little fairer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, moving into the second area, we've suggested "an increase on a progressive basis" – not a Progressive Conservative basis – "to the Alberta high-income surtax." Again I go back to those '87 figures – and I expect they would be similar; we'll know in a couple of years – where people didn't pay any tax at all. Hopefully, an increase on a progressive basis to that would at least solve somewhat that problem. Again it would go to the progressive nature of our taxation system. In other words, not only lip service: those that can afford to pay should pay their fair share, and that's the point of that second one. Clearly, the removal of the flat rate and moving in that would collect perhaps even more money but give money to those who most need it.

And, finally, probably the one that gets the Conservatives going – we hear all sorts of things: they're going to drive the corporations out; there will no business here – has to do with the implementation of a minimum corporate tax to be applied to large, profitable corporations operating in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I campaigned on this during the provincial election, and it was well received, even by some people who voted Conservative in the election because of other misguided reasons they've since learned to regret. But a minimum tax is simply a means of ensuring that profitable corporations cannot exploit a series of tax loopholes to avoid paying taxes completely. It is achieved through an alternate system to the regular tax collection and includes a minimum tax base of corporate profits and earnings reported to shareholders each year.

Now, in practice a profitable corporation would compare its regular tax liability to the corporate minimum tax calculation – we suggested a minimum rate at 20 percent, and I'll come to why we've suggested that, Mr. Speaker – and the corporation then would be responsible for paying the higher of the two amounts. But to ensure that all small and medium size companies who were taxed again in this budget continue to benefit from existing tax incentives and are not burned by the compliance, the minimum tax rate would be applied only to profits above a certain exemption level.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we suggested this at the provincial election, I remember the cry: "Oh, you can't tax the corporate sector. They'll all move out. The taxation system has to be unfair; it has to go after the middle class, has to go after the poor people, because if you tax the corporations, they're going to go elsewhere." Well, they were a little embarrassed when I pointed out at the time – and I've mentioned it before in the Legislature – that the darling of the conservative movement, the ones this government likes to talk about, the Republican Party in the United States, had found exactly the things we're finding in this province: that big, profitable corporations were not paying their taxes in the United States. So they brought in a minimum tax. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be called a Conservative, but I was even more generous than Ronald Reagan. His was at 21 percent; we were willing to give it to them for 20 percent, a benefit compared to the United States. But the reality is that they did it in the United States, and they're collecting millions of dollars for the first time. If a Republican Party can do that in the United States, why cannot a Conservative Party do that in Alberta?

I want to say something, Mr. Speaker. Guess what? All the corporations haven't flooded out of the United States. They're making money paying some taxes, at least, in the United States. Isn't that an amazing thing? Even if we bring in a minimum corporate tax – and that's why we did the figuring on this – we'd be paying relatively the same amount as corporations are paying in other provinces. We'd still be very competitive. I recognize that one province or one country can't change their taxation system and distort it so much that it's not comparable to other countries and other provinces. A tax like this would bring in \$230 million of much needed money after the squandering and mismanagement and the debt that we have. I suggest to you that these corporations would squeal a bit, but they'd pay their taxes just as they did in the United States, and continue being profitable, Mr. Speaker, paying a little bit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many other things that we could do with the taxation system, but it would take longer than we have in the very short period of time that we have to debate this particular issue. But I say to the Conservative members that

rather than blind ideology and rejecting something like this – it is happening with other Conservative governments, what we're proposing. This is not radical, but it would go some ways, in view of the fact that we don't have a system to look at it overall, a commission or a task force or whatever to look at bringing in as fair a taxation system as we can. I especially say it's very appropriate that we look at this, because it's going to get worse next year; probably worse from this government, if they continue. Hope springs eternal that they'll change, but we know that unless something turns around in the next couple of months, we've got this GST coming, and it's going to make it much worse.

So we're suggesting that we think there's more revenue here than the government's already getting, which would help with the deficit and the debt, and it certainly would put some money into the hands of people who need it. An amazing thing will happen. If the people in the middle and lower incomes have a few more shekels to spend, they do an amazing thing: they go to the store and spend it. And guess what? That stimulates the economy. It's called the trickle up rather than the trickle down, but small businesses will tell you they want their people to have a few more dollars. Small businesses would support something like this, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the government members, rather than just having ideology overrun common sense, take a look at these things, because I suggest to you, number one, this government said this flat rate tax, when they brought it in in '87, was temporary. It's getting awfully permanent right now, Mr. Speaker, because it is still there in this 1990 Budget Address. When 600 people aren't paying their taxes, I think it makes common sense that all contribute somewhat on a progressive basis: the Alberta high-income surtax and – what's good enough for Ronald Reagan in the United States – the minimum tax on the corporations to bring another \$230 million into this province. That's not chicken feed.

So I would say again to the members that these three suggestions are not the end-all and be-all, Mr. Speaker. Nobody's saying they are. But at least it would be a start towards fair taxation. We've suggested also in the last part of that motion – I'm not holding my breath after question period today – that we

request the federal government to redress the shifting of the federal tax burden from corporations to individuals and from wealthy individuals and profitable corporations to low- and middle-income Canadians.

Well, again, maybe I'm naive. I keep waiting for Conservative governments to do this, but we haven't had much luck in getting them to move away from the GST. I think political pressure has to be put on to axe the tax, but also both federally and provincially to start to develop a fair taxation system. If the Assembly was to pass a motion like this, Mr. Speaker, we'd be sending a message to both governments, both here provincially and federally, that we're not going to take it anymore.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, that people are fed up. They're fed up with this last budget. They're fed up with unfair taxes. They're fed up with getting taxed here, there, and everywhere. They're fed up with the unfairness. They're fed up when they see the corporate sector not paying their fair share. They're fed up when they see wealthy Albertans not paying anything when they are being overly taxed. A lot of people aren't going to put up with it any longer. I would remind the members here, see what's happening in Britain when you have a Conservative government and they bring in an unfair tax, the poll tax. In that regard, Mr. Speaker,

you start talking to people about the anger they have about the taxation system. I say to this government that they had better start listening and start finding out what people want in terms of a fair taxation system.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I'm close to the end of my time. I would hope, again, that hon. members would take a look at whether this makes sense economically rather than just letting the ideology run away and saying that you can't tax the corporations and calling it socialism and Marxism and all the other little goodies they have to say. But look at whether this makes sense or not. They should take a look at the rest of the world, Mr. Speaker; this makes sense to them.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Lloydminster.

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to compliment the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his comments. They were interesting, but you know, I was just about ready to pack my bags and get away from here. I was scared. You know, when you look at the motion, you can say about personal income tax, for example, that reform comes every year in the budget; it's looked at. The restructuring of the income tax happened in 1987. This had two purposes: one, to reduce the deficit, and two, to make the income tax system fairer and more progressive.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Let's go back a few years, my good friends, and look at the overall tax rates, what we had when the province was right up there on cloud nine. It was the equivalent to about an 18 percent sales tax. Everyone knows what happened in the '80s when the energy sector fell down. Yes, we do know. Revenues were cut also. But those programs were in place. I'm sure the hon. member was sitting here and liking the programs that were in place. But where do you get the money from? How do you get it?

MR. FOX: You have rich friends.

MR. CHERRY: Oh, our rich friends. Yeah, now we're coming to it. You bet.

You know, when you look at corporations, they do carry their fair share. And what would you have? You would have it so that there was no big business in the province whatsoever. Isn't that right? None whatsoever.

You know, I think this government has done a good job on taxation. Selective tax reduction reduces income taxes for those – now, listen to this – who earn below \$16,500. You hear that? Temporary high-income surtax applies to individuals who have employment above \$42,000. You know, our taxation regime is progressive. In 1987 nearly 100,000 taxpayers paid the high-income surtax of 8 percent, and that contributed to roughly \$25 million in tax revenue.

Not a word.

About half a million Albertans benefited from the selective tax reduction. In 1990, they will. A quarter of a million people in Alberta will have their provincial income tax reduced to zero in this taxation year. We're concerned about the growing centralization of the fiscal power in Ottawa, and as much as the Leader of the Opposition – I heard him saying, you know, the GST. You would think they were the only party that was ever against the GST. This is the first thing, I think, that they've ever been

against. [interjections] Oh, they're coming awake now. They're starting to come awake, yeah.

And another thing. Look at the stats across Canada. Who has the lowest taxes?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Not us. Not us.

MR. CHERRY: Well, you're reading the wrong information.

Also, when you look at the temporary flat tax, it was introduced in '87 as a form of a minimum tax. It was levied at the rate of 1 percent on taxable income, and it is not reduced by the application of dividend credits or foreign tax credits or any other reductions in tax payable. The introduction of the flat tax did not lower the lower income people – in other words, the work force – as a selective tax reduction was widened to protect almost half a million Albertans at the cost of \$72 million. It was estimated in '87 that the flat tax would provide an additional \$376 million in revenue for the '87-88 tax year. Also, the 1988 budget saw the flat tax cut by one half to .5 percent. This resulted in an after-tax income gain of \$183 for a one-income family of four with \$40,000 income, a gain of \$116 for a single-parent family of three with \$25,000 employment income, and a gain of \$132 for the senior citizen couple with \$30,000 pension income. In total, Albertans took home an extra \$165 million in after-income pay. At the same time, in support of the 1988 federal personal tax reductions, it lowered provincial taxes by a further \$420 million, leaving another \$185 million in the pockets of Albertans. Low-income – I say again, low-income – Albertans received the largest percentage reduction of these tax cuts. The '89 and '90 budgets did not alter the flat tax rate of .5 percent. The '89 and '90 budgets did not increase the rates of the personal income tax.

AN HON. MEMBER: I wonder who wrote that for him.

MR. CHERRY: Thank you. Thank you.

The selective tax reduction replaces the Alberta tax for all taxpayers with the provincial tax up to \$860. It is expected that nearly half a million Albertan tax filers will benefit from this generous program in 1990. Hear that, boys? A quarter of a million Albertans will have their provincial income tax reduced to zero. Mr. Speaker, for a single individual with only employment income, the selective tax reduction will reduce income taxes until the total income threshold of \$16,500 is reached.

Now, let's go on with the temporary high-income surtax. It was introduced in 1987 at a rate of 8 percent of the basic Alberta income tax in excess of \$3,500. This resulted in nearly a hundred thousand taxpayers paying \$25 million in high-income surtax. The level of surtax in Alberta must be considered in the framework of the total tax regime, including the federal tax. The province has only so much room to increase taxes – you can understand that; I hear you saying it every day – on any sector of the population before the percentage of tax payable becomes a disincentive to living in this province. You know, when you look around the country and you look at Canada, this is a pretty good province to live in, managed well by this government.

AN HON. MEMBER: Principal was managed well?

MR. CHERRY: Now, don't sit there and say that. We just came through an election. If we were not managing this province well, I'm sure that, God forsake us, you'd be over there.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order in the House. I think the Chair would just like to advise that it is not necessary for the hon. member speaking at the moment to respond to those from across the hall, nor is it necessary for members in the opposition to answer the hon. member's rhetorical questions. Let's proceed in a more orderly fashion.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, if I was in any way at fault, I apologize. I'm trying very hard to get my message across. I'm having a great deal of trouble, sir.

Mr. Speaker, I guess there are many, many ways in which the government has options to get income and to provide the services which are provided today. In my view, it's like the private sector, except that we are somewhat different because when these programs do go in, people then consider and take for granted that they will never be taken away. You know, this government has done a great job in putting in the services that Albertans enjoy today. It wasn't long ago when I was speaking with some of my relatives from our sister province in British Columbia, and they admired this province. They did say, Mr. Speaker, that a few years ago, I believe before . . . Excuse me; I just can't remember what that government was that came into B.C. for a short time.

AN HON. MEMBER: NDP.

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, sir. NDP, yes, but they certainly took it out in a hurry. And I remember, Mr. Speaker, because I come from the Lloydminster area right next door. The socialists were there for many, many years. And I want to tell you something. I want to tell you, in Lloydminster the population was three-quarters Alberta, one-quarter Saskatchewan, the reason being because of the government, and don't ever kid yourself.

Mr. Speaker, no one's perfect, but I believe that working together in this province, which we have done and will do, is still the best option that this province has. I mean, it's shown through one election after another. And then once - I think it was '86, if I remember - some people got lucky, but we'll see them go down next time around, I'm sure.

But one of the things I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that this government has the best taxation policy in Canada. When you look at 14,000 new businesses started in 1988 in this province and over 17,000 new businesses started in 1989, they must have started for something. They liked it; they liked the atmosphere in this province. And when you consider that we have the lowest personal taxes and we have no sales tax, the tax policy of this government is fair, progressive, and is working. Ladies and gentlemen, Alberta is the place to live and do business in.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be relatively brief, largely because I have to, with 10 or 12 minutes left.

I must say that I very strongly support the philosophical thrust of this motion and a great deal of the substance, although not all of the detail. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that in recent years the well to do have been getting wealthier in this country, and the low- and average-income Canadians, and particularly Albertans, have been having a very difficult time. As I noted in my comments on the budget debate a little over a week ago, the

money raising policies of this government in fact compound that gap between the well to do and the have-nots. This policy represents one of the fundamental differences between this government and our party, the Alberta Liberal Party.

The government's fiscal policies are indeed an assault on low- and moderate-income Albertans. We have seen since 1986 that the government has raised money primarily through regressive taxation measures, the impact of which falls most heavily on low- and moderate-income Albertans. We've seen fuel taxes which hurt those with low incomes. If you want to drive, you have no choice. We've seen an end to the renter's tax credit, which impacts totally on those with low incomes. If you want to live in an apartment or a home and not on the street, you have no choice. Medicare premiums have been increased, with pitifully low exemption and assistance levels, and they have now reached \$23 per month for individuals and \$46 per month for families. We've had fee increases on motor vehicles, and we've had the flat rate tax, initially 1 percent and now .5 percent. The reality is that since this 1986 time frame in which we've seen these increases, the corporate sector and wealthier individuals in this province have indeed been relatively lightly touched.

I can't help but note that the special capital tax, which was imposed on financial institutions this year for the first time, could have and should have been imposed four years ago. Where was this tax four years ago when regressive taxation measures were being imposed on the citizens of this province? Instead, we find tax increases being piled upon medicare fees, upon fuel tax increases, upon renter tax credit withdrawals - all hitting the little guy in this province. And then to add insult and further injury to injury, we have the flat rate tax instead of increasing the progressive rate of taxes as should have been the case.

Now, why, Mr. Speaker, do we have that policy? So that the Provincial Treasurer can stand up, so that he can write in his budget addresses, so he can tell the *Globe and Mail* and the nabobs from eastern Canada when he tries to woo them out here, that we have the lowest tax rates in the country. Yes, certainly for the higher income Albertans, but not for those with low and moderate incomes.

Now, the flat tax is particularly onerous, Mr. Speaker, because it is levied on taxable income before credit is provided under our income tax system for age, for marriage, for dependants, for Canada Pension Plan payments, for UIC, for tuition fees, for medical expenses. It's a tax on all of these items which impact so heavily on low-income Albertans. Thus we find, for example, an average Albertan earning \$20,000, having trouble making a go of it, paying his rent, paying for diabetes testing materials - we find such an individual paying \$100, .5 percent of his income, as a result of this flat tax. It's a policy without fundamental compassion or understanding, Mr. Speaker, and it raises substantial portions of income tax revenue for this province.

The figures I have vary slightly from those provided earlier by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. My figures indicate that in 1987 the flat tax at that time, 1 percent, raised \$2053 million, which constituted 9.6 percent of the personal income tax revenues raised in this province. For 1988 and '89 the numbers are estimated to be \$165 million and \$179 million, for 7.6 and 7.3 percent of the personal income tax revenues. But we have to remember and realize, when we use these figures, that that's a significant amount of revenue that's being raised on a non-progressive basis and on a basis which, as the federal Auditor General told us, is contrary to the terms of the Canada/Alberta tax agreement, which provides for provincial taxation to be on

a percentage of the federal revenue, simply because of the philosophy that it should be kept progressive. When we keep those things in mind, we also have to remember that the flat tax again is only part of what we've seen in this province. We've had the medicare fee increases, we've had the fuel tax increases, we've had the licence fee increases, and these make life very, very difficult, increasingly difficult, for the average Albertan.

Those members of the government who constantly repeat how they're talking to their constituents I'm sure must realize just how difficult it is, how low- and average-income Albertans are having an increasingly difficult time in this province. The flat rate tax adds to that difficulty, it doesn't diminish it. The difficulties should be put – and I say difficulties in the sense of relative difficulties – on those many well-to-do Albertans who are still riding high on the hog and have not yet been asked to pay their fair share of the cost of running this province.

So we have to get back, Mr. Speaker, to a more progressive regime of taxation. We should eliminate the flat rate tax, and we should at the same time remove the medicare fees or at least, at the very least, expand the exemption levels and the assistance levels for medicare fees in an era when we're talking about \$40,000 income levels for day care assistance. We should reinstate the rental tax credit. We should be providing credits to low-income Albertans for the regressive tax measures, such as fuel taxes, in the same way as the federal government has, happily, recognized the need for a tax credit for their sales taxes. The revenue should be replaced by increases in the rates of those who can afford it: the reliance on the concept of progressivity in our tax system.

Now, the area of detail where we differ with the motion, or at least where we are at this stage unpersuaded, relates to the imposing of a somewhat unexplained minimum corporate tax to be applied to large profitable corporations operating in the province. Now, I agree that we should very much review ways in which we can get more revenue from large profitable corporations, but I think we have to keep in mind our overall economic goals and the fact that we have special capital needs in this country in relation to different types of enterprise. We've seen recently, for example, the federal government imposing a large corporations tax, which is hitting more heavily on the resource industries of Alberta, which are very, very capital intensive. I think we need to fine-tune the type of taxation system that we have, Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that we don't inflict harm on the types of business enterprises that need capital to flourish in this province.

It is true that the minimum corporate tax concept, as a concept, is far from radical as such. They do have a minimum corporate tax in the United States, but they also have a totally different tax regime. I know that the opposition is often very critical of the social and fiscal policies of the United States, and I don't think that we should blindly be following their examples.

So we need more fine-tuning with respect to our economic goals. We need some targeting, targeting such as the special capital tax on banks, which we find to be quite reasonable. We would like to hear more from experts on the different options that we have available, but we're certainly not prepared to support the very broad and unexplained suggestion that a minimum corporate tax be applied *holus-bolus* to large profitable corporations operating in the province without more.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I note that the time for this debate has almost terminated, so I would take this opportunity to adjourn debate if I could have the support of the House in that regard.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo to adjourn debate, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

head: **Public Bills and Orders
Other Than
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 204
An Act to Amend the Labour Relations Code**

MR. DECORE: I now speak to second reading, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring to your attention the fact that there is a clerical error in Bill 204. That error is a reference to section 117.1(1)(b). When the matter was referred to legal counsel, legal counsel looked at the wrong Act, or not the new Act, and the reference should in fact read section 94. Legal counsel has informed me that this can be changed when the matter goes to Committee of the Whole and that it would be in order for me to proceed in that it is just a clerical error. I don't know whether the matter has been brought to your attention or not.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, these inadvertent errors occasionally occur. The Chair accepts the change, with the understanding it will be dealt with in committee.

MR. DECORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, the . . .

MR. McINNIS: You signed your name to it.

MR. DECORE: Yeah, I signed my name to it. I have no difficulty in making and proposing this Bill, hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. I do so with pride. I do so bearing in mind a situation that recently occurred in this city, the city of Edmonton, and that was the very difficult issue of the Catholic school teachers and the Catholic school board attempting for a week or two weeks to resolve the difficulties between themselves. But in the end they did. They did because the collective agreement process worked. The system of strikes being strikes and lockouts being lockouts, clearly understood by both sides, worked. There was no favouritism given to the teachers and no favouritism by legislation given to the school board. There was equality on both sides in terms of the law. Each knew the risks their particular group was taking with respect to the public. If the teachers went on strike and didn't have the support of the public, they would have to face the consequences. If the school board, on the other hand, was not being reasonable and the public found that to be the case, the obvious would happen, and that is that the school board trustees would be turfed out or great pressure would be brought upon them. Now, that worked.

I had the privilege of working with 10 unions and two associations at the city hall level in my own city when I was mayor. Except for the compulsory arbitration provisions affecting police, every other union and management operated in that same way of fairness and equality. Nobody had an upper hand. Nobody had a hammer over their side that gave them an edge, gave them an advantage over the other side.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view, our view, the Liberal Party's view that the present legislation in our labour code gives an advantage- an unjust advantage, an undue advantage, an improper advantage – to the employer when it comes to dealing with hospital employees, particularly nurses. The present legislation makes it compulsory that there be arbitration for what are called essential services, and nurses and hospital staff are put into that category. That means that when the nurses have a grievance, when the nurses are negotiating their contract with their employers, the Alberta Hospital Association, there isn't equality, there isn't fairness, because a stick is hanging over their heads saying if this isn't done properly, if you can't agree, it will go to compulsory arbitration and government arbitrators will determine the issues.

To add difficulty to difficulty, insult to injury, there is a further provision in the labour code that says that the arbitrators must act pursuant to certain fiscal guidelines the government has established. That doesn't apply to the employer. That doesn't apply to the Alberta Hospital Association. It applies to the nurses. If they wish to grieve or make an issue of issues, they must go to this compulsory arbitration provision and the hammer is over their heads. The effect of Bill 204 is to amend the provisions of the labour code so as to allow equity, so as to allow that edge to be taken away from one side and fairness to prevail with respect to both.

Mr. Speaker, the idea I'm submitting, that our party is proposing, isn't new; it isn't novel. This idea is now used in the province of British Columbia. In British Columbia nurses do have the right to strike, but before that is done, hospital staff must, by a collective agreement, agree with their employers as to what the essential services for a particular hospital are. What must be manned? What stations must be looked after? Where must there be doctors and nurses and hospital workers to ensure that people who need immediate or ongoing attention are looked after? The collective agreement in the province of British Columbia must spell that out. Everybody else who isn't included in that essential service area for that specific station or unit is allowed to be part of the collective agreement process. They're allowed to strike if they feel their grievances are so great that they must strike. And when they strike, there is no advantage given to one side or to the other. They must incur the wrath of the public one way or the other.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that when we contacted the Alberta Hospital Association, the employer in dealing with hospital staff in our province, they indicated that they would rather go back to the old system, the system that I and our party are advocating now; that is, where there is a proper lockout provision and a proper strike provision, where equality is given to both sides, where no hammer, no advantage is given to one side over the other. That's important to note: that the employer itself, the Alberta Hospital Association, says the best system is the true collective agreement negotiating system.

I don't think we can be very proud of what happened in the last nurses' strike in our province. That was not a good experience for the Premier or the cabinet or the government or the citizens of Alberta, a 19-day strike in spite of legislation that compelled people to continue working and compelled compulsory arbitration. I believe and our party believes that that nurses' strike was a tragic experience for Albertans, tragic for the nurses who day after day had to walk the picket line and who . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: Illegally.

MR. DECORE: Pardon me?

MR. TRYNCHY: Illegally.

MR. DECORE: Yes, illegally. I notice the hon. minister didn't stand up and take any action or speak of any action one way or another on locking those nurses out. I never heard the minister speak out in that regard or speak out one way or the other on the particular issue. But they did walk out illegally. They felt they were so grieved by the provisions of the Act that they couldn't with good conscience continue working under legislation that was so patently unfair. I would like to ask the minister, inasmuch as he's now interjected into the debate, whether he thinks it's fair. Do you think it's fair, Mr. Minister, for this kind of legislation to give advantage to one side over the other. The minister is involved with employees and employers. He should have some opinion on this other than simply heckling from the side. I notice he's turning away from the record and not addressing the matter anymore.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DECORE: I hope you speak to it, hon. member.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. I expect the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry has more to say on his Bill that is relevant and not directed to other members individually.

MR. DAY: I don't know why we'd expect him to have anything . . . [inaudible].

MR. DECORE: I'm sorry, hon. Member for Red Deer-North; I couldn't hear you.

MR. DAY: I said that I don't know why we'd expect you'd have anything relevant to say.

MR. DECORE: Any relevancy from you?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Let's proceed with the usual and orderly manner of debate, please, all hon. members.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, our party then proposes that legislation be improved – legislation that allows for equality, legislation to get rid of legislation that invites conflict – and that we go this route. I know the nurses believe that the whole of the labour code, the legislation, insofar as hospital workers are concerned should be such that no collective agreement should be put into place with respect to essential services, that it be wide open. I think we have to go at this slowly. I think we have to look to see what is essential in some places, because it may not be so essential in others. In other words, the Cross Cancer clinic, in the way it operates on a 24-hour basis, may not have the same kind of relevancy that exists in the town of Vegreville insofar as cancer attention is concerned, because a cancer patient can come quickly to Edmonton, be referred quickly, come by ambulance quickly to that strategic, specific area, the Cross Cancer clinic, for immediate attention. So essential services in one hospital aren't the same as they are in another, and I think

it's necessary for us to work through this process of collective agreements in determining what is essential in this hospital district, what is essential in this one, and so on. It shouldn't be written into legislation, chapter and verse. I don't think that serves anybody well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this matter should be moved along with importance to ensure there is no difficulty down the line, so fairness and equity prevail in this area. Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter the debate today, but I've got to say that the New Democrat caucus will not be supporting this amendment to the labour code. We do it for a number of reasons.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite frankly surprised that at the very beginning the leader of the Liberal Party stood up to offer this as a clerical error, when in fact what they're trying to amend is the Labour Relations Act. We haven't had a Labour Relations Act for quite some time in this province; we've got the labour code. Now, that wouldn't be so bad, but then at another point in his speech the member stood up and spoke about the code, the allowance in British Columbia. It wasn't the allowance in British Columbia he was describing; it was the allowance in the province of Manitoba, where they have provision such as the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry described.

Now, the third problem I have with this is that this wouldn't take away the hammer that's hanging over the heads of the workers. This wouldn't equalize the fairness at the negotiation table. The only thing that I believe this kind of amendment would do is make it very easy for people to go out on strike, very easy for the employer to say: it doesn't matter about the negotiation process because we're going to be able to maintain essential services. This kind of Bill is going to lengthen, if anything, the duration of the strike. That, Mr. Speaker, is the problem. Because what this Bill does is say that all of a sudden we're going to have essential services maintained; we're going to be able to provide services. Well, if you're going to be able to provide services for people who through no fault of their own are hospitalized, what's the point of negotiating? What's the point of sitting down at the table to negotiate some kind of contract with your employees? You get to the point where you're negotiating with the employer, you go out and say: "Well, here we are; we're at a stalemate. Where do we go?" The employees have no choice. They've already fired their big cannon and they've missed. They would miss with this kind of legislation, miss their target completely, because while some of them would be out on a picket line, having withdrawn their services, others would be inside providing the essential services and there wouldn't be any reason to negotiate that back. That's part of the problem. This is the kind of legislation that would guarantee long and ugly strikes.

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

Now, let's not confuse ourselves in this House. Tories have a position and I respect that. They say, "No right to strike, regardless." We have a position. We say, "You've got the right to strike and withdraw your services." That's our position. The Liberal Party's is: "Some are in; some are out. It's Thursday; the stars are aligned." My God, given enough time, I'm sure you'd find a way to get a little bit pregnant and stay that way.

MR. DECORE: After my recent hospitalization, it's impossible to get pregnant.

MR. SIGURDSON: I want to know if before his hospitalization it was possible for that member to get pregnant.

You know, there's no doubt that from our perspective the right to strike is essential. The right to strike shows the value an employee has to the employer or to society, and it also shows their economic strength. Employers do it all the time.

MR. CHUMIR: Get practical.

MR. SIGURDSON: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo says "Get practical." Well, employers do it all the time. Employers have frequently suggested: "Well, if we don't like the way negotiations are going, we can lock you out. And if we don't like the negotiations after we have locked you out, we can lock up." And they have locked up and moved away. That's economic clout. Another tactic they use is one that was probably exercised back in 1986. We had, perhaps, from Peter Pocklington a threat that "We wouldn't expand the operation; we'd move the operation." What happened? The government came along, gave a little money, and the plant stayed here. There's no plant in Picture Butte, but there is economic power. What do workers have? Without the right to strike, there is no clout. You go out and negotiate long and hard, as they did with the Roman Catholic school board situation, with the Roman Catholic teachers' association. They negotiated hour after hour and week after week. They had economic clout at the end of it, fully aware of it, fully cognizant of it, and prepared to exercise it. But if you don't have the right to strike, where do you go? Do you go back to work? Well, in many instances that is the case. But there are those times, those occasions where you have to show your value and have to show your economic clout, and you exercise an option available to you whether it's legal or whether it isn't.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've worked alongside a number of workers in a number of industries, and in one particular situation in British Columbia I was actually involved on a picket line. It's not something workers take lightly. It's not the holiday some members might believe it might be. You don't have to ask too many workers in too many unions who have been out on strike if it's a treat to be out on the picket line. Ask the Gainers workers. You could ask the Ziedler workers, who in Slave Lake have been out for four years and in Edmonton for over two. You can ask the Wittke workers, or you can ask the teachers in Edmonton who had to take that strike vote and then suffer the economic consequences of their actions. They're prepared to do it because there are points in the negotiations, points in the bargaining process where you haven't any choice.

The nurses? In the past the nurses had to walk out, and what did we get? The government thought they would come up with this wonderful solution way back when and passed a piece of legislation, Bill 44. "No more strikes from the nurses," the government said. "No more strikes in the hospitals with the nurses." The problem is that the legislation wasn't sufficient. Those women stood up for their rights and went out on strike anyway. When they went out on strike last time, what happened? The legislation was still there. The courts fined them \$400,000. Still, this time, at this round of negotiations, they took strong positions. They knew what the consequences would be if members walked out for a long period of time, but they were prepared to stand up for their rights regardless of what the legislation said.

I read today in the *Edmonton Journal* that the social workers . . .

MR. DAY: Still reading it, are you?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, not at all.

The social workers are finding themselves in a similar situation.

MR. DAY: The source of all truth and light.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm glad you appreciate it.

The social workers are finding themselves in a very similar situation, Mr. Speaker, where they feel pushed to the point that with caseloads being what they are, 400 and some cases . . .

MR. DAY: Aw.

MR. SIGURDSON: We get some moans and we get some groans. That's not part of the speech, Stockwell.

With the caseloads being what they are, the commitments being what they are, they are now feeling that they, too, may have to exercise their option. Their option says that they have no option, so they're going to have to violate something. They may have to violate a piece of legislation that says, "You haven't got any right to strike." But the only economic clout they have, the only way they can show their value, is to go out and let people know what it's like to do without those services. This government says it's illegal. So? The nurses defied it and won. Social workers see that, and they just might take that chance as well.

Other jurisdictions, as the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry pointed out, have come to deal with their labour/management negotiations in a different way. Manitoba was outlined. British Columbia? They have no prohibitions on strikes, but in the British Columbia instance, what they've got is in their labour code. They've always got that rather ugly and heavy hammer that can order the nurses back to work at any time. That's statutory. That's in there. Saskatchewan? They haven't got the ordering-back provision in their labour code, nor do they have any provision in their Act that prohibits the right to strike for any hospital employees. So they've got the full right to go out and strike.

No doubt there are members here who will say: "How are you going to maintain emergency services? How are you going to be able to provide services when there's that greatest need?" Well, I happen to believe that health care professionals are responsible people and will provide emergency service when necessary. In previous labour/management breakdowns, each local of the United Nurses of Alberta had an emergency services committee at every station, and what they were prepared to do in the event of a major emergency was call a sufficient number of nurses in to look after that emergency. That's responsibility. That's what we need, a responsibility mechanism. By having taken their oath of service, they will ensure that emergency services are met. That's what we need. We don't need to define essential services so some people can go in and some people can stay out. That would only prolong the strike. And we don't need to have the heavy hand of government saying, "No, you can't do this because we say you can't do it." What we've got to have in Alberta is a sense of fairness, a sense of justice, and a sense of equity. We haven't got it yet. We won't get it through this amendment to the labour code, and that's unfortunate. This is an attempt to

please both sides, but in the long run this kind of amendment would harm the workers most. We cannot support it.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In rising today to speak on this Bill, I would like to preface my remarks by stating that by and large Alberta has a good history of stable labour relations and has had harmony in the past by American standards. Although it's true there have been some incidents in the past which have tarnished reputations and caused incidents, for the most part Alberta's labour relationships have been fairly successful. The reason for this balanced relationship can be found in the province's labour legislation and the strong effort everyone has made to reach consensus on what works for the workers and for management.

There are three elements, Mr. Speaker, that contribute to this. One is proper labour legislation; the others are the attitude of the participants and the economic realities in which the enterprise occurs. All of these play an equally important role in developing the actual employee/employer relationship. Labour relations and labour legislation are designated with just a minimum of rules; there shouldn't be overlegislation. Both employers and employees have to work out some of the relationship themselves. Attitudes are developed over many years and influenced by many factors, and although legislation may not immediately change attitudes or help to establish relationships, it can provide direction and encourage improvement in relationships. Mutual respect and a sense of commonality of interest are a direct result of the attitudes of the participants. When the attitudes are positive and constructive, commonality of interest develops and the result is that employees and employers develop mutual trust and respect. However, when suspicion and distrust arise, then the participants themselves suffer the consequences. It's clearly understood by everyone that when the labour relationship breaks down, everybody involved suffers.

The issue before us, then, is how does this Bill stand up against any test of being a positive influence on labour relations in this province? Is the net effect of this amendment desirable, or does it set the stage for an erosion of labour relations in the province? Mr. Speaker, this Bill before us today is misguided and based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the bargaining system.

The explanatory note which comes with this Bill suggests that compulsory arbitration would not apply to everyone in the union but just a small portion. Since there can only be one collective bargaining agreement, this proposed amendment would seem to preclude a collective agreement ever being reached. It would result in one group within a bargaining unit having a contract arrived at by compulsory arbitration while the rest of the bargaining unit would have a different contract achieved by a different method. The effect of this amendment, were it accepted, would treat employees of the hospital units unequally, and only those that the employer and the bargaining unit could agree on as being designated essential services would be covered by the compulsory arbitration. I feel this would be very difficult to determine. There is no mechanism to ensure that such a collective agreement would ever be achieved in the first place. It would be very difficult to agree on who is an essential service and who is not. Would it be the nurse in the neonatal ward, or would it be the nurse in the cardiac recovery room? It would be

very difficult to decide who would have to be essential and who would not.

Perhaps the most harmful aspect of this proposal is that it's made with no consultation with the parties who would be impacted. Consultation, Mr. Speaker, is the cornerstone in developing effective legislation. In this case there is no agreement that the proposal is desirable. There's no common understanding that it would be workable and not even a consensus that there is a real problem that needs to be addressed.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would permit a question.

MRS. B. LAING: I'd like to finish, please, first.

In view of these facts, Mr. Speaker, this amendment does not in any way, shape, or form pass the test to indicate that it would make a positive contribution to Alberta's labour/management relations. The only way that I can see it going is causing confusion and instability in the workplace, and for this reason I cannot support this amendment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry arising on a point of order?

MR. DECORE: Well, I understood that the hon. member was agreeable to answering the question after she finished. She said that she wished to finish, and then the implication was that she would allow for a question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member can indicate whether or not she would entertain a question. I guess silence does not mean consent.

MR. DECORE: I'm sorry I didn't hear her, sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: She didn't answer, so I guess she does not want to entertain a question.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Did you say Edmonton-Whitemud?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I did.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I just didn't understand why the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre stood up.

REV. ROBERTS: I want to speak.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I listened with, I guess, some amazement to the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Belmont, and I was quite frankly shocked that that type of statement would be made. I see it as advocating that concern for the well-being of people's health, whether it be heart problems – no matter what the situation may be, the bargaining process in itself, from the labour point of view, becomes so all-out important that nothing else matters. In other words, there is no room there at all for a position that is moderate, that will satisfy both bodies involved: the employer, management, and the employee. That is an extreme position that I think both affected parties would have difficulty with. I'm not sure the

health care people within our province would want to be placed in that type of situation. As was stated by the leader of the Liberal caucus, we're talking in terms of responsible people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go back two years. We were faced at that time with the situation where we did have the illegal strike, the illegal walkout. At that particular time, I was a member of the Alberta Hospital Association. I was part of the so-called management portion of the two-way street. We had extreme difficulties with what was happening, because we were locked into a situation because of legislation. We could see that the nurses were forced into a situation where they were going to go for an illegal walkout, because they didn't have the right to go through the normal process, a process that will generally work extremely well.

The references made by the Member for Edmonton-Belmont that this strong position, the ultimate clout, has to be in the hands of the union I have a great deal of difficulty with. We are talking in terms of responsible workers. We are talking in terms of a group of health care professional people that are prepared to accept their responsibility toward health care, and that responsibility is to provide those essential types of services that are required to deal with critical lifesaving situations even if a strike is occurring, whether that strike is illegal or legal. They proved when that strike was illegal that they were prepared to provide that type of service.

I don't believe that if one were to talk to the masses of health care personnel out there, they would object to this type of position. Clearly, management, the Alberta Hospital Association, has made it very, very clear that this is the type of Bill they would like to see passed. This is the type of Bill that would lay out the process for them, would give them clear direction, would tell them exactly what they could expect.

Two years ago while a retreat was being held in Calgary by the Alberta Hospital Association just trying to get a feel as to what might happen, we found ourselves in that difficult situation of speculating. By the time we drove back to Edmonton, the strike was already on, because of course with an illegal strike you don't have that normal notice you would have and you don't have the mechanism in place to allow for certain aspects of the operation to continue.

I hold that in most cases the employee, the union, is indeed very, very responsible. We can't always assume it's management that's the responsible party. We have to assume there is as much responsibility, if not more in a lot of cases, on the part of the employees. We can look at some of the strikes the Member for Edmonton-Belmont referred to, such as the Gainers strike. We saw clearly that there was a great deal of irresponsibility on the part of management in that particular case.

When it comes to the bargaining process, it is recognized as a two-way street; it is recognized that there has to be a bit of give and take. It is recognized that there has to be a process in place that works to the satisfaction of both parties but at the same time protects the common good of the public. I believe that's the key: protecting the well-being of the general public.

This Bill in front of us, Bill 204, would provide that provision. I would be frightened to even think of having to live in the city, to live in the province if, in fact, we had a Bill that spelled out going to the degree the New Democratic caucus has. It would be very, very frightening, and I don't think it's the type of responsibility that even the health care people would want to have placed on themselves. I think it's unfortunate that the Member for Edmonton-Belmont has allowed himself to get so hung up on defending that one position that the light is just

totally blacked out, the light just isn't seen. I believe that the only answer, the only alternative that satisfies all parties concerned, is Bill 204.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. THURBER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to stand in this House and speak in opposition to this Bill. I welcome debate on this Bill today because I think it gives a good opportunity for Albertans to learn firsthand about the role this government plays in developing good labour legislation. It is also a good opportunity for members of the public to learn of the differences in approach between this government and the members of the opposition in the development of legislation in this province, which is so vital to each and every Albertan who works in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I think members will recall that back in 1987, following extensive public input and a comprehensive review of the employment standards and labour relations legislation, the Minister of Labour introduced Bill 60, the Labour Code. Prior to the introduction of that Bill, numerous meetings with interested groups, both labour and management, were held to ensure that any legislative changes would be fair and equitable to all Albertans. Altogether this government received over 300 public submissions and attended over 200 meetings on Bill 60 alone.

In 1988 and 1989, in response to these very concerns raised by Albertans, the Bill was separated into Bills 21 and 22, which, as members on this side of the House are aware, were enacted on November 1 and November 28 as the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code respectively.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberals may be interested in knowing that the first Bill, Bill 21, the Employment Standards Code, sets out the minimum provisions that will apply to all employees and employers, including payment of wages, hours of work and overtime, minimum wage, parental benefits, vacations, holidays, termination benefits, all these criteria that are in this code. The Labour Relations Code, Bill 22, applies to the unionized sector, and it does address such subjects as mediation, arbitration, strikes, lockouts, and the operation of the province's Labour Relations Board.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it is important to emphasize the point here that these two Bills arose out of a very comprehensive consultation process which was initiated by this government. I wonder which groups the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition consulted prior to introducing this Bill today. My first reaction, given that he puts forward an amendment to legislation which ceased to exist 16 months ago, is that he most certainly did not meet with any labour groups or any nursing organizations in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the hon. member just made this one up on the fly, as he does most other things, and didn't really give any serious consideration at all to consulting with those most directly concerned with this amendment. That is not only unfortunate; it's reckless. This government has accomplished a great deal in developing sound labour legislation, which in my view has set the stage for harmonious labour relations in Alberta, such as the one that just took place the other day and was settled. This government has gone to great lengths to consult with all Albertans and has now achieved a solid legislative framework which serves the best interests of all Albertans and all sides of the labour equation. It took a lot of work, but I'm sure all Albertans will agree it was well worth the time and

effort. In Alberta we have some of the best labour legislation anywhere.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this lesson seems to have been lost on the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, as have a lot of other lessons. I really have to ask myself: does the member opposite realize the implications of this amendment? Does he realize that he may be actually setting the stage for future labour strife with such a selective amendment? What do the labour specialists have to say about this Bill? Has he consulted with them? Has he talked to anyone in the Department of Labour as to the impact of this Bill on the compulsory arbitration process? I think not. Has he had representation from the hospital workers?

Mr. Speaker, there are too many questions left unanswered by the leader of the Liberal Party in proposing this amendment. Perhaps in the future he should follow the lead of the government and consult with the people of Alberta, not just the Liberals; consult with the people, find out what they want and what they need. Only then should he think about coming back to this Assembly with amending legislation to Alberta's labour laws. Until such time as he does that, I certainly cannot support this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm prompted, too, to get into this debate a little bit. I've been watching the whole health care sector with interest for a number of years, as you know. Though we're most concerned in the New Democratic caucus about health care services for people in the province through the hospitals, the long-term care centres, and now the community health sector as well, there's no doubt that the conflicts which often arise among the staff and the workers and the professionals and the service providers is a very important area of investigation and review. Though it's perhaps more of a labour matter, I know those of us who are concerned about good health care, not just for consumers but also for providers, want good health care in the system, and we want to again look at this Bill. Most of what my colleague from Edmonton-Belmont has already said are points I'd like to make, so I'd like to reiterate them and emphasize some of them.

I am a bit concerned about my colleagues — dare I say — to the left here, particularly the management view.

MR. DECORE: Don't say to the left; that won't be true. [interjections]

REV. ROBERTS: I know. It does seem a tad ironic.

The management view as just articulated by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, I think, is very telling. I'm sorry I didn't hear the leader of the Liberal Party's introduction of the Bill, but it was articulated by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, his experience being with the Alberta Hospital Association as being on management's side. I mean, they're very respectable people, some appointed and some elected, and they have to be dealt with in a very strong way. We know that people we've talked to at United Nurses of Alberta, representing about 12,000 nurses in the province, and the Staff Nurses Association at the University hospital and other provincially operated hospitals, representing some 2,000 or 3,000 nurses or more, have a very

different view from the management view as articulated by Edmonton-Whitemud and by this Bill.

In the main, the dynamics of this process are as the Member for Edmonton-Belmont has articulated. What this amendment does is basically erode the collective will and wisdom of the nurses as a collective bargaining unit together. What this does is divide them into some sense of who's essential and who's not essential. I think that itself bears some examination. As, in fact, Calgary-Bow has pointed out, who's to come around and say that this pediatric intensive care nurse is essential but the nurse who's on the ward, dealing with kids and babies, is not essential? Who's to say that an emergency room nurse is essential and a geriatric nurse in a long-term care centre isn't essential? So I'd like to see how it's provided for. It says in the collective bargaining agreement, as I read the amendment, that they would work out themselves who would be essential and who wouldn't be essential. But my view is, as has been said, that they don't want to get into that kind of double bind, that they don't want to have to say, even in their own ranks, who in some sense is a bit more important, in terms of being outside the collective bargaining arrangement, as opposed to who can be given the right to strike.

That itself hits at the principle of solidarity, which is a very strong labour principle. We know that solidarity is the key word of the working people. We in the New Democratic caucus want to represent that voice and say with the Lech Walesas of the world, whether it's in Poland or the workers in Czechoslovakia or the workers in East Germany and West Germany together or the workers in Great Britain or the workers here in Alberta, that their key principle, their key organizing view is that they have to work together. Either we hang together, it was said, or we hang separately. To do this, I think, clearly hits at the solidarity principle of what it is to be a union of working people, together trying to develop a fairness for their efforts and for their labour. Now, that's the one question in terms of essential.

The other question, maybe more to the point in terms of the public, is how emergency services, vital life-and-death services of that nature, are to be provided for in the event of a strike. Now, we take the hard-handed, almost totalitarian view of this government, which says, "Well, cabinet will come down, and we'll use the UNA bullet and either decertify them or fine them to death for being illegal." I mean, they've tried to point out how Nelson Mandela broke laws, and he did and was put in jail for long periods of time. Desmond Tutu or other people have broken laws. It just happens that some of the laws that are made are bad laws. So we have this very authoritarian, totalitarian view of decertifying them by the will of a few people that want to suspend freedoms in this province.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

They say they want to do it because it's going to mean that somebody in a motor vehicle accident or some baby that's born that needs emergency surgery is going to die as a result. Well, as Edmonton-Belmont again has already pointed out, that clearly has been provided for by nurses, who, after all, have taken an oath, have a professional standard, have become registered as nurses in this province, and have a professional ethic and a professional duty to perform nursing duties as they see fit. They want to provide for the life-and-death services of people. They just don't want to have the life and breath sucked out of them in the process.

So what they have said, and what they are doing, as has been pointed out, is that during the last three or four nurses' strikes in the province, they have within each local an emergency services committee, which is in contact almost on every shift with people in the hospital to say, "Well, what is going on in the surgical suite, what is going on in emergency, and what services need to be provided?" At that point the power's in their hands and they can be the arbiter in terms of saying, "Well, you can provide for that person with this or that kind of care or service." Clearly, they're not going to come in when it's not an emergency, but according to their own ethic, according to their own professional standards, they have made themselves available and will continue to make themselves available in the event of a strike or lockout where negotiations have broken down.

What the principle of this amendment is trying to do is to provide, I think, for that kind of inevitability, but as has clearly been demonstrated in the province in the last few strikes, as I've said, this kind of provision has been met. After the last nurses' strike or the ones before that, I don't recall you could say that a 55-year-old man who wouldn't have otherwise died because of a heart attack died because of the strike, or a young infant died in an incubator because there weren't nursing services. There isn't testimony of that. Now, I could be wrong. I'd like to hear about it; I'm sure it would have been reported. The United Nurses are very aware of reports, often hyped up, of management getting all the TV cameras and reporters and saying: "Oh, here's a little baby we have to fly out to a neighbouring province. See what those nasty, mean nurses have done. They forced us to fly this baby out to another province for care."

My information is that that is quite staged, that in fact the nurses would have provided service in a life-or-death situation for that infant, but obviously to get the cameras there and to fly the baby out in a helicopter is very dramatic and is, if anything, trying to alter or shift public opinion. I don't think it has much to do with the health care status or what could have been provided in an authentic way during the strike. My information is clearly that nurses would have provided that service through the local emergency services committee that each, of them have during a strike.

So given that sense of the matter, Mr. Speaker, the principles involved – solidarity as an organizing principle that, I think, this Bill hits at the heart of – we just can't support it. Given the sense of the Liberals or some, can I say the words, bleeding hearts who might want to just think that people are going to be denied services because of nurses on a strike and that we should have some nurses deemed essential, not to be able to strike – again, I think that has already been provided for and doesn't need to have this amendment to make it any more literal. In the dynamic of the negotiating process and in the dynamic of the strike itself, these things are taken care of.

So those are primarily my points, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm sure the Liberal caucus has been in touch with some nurses who might have taken this view, but it does seem to me to be a management view. Obviously, the executive and the people I'm in touch with . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Through the Chair, please.

REV. ROBERTS: I'm sorry. The people I'm in touch with, who are the leaders of the United Nurses of Alberta themselves, want to hang together; they don't want to hang separately. They want to use the principle of solidarity to bargain on behalf of all nurses in the province. They don't need to have this kind of way

to make strikes more possible, because management will come along and say: "Well, you want a 30 percent raise; too bad. We can still keep the nurses in the hospital sector going because we have these essential ones. We can let the rest of you strike, and you can be out for a long period of time." So it takes the pressure off and makes the possibility of management forcing a strike much more likely. Or as it's been argued, once they're into a strike, they'll say, "Well, okay, we'll just keep it going, because we can keep the pediatric intensive care or the emergency services going, and we can weight-list other services."

So I think that though there might be some sense of trying to be fair with this amendment, basically it is hitting not only at the principle of labour negotiating but at the dynamics of what's really been going on and is actually going to make things worse. I know I've learned the lesson, and we all need to learn the lesson, that as well intentioned as we might want to be, often those good intentions end up hurting more than helping. We need to be very careful and consult with all sides and be, I think, much more concerned about fairness and equity and justice and what the labour movement is about and how nurses have organized to be strong advocates of the work of nurses and to use the clout they have. As Edmonton-Belmont has pointed out, they don't have economic clout; they don't have management clout. The only clout they have is their going to work for that eight-hour or 12-hour shift. That's their only clout, and to take that away from them, to begin to splinter or divide or fragment it, to diminish it in any way, I think is a clear violation of their freedom and their rights in this country and in this province.

So we certainly don't support it in any way, and I'm pleased to be able to put these comments on the record with the comments of Edmonton-Belmont. I know that in large measure the nurses throughout the province agree with us, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for your attention.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the brief couple of moments left to me, I'd just like to point out to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley that those of us who were present and in this House at the point at which the labour legislation that now stands was created do remember the public outrage at what occurred during that time, and I think it would be prudent not to laud the legislation or the process at this stage.

Mr. Speaker, the history is that in the late '70s there was a particularly difficult and acrimonious strike. Prior to that, nurses had been allowed to go on strike. The government, in a fit of pique or whatever, decided to create this piece of legislation and disallow it. Now, did it work? The answer is no; of course it didn't. It was compounded a few years ago by the reduction in the allowance and the resources to hospitals, and it was a very difficult situation indeed. Yes, it caused a lot of discomfort; it caused a lot of fear. Unquestionably, Mr. Speaker, there was overwhelming support during that strike for the nurses. Our Premier came back from a holiday in Phoenix, as I recall . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Palm Springs.

MRS. HEWES: Palm Springs it was. He took a special flight back, presumably to resolve the strike, got off the plane and said, "I don't speak to people who are breaking the law."

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Hospital Association and hospitals, institutions, nurses, and health care workers throughout our province in fact support this piece of legislation. The notion is that essential services should be worked out between the parties, between the institutions and the organizations, depending upon the particular needs of that institution.

Mr. Speaker, nurses should not be treated in this fashion. They are a professional group. They are a group that can be depended upon, and they have always proven that and will again. To the Member for Edmonton-Belmont, I suggest that we are talking about a public service; we are talking about hospitals. We are not talking about industry here, and there is a difference.

I believe it is high time that we rethink this regressive piece of legislation and put nurses and health care workers back on a fair and equitable track in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest to you that I have prepared a speech that in all modesty I feel deserves a hearing in this Assembly at some future date. Given the hour, I would request leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.
Deputy Premier.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, as members are aware, the estimates of the Department of Agriculture will be dealt with this evening and the Department of Education tomorrow. I would move that when the members assemble at 8 o'clock this evening, they do so as the Committee of Supply and that the Assembly stand adjourned until such time as the Committee of Supply reports.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

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