

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 1, 1990 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 90/05/01

[The Committee of Supply met at 8 p.m.]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the committee come to order, please.

head: **Main Estimates 1990-91**

Labour

MR. CHAIRMAN: In Committee of Supply this evening we are looking at the estimates of the Department of Labour, which are found at page 235 of the main book with the details found commencing at page 101 of the elements book.

The hon. Minister of Labour.

MS McCOY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [some applause] Thank you very much. I truly appreciate the support my colleagues have shown, and I also appreciate the chance to make some opening remarks this evening. I'd like to begin by welcoming members from the Department of Labour and the Personnel Administration Office and my own office for attending this evening, and I particularly wish to thank them for their help in preparing this budget and for their hard work and assistance in all of what we do all year-round. I particularly wish to commend the 724 public servants in the Labour department, the Labour Relations Board, and PAO for their effort and commitment, which is outstanding and ever nonstinting.

I'm fortunate and honoured to present my estimates on this particular day, May 1, which is a day celebrated by working men and women all around the world as international Labour Day. In my more than 12 months in this portfolio I've had the opportunity to speak with labour leaders and with employers and employees all around the province, and I've had many opportunities to reflect on the meaning of work and on the contributions of labour to Alberta. I think it appropriate to share some of those reflections now not only because it is a special day for labour but because these thoughts from the underlying rationale for much of what I'm doing and trying to achieve in this portfolio I think are important to express.

A philosopher once observed that work is indispensable not only for our material well-being but for our happiness as well. For most individuals work is much more than one of the few things a human being can do for eight hours at a stretch. It is central to our sense of self and to the quality of our lives. The writer Studs Terkel once powerfully summed up the importance of work in his famous study called *Working*. He wrote: work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than boredom; in short, for a way of life rather than a Monday to Friday way of dying. In my own way with my own words that is the message I try to convey.

Today's workers are not commodities but constituents to be won and, once won, made partners in organizations. Workers today want to participate and to be involved in the decisions that affect their working lives. They want an effective voice in the workplace, and they will not be denied that voice. They will not

work in silence. Providing workers with a voice has, of course, always been the central purpose of the labour movement. Labour, too, has always been among the first to remind us of the connection between work and the human spirit, something we can easily forget in the rush to compete in a changing world. Labour has always reminded us that people are the key to prosperity and success, and this has never been more true than in today's world of global competition and technology. Of course, the meaning of work and the importance of people should be remembered every day and not only on May 1 or on Labour Day in Canada, which is, of course, September 1. Certainly in the Department of Labour these things are foremost on our minds.

The department exists to help employees and employers achieve a productive and mutually beneficial relationship. The department does that in a variety of ways. It helps through mediation services, through the employment standards branch, and by administering Alberta's human rights law and its labour laws and its general safety laws. The department is a relatively small one in terms of dollars and employees but its influence is widespread and extends well beyond administering laws and regulations.

One of my most important jobs as labour minister is to encourage the major partners in our economy, management and labour, to sit down together and identify appropriate areas for mutual action and for innovation. Sure there will always be items of contention between labour and management, but that does not preclude the need or the ability for co-operation and negotiation. That co-operative effort and spirit are required more now than ever before as we head into the 21st century. We must co-operate and negotiate as we face the challenges of all that is being put before us in the 1990s. We must co-operate and we must negotiate as we attempt to adjust the workplace to accommodate the new realities of today's increasingly diverse work force. We must co-operate and we must negotiate if we are to maintain and strengthen the connection between work and human dignity.

Now I'd like to briefly mention the highlights of the six votes before members of this Assembly tonight and, in doing so, quickly comment on the work being done in each of the areas involved. As you can see, votes 1 through 5 relate to the Department of Labour. We're looking at a \$1.8 million, or 6.2 percent, increase in spending over last year. Salaries, wages, and benefits account for some of that increase; the rest is to fund several special initiatives, including a plan to improve service delivery in the employment standards branch. As well, more money is going to the Alberta Human Rights Commission in order to help it deal with an increase in complaints.

In vote 1 members are being asked to approve a 4.1 percent increase for Departmental Support Services. This will cover salary adjustments and one new position to help implement the new MUST program, which stands for monitoring underground storage tanks. That is a program which is designed to reduce environmental risks posed by underground storage tanks. The general safety services division of my department is working with Alberta Environment on this innovative program, one of the first of its kind in Canada and yet another example of Alberta taking the lead in dealing with environmental issues.

Vote 2 calls for a 2.6 percent budget increase for the Labour Relations division, which consists of Mediation Services, Employment Standards, Employee/Employer Services, and the pensions branch. I want to draw special attention to Mediation Services and Employment Standards. In the past 10 years 95

percent of the collective agreements in this province have been reached without strike or lockout. Last year the percentage was 98 percent. That is an excellent labour relations record and one which the mediations program offered by my department has helped to develop. Department mediators assist in resolving difficult negotiations. That often involves working straight through the night until early morning and on weekends. Our mediators also offer one-day sessions on labour management relations for union stewards and supervisors to promote harmony on the shop floor. There is growing interest in our grievance mediation service, to the point that a few people are making it part of their collective agreements. We also provide first agreement orientation, and we help set up labour/management committees to deal co-operatively with issues like health and safety, drug abuse, and discrimination.

Equally important in maintaining good employer/employee relations is the employment standards branch. Employment standards officers educate employers and employees about their mutual workplace rights and obligations, and the branch offers protection to workers by setting minimum standards of employment and by assisting individuals denied those standards. The branch is one of our busiest service agencies. In an average year the branch deals with about 10,000 claims. Most of those claims, about three-quarters of them in fact, are dealt with, finished completely, within 90 days. Many claims are resolved on the same day that they are filed. In only 4 percent of cases is the branch unable to assist, usually because the employer is either bankrupt or has left the province.

Last year the branch recovered two and a half million dollars in earnings for Albertans. Two and a half million dollars: now that, I would say, is service. The branch does provide an excellent service, but it never rests on its laurels. The people there are continually trying to make it even better. They are even now completing reviewing their branch operations and hope to launch several initiatives later this year, including a storefront office in Edmonton and a telephone line offering taped information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Just this week the branch released new brochures that explained the employment standards code to immigrant employees and employers. The brochures come in seven languages, which are: Punjabi, Spanish, Vietnamese, French, Arabic, Polish, and Chinese. I welcome every one of the members of this Assembly to ask for copies of these important brochures. If they would have any assistance to their constituents, I'm sure they will. In the near future we'll be releasing Cree and Blackfoot versions, and we're open to providing these brochures in other languages, too, if the need is demonstrated. Generally, our aim is to become more accessible and more effective: more user friendly, if you will.

Vote 3 calls for an 83 percent increase in funding, and that's for General Safety Services. Although this division has a low profile compared to, say, labour relations or employment standards, it nevertheless has a major impact on the everyday lives of all Albertans. As the Romans used to say, "*Salus populi suprema lex.*" It means: the people's safety is the highest law. This division sets standards and regulations and uses risk management skills to enhance safety in many areas, including fire, electrical, plumbing, gas, elevators, buildings, and boilers. Currently the men and women of this division are consulting with Albertans to compile a new uniform general safety Act. That Act will carry Alberta into the next century and the increasingly complex world of risk management.

Vote 4 covers the Labour Relations Board, a key component in our collective bargaining system. Aply led by the Chair, Andy Sims, it is comprised of two vice-chairs, and then an equal number of representatives as part-time members from the labour movement and from management side. The Labour Relations Board consists of equal representation, as I've just said, because its role is to be an impartial and fair adjudicator of disputes and a fair and impartial adjudicator and interpreter of our labour law, the Labour Relations Code. It also ensures that the employee's right to free collective bargaining is upheld. Of all the rules covering labour relations, this one, the employee's right to free collective bargaining, is the most fundamental and one that this government will always uphold.

Speaking of individual rights brings me to vote 5, which covers the Alberta Human Rights Commission and administration of the Individual's Rights Protection Act. The 12.2 percent increase here reflects the much higher profile and heightened activity level that the commission has assumed under the capable and energetic leadership of its new chief commissioner, Fil Fraser. This increase, coming as it does during a time of fiscal restraint, also reflects this government's strong commitment to human rights. Complaints to the commission rose by 70 percent last year, a response, no doubt, to the commission's renewed visibility and effectiveness.

As I have said many times before, Alberta's society is becoming increasingly diverse. One in every six Albertans was born outside Canada. One in every five people living in either Calgary or Edmonton is an immigrant. Our population includes more than 40 different cultural and ethnic groups. Sixty percent of the nearly 90,000 immigrants who came to Alberta between 1980 and 1987 did not speak English. Our diversity extends beyond culture. It includes diversity of gender, of age, physical and mental abilities, of skills, family obligations, philosophies, attitudes, and issues. Diversity is a fact of life, and the commission and the IRPA are two of the most important tools Albertans have for managing this diversity. By providing protection for Albertans in the areas of employment, accommodation, and public services the commission and IRPA help us to build bridges of understanding and acceptance among the many communities that make up our society.

However proud we have been of our image, the Canadian mosaic, I think we do need to move toward a new image for the coming century. I do say it's time that we, as Albertans and Canadians, stopped thinking of our society as a mosaic with its very many different pieces all static and separated by thin layers of cement, because inherent in that image is the thought of isolation. Rather, I say it's time we adopted a new image, and that is of the kaleidoscope. A kaleidoscope contains many pieces, all touching edge to edge, and they're dynamic and they move and the pattern shifts even though the pieces are all the same. They all shine like jewels, illuminated by a common light: the light of our shared values. We come from many lands and from many backgrounds, but we all believe in fairness, equality, self-reliance, hard work, and family in all its diverse forms. We believe in helping those in need, and, most importantly, we value the individual. The IRPA, the commission: they're all about upholding these values and making Alberta the kind of kaleidoscopic place where all communities connect and where all individuals are free to achieve.

Finally, we have vote 6 and the Personnel Administration Office. Here we are looking at a 5.1 percent increase. PAO plays a key role in developing and maintaining the quality of our public service. In Alberta we have an excellent public service.

It's made up of skilled and committed and hardworking men and women. It's easy to overlook just how important the public service is. Government plays a major role in many aspects of our lives, and while it's elected politicians who set policy and provide direction, it's the public service that delivers the services to Albertans. It's the public service that delivers programs and mails out cheques and provides government with information and advice and options. How well the public service does its job affects the quality of life of all Albertans. Maintaining excellence in the public service is essential if Alberta is to continue responding successfully to the challenges of a competitive and complex world.

As you know, I'm also the minister responsible for women's issues, and I can't talk about PAO without pointing to some of the things it is doing and has done to promote equality for women. It is about to launch a mentoring program for senior-level women along with an accelerated management training program, two initiatives being taken under the umbrella of the Alberta Plan for Action for Women. Additionally, PAO now has under way two committees, one to look at employment equity and another to examine what can be done to help employees better balance work and family responsibilities. As well, of course, the PAO has since 1977 operated the women's program to help women pursue public service careers.

We still have a long way to go, but PAO has achieved significant progress. I know the commitment of Jim Dixon and others under his leadership is strong and the urge to succeed is very high. I'm pleased to report that the number of women in management has more than doubled since 1978, and the wage gap between men and women has been narrowed from about 38 percent in 1980 to roughly 28 percent today, a drop of 10 percentage points in 10 years. That's progress, and I'm certain we will see even more.

Well, I've said enough for the moment. Now I look forward to hearing from other members of the Assembly. With that, Mr. Chairman, I will say thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before the Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont, there's a request by the hon. member that his time be shared with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore. Is the committee agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to members of the Assembly for that agreement.

In commenting on the minister's estimates, I want to start off by saying that this is the second year that I've again had the opportunity to stand up immediately following the Minister of Labour to comment on the budget of the department. I remember that when I sat down last year, I made comment that contained in the government estimate books, the Capital Fund estimate books, there just wasn't sufficient information in the various votes that we're asked to consider to really be properly and fully informed of what's going on inside the Labour department. It's with regret that again this year we find that in four out of the six votes that we have in the department we have no subprogram breakdowns and very limited information available to us.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased that the minister tried to provide some information starting off her estimates tonight, but what we've got before us is a budget of \$40, 190,000, which is an increase of two and a half million dollars over last year, without any increase in information. Now, perhaps some of the backbenchers are happy that they don't have this information before them. Perhaps without this information there's a lack of responsibility that accompanies it, but I'm not impressed. I'm actually rather upset that we have such little information before us for an amount of money that is so great, and it's impossible to know where that money really is going to without further breakdown.

MR. NELSON: Ask the right questions.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall suggests that I ask the right questions. The matter that's before us is that when we asked questions last year, we didn't get a response. When we've asked questions in other departments, sometimes time doesn't permit a response to occur. For \$40 million one would anticipate there being more information, and if you were at all concerned about the amount of money that was being spent by the government, you, too, might want to have more information before you. Because quite frankly, taxpayers have the right to know how their money is being spent, and we're not getting that information here.

Mr. Chairman, only in vote 1 have we got any kind of a program breakdown at all. We get to find out very little about where \$4.6 million is being spent. Very little information. You can't find any information in this vote 1 that might lead to the suggestion of the duplication of services, about redundancy, about waste, because there's no breakdown. You've got vote 1.06, which is Communications: \$109,000. Then you've got vote 1.08, Information Services: \$441,000, almost \$442,000. Now, I would suggest that Information Services and Communications might be something similar. But without a program breakdown, without further breakdown, I can't tell, quite frankly, whether or not there's anything related, whether or not there's any duplication of services, whether there's an effort that might be made in order to tighten up the department to save some money, or whether more money ought to be expended. What we've got is a lump sum that's thrown before us, and we're expected to know what's going on in there.

That's not the only area. We've got Executive Management at \$573,000 and Human Resource Services at \$318,000, votes 1.02 and 1.03. Without having the information before me, I would think there might be some areas there where there's a duplication of effort and service and redundancy. Perhaps that ought to be broken down so that we can examine the figures that are before us. In that same vote 1, if we had a breakdown perhaps I wouldn't bore the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall by asking the question: why is there a 19.5 percent increase in the Minister's Office? But that's a question that I have to ask because I don't know. Maybe the Member for Calgary-McCall can get up and answer the question. Maybe he's got the answer. Surely that's a concern of his. What constitutes Systems in vote 1? At \$906,000 I would hope we would have more information before us than just Systems, \$906,000. I would think that other members of the Assembly, other members of caucus would have said, "What is Systems?" If Systems are so important, why did they get an 8.9 percent decrease? Again no information.

Maybe what we ought to do is take some of that money that was in vote 1.08, Information Services, and put some of that

information that ought to be contained in the budget into the budget and bring that into the Assembly. Because this is not, quite frankly, I believe, how you go about debating the budget. This is not how you go about trying to debate the estimates for this department. What's really regrettable, Mr. Chairman, is that vote 1 along with vote 6 has the most information. Votes 2, 3, 4 – my colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore is going to comment on vote 5 – we have no breakdown at all, nothing whatsoever. So we have to ask questions of generality, questions that are so apparent that the figures jump out at you but, again, not knowing what is really there.

In vote 2 we have a 12 percent increase in Divisional Support. To me, quite frankly, that doesn't mean an awful lot, and I really wish we had a subprogram breakdown. I want to know why there's a 12 percent increase. Why is that need there? I'm sure the minister and members of the department have some rationale and some justification for it, but it's not contained in the budget.

At the same time, we have a 25 percent decrease in Employee/Employer Services. How come? Perhaps, again, if we had had that information, we just wouldn't have to ask questions about why this figure is up and that figure is down.

The minister explained the reason we have a \$200,000 increase in Employment Standards, and I'm pleased about that. I know that there have been a number of occasions where my constituency office staff have utilized the services at the employment standards branch, and they've done a marvelous job. I've been more than pleased with the kind of reception that we've had at employment standards. I think there are some limitations that they have, and that's related to legislation and not related to the budget, but that's a problem that we're going to have to resolve at another period of time.

Now, I want to move on to another vote that has little or no information again, and that's vote 3. The most glaring figure that jumps out at you, perhaps out of the entire estimates of the department, is vote 3.0.1 where we have Divisional Support without a program breakdown but we've got a 98.4 percent increase. I would hope that the Member for Calgary-McCall would concur in my request to get more information for this one, Mr. Chairman, because this is almost a doubling of the amount of money with no explanation. Divisional Support doesn't mean an awful lot to me, but the figure really pops out at you. I've heard that there are going to be some major changes to a number of statutes that we have and that *we're* going to end up with some kind of a uniform safety Act, and I was wondering if this incredible increase in funds for Divisional Support has anything to do with the uniform safety Act. But again, without having any kind of information really, we can only guess. I hope the minister would respond to that.

The other figure that pops out of vote 3 is Fire Prevention. All of the other departments in vote 3 are within half a percentage point of 3 percent. Boilers, Building Standards, Electrical Protection, Elevators, and Plumbing and Gas are all within a half point of 3 percent, and yet Fire Prevention comes out with a 22 and a half percent increase. So I don't know. I didn't hear the minister comment in her introductory remarks about the reason for the increase. All members, if they turn to page 103 in the little thin book and 243 in the big fat book, if you turn to those pages you'll see that there's not enough information there to really understand why we've got a big increase in one area and just little, minor increases in the area of all of the others.

Now, it's pretty plain what's going on in vote 4. We've got the Labour Relations Board, and Labour Relations Board is going to get \$1.6 million. Now, in the big book it says what the services provided by the program are. I just want to quote:

The Board grants and terminates bargaining rights of trade unions or employers, investigates complaints under the applicable legislative authority, issues declarations on unfair labour practices, and issues cease and desist orders on unlawful strikes or lockouts.

One point six million dollars.

I've got a feeling, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Assembly, that \$1.6 million just isn't going to be enough to cover the needs of the Labour Relations Board. Now, why would I have that feeling? The reason I've got that feeling is because workers in Alberta are upset. I've gone out and talked with workers. The minister talked about the record that we've got in the industry that's unionized, a 98 percent settlement factor without strike or lockout. That was in the last year. I think that's a figure that we'd better pin to a wall, because I've gone out and talked to workers recently. They're upset, and I'm using parliamentary language, Mr. Chairman. That's the nice term. That's the real nice term, because these guys are mad, and there's really a compound word to that. I would suggest that when the opportunity comes about for renewals, there's going to be an awful lot of labour disruption in our province. Perhaps the reason that there's going to be so much labour disruption in our province is because workers feel very much let down by the actions of this government.

They can cite some pretty strong examples over the course of the administration of this government. Bill 41: take away the right to strike. Bill 44: let's do it again. Bill 110: we had spin-off companies in the construction industry that were functioning illegally, but let the government introduce Bill 110 to make it legal for the employer. Workers got wind, finally started to recognize what was going on, and saw the problem. The problem wasn't just with their industrial relations; the problem was with the administration of the province's affairs. It became very clear over the course of time just whose side the government was on. Every time labour had a problem that couldn't be resolved, too bad. We can cite Zeidler's that has had a strike for four years in Slave Lake and two years in Edmonton and Wittke in Medicine Hat. We can talk about negotiations of Time Air attendants that can't get their first contract, of Wittke workers that are out on strike because they can't get their first contract. We can talk about strikes that are lost because they couldn't secure first contracts at Daam Galvanizing.

Now, Mr. Chairman, that's what the workers get. What do the employers get? Well, we have Bill 110 that showed how prepared the government was to get involved and change the legislation, change the law to benefit the employer. We've had previous examples from previous administrations, not when this minister has been the Minister of Labour, but it's been there, and it's compounded. Now we've got a problem. It's created a climate. It's created a climate that workers don't like.

We've got laws on the books right now that say nurses don't have the right to strike, social workers don't have the right to strike. Nurses were fined \$400,000. You would have thought that when the social workers saw the kinds of fines that were being levied against the nurses, the social workers wouldn't go out on strike. My God, if there's going to be any kind of economic penalty levied against one group as a lesson so that another group wouldn't go out, you would think \$400,000 would be sufficient. But it wasn't. So the legislation that this government passed that says, "Oh, naughty, naughty, you can't strike," just isn't effective. It's not going to do anything to those folk.

Legislation isn't going to hold them back. They're out on the picket line today. I'd bet you a lot of money that they'll be out in increasing numbers tomorrow. You know, Mr. Chairman, the problem that we've got is multifold. We've had the International Labour Organisation come along and say, "They have the right to strike." Well, government says: "Naw, not to worry. We'll take that right away. We won't have to worry about it." Is it any wonder that workers are demoralized? I don't wonder about it at all.

It's no wonder that the Merit Contractors Association of Alberta and the independent construction contractors of British Columbia chose Alberta as the site to hold their first conference. Imagine that garbage in a national park. It's pretty shameful. Pretty shameful. But you know what? The climate was right. The climate was right and it was right here. That's part of the problem, that this government has created the climate, and now the private sector knows it. That's why they were here.

The Minister of Labour attended, and I got a copy of her remarks. I saw the remarks, and I was impressed that she was there to stand up and say that workers have the right to determine their own future. But you know, Mr. Chairman, I don't think the Minister of Labour should have been there at all. I don't think the Minister of Labour should have gone there to even give credit or credence to this group. She could have said the same thing in a letter and sent them a map that showed them how to get out of our province. It's no wonder that we had working Albertans protesting at the conference outside while the minister spoke inside, because they've got no faith. They haven't got any faith in this government at all, and when the opportunity arises for those workers to get some of their own back, they're going to. They're going to get some of their own back whether it's on the picket line, regardless of the law, and they're going to get some of their own back come the next election regardless of what this government tries to do to correct their past mistakes.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to close my remarks for the time being and ask my colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore to stand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I would like to confine my remarks to vote 5, which deals with the Individual's Rights Protection Act. I must compliment the minister on her image of a kaleidoscope. I think it's quite appropriate and is an image that is much more helpful than some of the images and what some of the images have given rise to in the past.

I would also like to compliment the commission on a much higher profile in the community. It's been very important and obviously has brought some results if there has been a 70 percent increase in the number of complaints. I don't think that that many more people are acting in a discriminatory way, but more people are seeing the Human Rights Commission as an avenue to deal with discrimination. So we have to be glad that has occurred. I'd also like to say that I've appreciated the recent publicity about a sexual harassment case, because this is indeed a great problem in our workplace and in our society.

Now, on to other things. I note that the increase of allocation to this department is 12.2 percent this year, but when I calculated that, that was only \$142, 159. So that's not a lot of money. In addition, I note that there is only an increase of less than \$40,000 to Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits, an increase

of 3.6 percent, which would hardly seem to keep up with the cost of living. So I have to ask, then: what kind of services will be provided by the additional funds? But, also, in view of the increasing number of complaints that are being received and the new categories of protection that are now covered by the human rights protection Act, I'm wondering how the investigators will be able to process the cases that will come forward even from these new categories and how education can be done in regard to mental disabilities and marital status as protected categories. So I have to ask the minister what initiatives she has planned for these two new categories, as well as how they will be funded, and if in fact we will see any real increase in funding.

I would also ask the minister about new initiatives that she may be planning for the department and particularly for immigrant people. I think she alluded to them yesterday in question period when she answered questions from the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn. So I'm wondering what her plans are and particularly if she has plans to reach out to the immigrant community, new Canadians who often do not know about the commission, but if they do, have great fear of being involved or complaining to the government, often because they have come from really repressive regimes where one could as well end up in jail or shot for complaining.

Another area of concern that I have is: how do we reach out to immigrant women who are at the lowest level in terms of employment and because of difficulties of language are not able to complain even if they know they have the right to complain? Does she have initiatives that will reach out to these, probably the most oppressed people in our society?

I noted from the '87-88 report that the majority of complaints are in regard to discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. I'm wondering again if there are new initiatives in this area, particularly in view of the reports of increased sexism on our campuses that we have recently been hearing about and in view of the recent report from the federal government which talks about the glass ceiling, a phenomenon in which women are only promoted to a certain level of management and because of sexist attitudes are not able to advance further even though they are qualified. I think that these attitudes really have to be addressed, because in fact they're based on falsehoods, false beliefs, and ignorance. I think, particularly, of something I just read today, that women do not have more absences or job changes than men do although it is held that they do because of pregnancy. However, men have other reasons, probably not so laudable. But anyways . . . So we have to address that issue.

Again, I hear that a woman with a baccalaureate degree earns less than a man with a grade 8 education. Now, that's truly shocking. I think when we looked at the statistics today from the government employees, we see that although increasing numbers of women are promoted into management, that hasn't improved their economic status in terms of how many cents on the dollar they're earning. So it would seem that even women in management are earning only 71.4 cents on the dollar that men in management earn, and how do we overcome that inequity?

So I guess those are the kinds of concerns that I have, that much has been done in the last year but a great deal more needs to be done. I'm not sure with this kind of an increase, although at 12.2 percent it looks good, the real dollar figures suggest that not a lot of additional work can be done.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to enter the debate this evening with the Department of Labour estimates. A very important department because it is such a far-ranging department.

AN HON. MEMBER: I'm listening, Frank. I'm listening.

MR. BRUSEKER: Excellent; that's good. I'm glad to hear that.

I did note, though, in flipping through the book, that there are only three departments smaller in terms of total dollars allocated to their budgets: Tourism, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and the Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs department. I'm wondering if that really reflects the priority of the government. If this is a valuable department, and I believe it is, perhaps the minister should be plugging a little harder for next time around.

Before I get into some specific comments about the votes, I want to make a couple of comments about the great numbers of pieces of legislation for which this minister is responsible, and I think there are a number of concerns. We heard about it earlier this afternoon, but the legislation which this Legislature put forward in 1977 that outlaws what government is incapable of achieving through collective bargaining – that is, preventing strikes by the government's public services employees – I believe is incorrect and certainly needs to be amended. I would encourage the minister to give that consideration, both within her department and with her cabinet colleagues, because I believe that's unfair and unequal for public service employees to be denied that basic right of bargaining technique.

The Member for Edmonton-Belmont already made some comments regarding the conference that was held in Banff, and we, too, in the Liberal caucus have some concerns about the minister's presence at that particular conference.

MR. FOX: That's Liberal policy?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. Is that all right? [interjection] Okay. Thanks.

Last year the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry made some comments expressing concern about legislation with respect to Family Day, and since this minister is also the minister responsible for women's issues, he made reference, in particular, to women that have to work on statutory holidays, and, of course, Family Day is the most recent statutory holiday we've had incorporated in this province. Generally speaking, many of the clerks that work in stores that are required to be open are women, and they're not given protection to allow them to take that day off to spend time with their family or for that matter to take time off on their Sabbath day, whatever day of the week that may be depending upon their religion, to spend time at home. It seems the employers hold the upper hand there. So we believe that there is room for some amendment to legislation.

Part-time workers need to be protected a little bit better, I believe. In particular, benefits for part-time workers are being shortchanged, and I think, in all honesty, one of the perhaps most notorious employers for this is the Alberta Liquor Control Board. The vast majority of employees in that particular board now are part-time employees rather than full-time employees, and the government itself is saving a potful of money on not

having to pay benefits, and I don't believe that provides the leadership we should be providing in that area.

I was wondering what theme song the minister was going to come out with this time. I was hoping she would come out with something a little more contemporary than Bob Dylan that she did last year, *The Times They are a-Changin'*. I read your comments the last time around.

AN HON. MEMBER: Beethoven?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah, I suppose that'd be all right too. I was thinking maybe Robbie Robertson would be more contemporary.

I'm sure the minister is well aware of my predilection towards education, and since this is Education Week, I want to talk a little bit about measuring the costs of illiteracy in Canada and how that affects the work force. This is a study done, by the way, by Woods Gordon. They talked about unskilled labour and muscle work or brawn work as on the decline, and brain work is on the incline. General Motors, for example, in their assembly plants report that currently they have one skilled worker, somebody trained in an area, for every five to six assembly line workers who don't have to have any particular training. GM projects that ratio will in fact soon be 1 to 1 within the next 20 years or so. Xerox, a very famous company, of course, predicts that this year three out of four of their jobs will require some postsecondary education.

With respect to accidents even, workers not able to read policy manuals, operation manuals, and so forth. In Alberta alone illiteracy is predicted to cost in terms of accidents – payments out of the Workers' Compensation Board, time off work, and so on – \$160 million. So I would hope that the minister would address that perhaps, whether that's in Communications, under vote 1.0.6, or in some other department. I believe that's an important liaison between your department and Career Development and Employment. I realize there is some considerable overlap here.

Okay. On to vote 1. I want to make some comments about expenditures in this department, generally speaking, comparing this year's budget estimates to some five years ago, the '85-86 fiscal year. In '85-86 the total government budget was \$10 billion; this year a little over \$12 billion. That represents an increase of 21 percent over 6 years. This particular department in '85-86 had a vote 1.0.1; the Minister's Office had \$141,000 allocated to it. Today the budget is \$265,825, a cumulative increase of 87 and a half percent or four times the average budget increase, an average of 14.6 percent per year. The Consumer Price Index was 4.7 percent, so 10 percent above the Consumer Price Index. I hope that the minister would make some comment as to why we're seeing such a tremendous increase in the cost of that particular department.

Looking at other votes in that area: Executive Management. I'm not quite sure what that means, and the Member for Edmonton-Belmont made some comments about that too. What do these different departments or subvotes mean? Executive Management has had an average annual increase of 9.6 percent. We're now up to a little over \$573,000.

Finance and Administration. Over that same time frame, from '85-86 to the 1990-91 fiscal year, average – average – annual increases of 24.6 percent: way above the cost of living. I hope the minister would be able to address that. The same thing with Communications, an average annual increase in that time frame, again, of some 14 percent. So tremendous increases

in costs. Are we really getting the value for the dollars that are being expended?

As I look through the elements book, the smaller one of the two which we receive, I notice that in all six votes, in all cases, it says "No Sub-program" or "No Sub-service Breakdown." I would like to echo the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Belmont. It's extremely difficult even to understand what it is that's being presented when there is so little information being presented. Nonetheless, I shall put forward some questions that did come across my mind as I was looking at this.

The minister did make some particular comment to Mediation Services, vote 2.0.3, and noted how important that was, but it in fact reflects a decrease of some 2.5 percent, currently now at just over a million dollars. If you divide that by the total number of Albertans, it works out to 44 cents per Albertan. I think that's a piddling amount compared to some of the problems that we've got, such as Zeidler's – that has been mentioned before – and the current problem we're facing with our social workers.

Employment Standards, 2.0.4. An increase there. Some questions that came to mind: that figure of almost \$5 million is the highest figure in that particular department. A question that comes to my mind: why is that such a high figure? Why does it stand up so much higher than the rest? Does it reflect a large concern with employment standards? How many calls have been received? I think the minister mentioned some 10,000 calls, but the question I had was: how are they resolved? How many are left unresolved? I think the minister mentioned 4 percent, so I suppose I can do a little arithmetic and figure out what that is. But the minister made a comment, I believe, that 4 percent were left unresolved and some two and a half million dollars were reclaimed on behalf of the workers. The question that I had for that particular statistic, as it were: what percent does that represent of what the workers claimed? You got back two and a half million dollars. Is that two and a half million dollars out of \$2.6 million or it is out of \$25 million or . . . The question that sprang to my mind when I heard that statistic earlier on is: how effective is it really?

Another question I had is: what is the nature of the calls? What is it that people are phoning about and complaining about when they do call? Are they concerned about cheques that don't go through? Are they concerned about cheques that are too small? Are they concerned about deductions that are too large? Are they concerned about deductions that are inappropriate? What are they concerned about in that particular area? I'd like a little bit more information about that particular vote, 2.0.4.

Moving on to vote 3. Again a number of comments. The one that really jumps off the page: Divisional Support. As much as it may hurt to do so, again I really have to support the comment from the Member for Edmonton-Belmont here, an increase almost doubling the amount. Why, in something that looks to be basically administrative matter, do we have such a large increase? If we're going to be providing service to the people of Alberta, that's fine, but I would like some more background on what that Divisional Support really does mean.

In vote 4, Labour Relations Adjudication and Regulation, again, there's really not much information there. The Labour Relations Board. The minister mentioned that there were some from Labour and some from the public at large. I'd like to know a little bit more about what this board really does. Is there a policy direction, a policy statement, saying what their role is, what it is that they do, how often they meet, and so on? Just a real lack of information in that particular area.

Vote 5. We in the Liberal caucus would like to support the amendments that have been put forward this year by the government. Some new initiatives there that I think are very important, although they're perhaps not quite as far reaching as what we'd like to see, some good direction and some good understanding in there. I do want to express some concerns, though, that there have been a number of very contentious issues in the media. I'm sure that the minister is well aware of the lapel pin issue, the issue with skinheads being perhaps a little bit more well noticed than what an average, moderate, reasonable Albertan would like to see happening, and I think that there are some concerns like that in the community at large that need to be addressed and certainly fall within this mandate of Individual's Rights Protection. It's a very contentious issue, a very difficult issue. I believe that we're headed in the right direction, but there's still lots of room for improvement. So I hope that the minister will take those comments under advisement for future changes.

I note over the last, again, six years, going back to '85-86, an extra \$282,000 increase in vote 5 in Individual's Rights Protection and in particular the Human Rights Commission, which is, of course, funded under that particular vote 5, and yet we don't see a real direction of improvement in that area. In fact, the increase in six years is less than the increase in vote 1.0.1, the Minister's Office. So it seems that there's more importance in the Minister's Office than there in the Human Rights Commission. I would like to express that concern, that perhaps the priorities are not as well focused as they should be.

Just going back for a moment to vote 3, General Safety Services. This is an area of particular concern of mine. I spoke a little bit on Bill 15 when it was before the Legislature. General Safety Services talks about a variety of different things. Again there seems to be a dearth of information: no sub-program breakdown in either the main book or the elements book with respect to what is really going on there. We see a few things mentioned in the elements book, but I note that if we look back to this year, the total budget is almost \$15.9 million. That's a fairly substantial amount of money, yet when I look back to the '86-87 fiscal year, for example, the total amount allocated in that particular year was in excess of \$16 million. So, in fact, the budgeted amount now is less for general safety services in total. The total of vote 3 is less than it was some five years ago. Now, I don't believe we've seen a decrease in the number of injured workers. I would suspect, in fact, that that has increased, and I'm wondering why that is. What rationale does the minister have and does this department have for reducing the general safety services that are being provided by vote 3 in this particular department? Because I think that's a real concern for people.

In particular, looking at that, I'm wondering if within that vote 3, General Safety Services – the question that came to my mind is: is there any educational training or retraining occurring in there for those individuals that are providing those services, or is it simply an inspection and certification type of branch? I'm not quite sure from what I read in here what is really the direction in that particular department.

So overall, I think there are a number of concerns here. I would like to just briefly touch on what the minister mentioned right at the close of her opening remarks, which was that she was also the minister responsible for women's issues, and . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Women's issues comes under the Executive Council vote.

MS McCOY: PAO.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, PAO.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, with FMAs and EIAs and all the PAOs, we're going to get confused with the alphabet here.

AN HON. MEMBER: ADC, FIC, UIC.

MR. BRUSEKER: Right, right.

What I wanted to briefly discuss was the concern that was raised earlier on today with respect to government employees, in particular under Personnel Administration. If you go through this large book and look at the total number of government employees and compare the total number of government employees per department to the total dollars paid in wages and salary and calculate an average salary, which is kind of an interesting exercise – I did that for all of the 24 departments which are listed in the main book. I came up with an interesting statistic. There are 24 departments. The bottom one, the lowest one, surprisingly, is Energy, with an average salary of \$15,000. The second lowest one is Health, with \$23,000, and then the next one is Family and Social Services with an average salary of just under \$19,000.

The reason I mention that is simply this. Family and Social Services, the social workers in this province and many of the health care workers – of course, the health care figure does not reflect the nurses who are out in the hospitals – both of those occupations are occupations which are primarily populated by female employees. The interesting thing when I compared their average salaries to the total average for the province is that they're some \$7,000 – well, closer to \$6,000, I guess – below the provincial average, even on the averages that I calculated from the total estimates book. So the interesting comment, I think, that comes out of that – and perhaps it's related to one of the reasons why we're having a strike today – is the fact that here we have employees working for the province, working for the government of Alberta, primarily women, who are earning significantly less than the average salary. I hope that the minister will keep that statistic in mind when further negotiations are occurring between her department and Family and Social Services and the social workers in this province, because I believe that those figures really speak very loudly on their own.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Red Deer North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few remarks tonight, and first to the minister herself through the Chair. I'd just like to commend this minister for the ability she has in handling a variety of issues, some of which people get quite emotional about and there are some very strong feelings on, and contentious issues. This minister is able to really keep an even keel in her deliberations and remarks, and a cool spirit. When I say cool, I don't mean cool in terms of cold; I mean cool in terms of with-it and not getting flustered and heated up as some people do on a variety of issues that tend to raise the temperature. So my compliments to the minister for keeping cool when sometimes under fire and being able to present legislation and various promotions and initiatives in a way that's levelheaded and on an even keel.

I'd like to refer to vote 2. Under Services Provided by Program it says one of the mandates here is to provide

educational services designed to enhance the awareness of employers and employees of their responsibilities under the applicable legislation.

I'm going to touch on a number of issues here tonight, but this first one deals very specifically with an issue that comes out of the Michener Centre in Red Deer.

In Michener Centre you get a variety of feeling and expression of concern from time to time. I feel the majority of people who work there and also the guardians who have their sons or daughters at Michener Centre feel confident about the administration and the way things are happening. You do from time to time get concerns raised, however, and one is in the area of protective legislation, especially in the area of abuse in the area of dealing with the handicapped. I appreciate that under the IRPA we're looking very clearly and very specifically at protective legislation, but I would ask if the minister could designate some resources to looking at our present legislation in light of protective legislation in terms of abuse, especially for those either mentally or physically handicapped, and maybe even do a comparison with other provinces to see if our legislation is as strong as and as protective as legislation in different parts of the country.

Directly related to that, also I've had a concern that those who work with the handicapped, depending on the institution in which they work and the milieu in which they're surrounded, have a tendency to hesitate to report what they would see as being incidents of abuse. They feel that there could be times when in fact they could run into employment problems of their own from management if they were to report incidents of abuse. Again, I want to emphasize that this isn't something that's been brought to me in terms of a wide scale or even majority view, necessarily, of employees, but it is one that's been brought to me on a minority basis from a point of real, genuine concern.

So could the minister allocate some of the funds under "educational services designed to enhance the awareness of employers and employees" to that question? Do we have labour legislation that is protective of those who would report what they see as being incidents of abuse, especially to those who are handicapped? I have had given to me some material and also copies of legislation from other jurisdictions that we could use in this research and comparison. I will get that information to the minister to be able to assist her and her staff as they hopefully will be able to allocate some resources to explore this area. If, indeed, we do have the legislation in place that already gives that protection, then let's use the educational services dollars to communicate that to employees. If we don't, then let's be willing to take a look at it and, in fact, shore up the legislation in the areas where it needs to be shored up.

On another item, I'd like to compliment the minister for educating us. One area of education in which I have been enlightened and had my horizons broadened is just being educated in the terminology that we use in discussion on issues. I'll refer to the now famous issue for which this minister will be remembered for generations to come, and that is the issue of terminology relating to gender vis-a-vis sex, something where many of us were stumbling blindly for years, getting those terminologies mixed up. With the enlightenment of the minister, and I say this quite seriously, we've been able to sort that out and recognize that there are very clear differences in terminology when we're talking about sex or talking about gender: gender equality as opposed to sex equality. So I appreciate that, and commend the minister for assisting us in coming to some realizations there.

Along those lines I'm wondering on a couple of other areas where terminology is being used in some of these discussions. I wonder if the minister could also use her proven talents in this area, and perhaps resources, addressing another area, and that is that we often hear the term – and this would be PAO related – mainly from the opposition members: the pink ghetto, and women being trapped in the so-called pink ghetto. It's often used, as I've heard from opposition members, talking about women who are in secretarial or clerical jobs. An occupation such as waitressing is one that has been mentioned by opposition members. It's used in a very disparaging way and in a way in which I believe people who are engaged in those occupations and who enjoy those occupations and feel fulfilled in them, are really insulted. Now, I understand from a socialist point of view, because they believe in powerful central government and a top-down hierarchy type of approach to life, that unless you're actually bossing somebody around, you don't really have self-esteem or dignity, so I can appreciate it because they live under that perspective. When they see somebody, for instance, in a secretarial role, they see somebody through that jaundiced view of life as somebody who's deprived, somebody who's disadvantaged. They look at a waitress as somebody who's trapped in a ghetto-like occupation. I'd like to bring to the awareness of the minister that in fact that type of terminology is insulting to thousands and thousands of women who enjoy those particular occupations.

As a matter of fact, I could, if the opposition members would allow me, take them to a restaurant right here in Edmonton – I'm not going to pick up the tab for them, but I'd take them there – and introduce them to a woman there who's earning just about \$60,000 a year as a waitress and really enjoying that. Or I could take them to my home constituency of Red Deer-North and introduce them . . . I see the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore has gone into shock and convulsions at the thought of somebody in the hospitality industry being able to successfully make \$60,000 a year. But, in fact, it is possible. Or I could take them to restaurants in Red Deer where there are women who are employed – not making \$60,000; maybe making half of that – who have told me, as I was involved in tourism education for a period of time and doing surveys in this area, that they love their job. They love their job, and to insult them with this broad brush of insinuating that they're trapped in some kind of a pink ghetto, is disparaging to say the least.

I've talked with secretaries in terms of asking if they would prefer a different type of terminology: would they prefer legislative assistant? Or secretaries in private-sector operations: would they prefer office manager? I've had secretaries tell me they take pride in the fact they are called a secretary. They don't feel embarrassed about that. They love their job. So if under that vote the minister could consider directing some funds to that. Now, I do think in any job or any occupation there are always people who feel trapped. I've talked to doctors and lawyers, and I've talked to politicians who feel trapped in their occupation and would like to get out. That's a different situation, and we do in this province and with programs even initiated through this minister and others, have opportunities provided for people to change occupations, to be upgraded, to upgrade their education. We're moving more and more towards flextime, towards situations where women or men can be working more and more out of their homes through the wonders of modern technology. So I would really like us to refrain from some of this terminology that I find so disparaging.

The minister has correctly brought out on this topic the differences in wages and salaries of men to women. I wish also that some resources under this particular vote could be designated to the area of giving people the true picture of wage equality and about legislation designed to enhance such. I'd just like to quote very briefly – and I know the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore gets really upset when you quote documents, so I am quoting it carefully here – from a lawyer by the name of Maureen Sabia. This woman is on the board of directors of the Canadian Tire Corporation, also the Export Development Corporation. She's vice-chairman of the Sunnybrook Medical Institute, sits on the advisory board for the CTV television program *On Women and Success*. I would suggest these are fairly healthy credentials for anybody, be they male or female. She also professes to be a feminist and to want to see women realize their potential and goals. Listen to what she says, and coming from Ontario, it's very instructive. She says:

Equal pay for equal work, definitely. Equal pay for work of equal value, definitely not. Why not? Because, all the rhetoric aside, it will seriously disadvantage women.

She goes on to say:

Legislation of the kind introduced by the government of Ontario is paternalistic and patronizing . . . [and] perpetuates the myth that women are inherently unequal . . . [and] are helpless victims who require protective measures in order to compete with men in the workplace.

This is coming from a woman who shares in the work that she's done that when she started out in the law profession – and maybe our minister can share the same thing – there definitely were, and there still are to this day, feelings of discrimination and ideas of discrimination. But there are ways to deal with it, and one of those ways is certainly not so-called pay equity legislation.

It's interesting to note that the figure that the opposition continually trots out – and the media soak it up like a sponge – is this thing about women making 63 percent of what men make. The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore made a wildly irrational statement, saying a woman with a baccalaureate earns less than a man with grade 8. What an astoundingly ridiculous statement. I have just come from a meeting, predominantly women – the percentage at that particular meeting was 85 percent women, 15 percent men. The women at that meeting, most of whom had a four-year baccalaureate degree, are earning around \$20 an hour. I just yesterday visited in my constituency office with a man who happened to have a grade 8 education, and he's barely making \$6 an hour. You know, to zero in on specific anecdotal things like this with absolutely no statistical backup is a disservice to the people of this province.

But this lawyer, Ms Sabia, who studied the Green Paper on Pay Equity which was adopted in Ontario in 1983, points out very clearly that that's where the 63 percent figure came from: from the green paper on equity in Ontario in 1983. That's the source of it. She goes on to say that she does not rely on those figures. They were already four or five years old when the green paper was put together in '83 in Ontario. I wish the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore would listen to this; I know our minister is familiar with this: that green paper itself in Ontario, which predicated the devastating legislation they now have in place, said that women only make 63 percent of what men make. But then it went on to say why, and the opposition socialists never say this. It then admits that the actual wage discrimination, actually based on discrimination, accounts for 5 percent of the 38 percent differential. The remaining differential is due to differences in hours worked, 16 percent; education, experience,

and level of unionization was another 5 to 10 percent. Our minister has already pointed out that even any wage gap that can be found here in Alberta in itself is shrinking, and that in this public service in this government men and women are paid equally for the work they do. This patronizing approach, as Ms Sabia points out, is highly destructive of women and their opportunities. I believe we need to do all we can to deal with attitudes of discrimination. I believe we need to make women and men aware of the opportunities that are available to them and of their individual potentials and that they don't have to be trapped. We need to use educational services and those types of resources to address this type of issue. But central government, heavy-handed type of legislation that has proven to be destructive both to women and, in this case in Ontario and in other cases to the economy, should be, just in the boldest of terms, shaken off.

I recently worked as chairman on a council in which we had the opportunity to hire an executive director. We got the job search down to four people, one of whom was a woman, and we made the decision to hire the woman as the executive director over the men. The reason that was done was because that woman simply was more qualified and convinced us that she was more capable than the men. If we had even hinted to that particular woman that she was hired because she was a woman, she would have been insulted and she would have been infuriated, and justifiably so. And that was to be executive director on a council which deals with a predominantly male-dominated industry. So I just wish we would use some of our resources to dispel the socialistic myths and misguided views that are going to be destructive, harmful, and, in effect, at their best are insulting to women.

Also in terms of terminology, I must take some offence when a member from the opposition socialist party . . .

MR. WOLOSHTYN: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DAY: Citation, please?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Under Standing Order 23(b)(ii), I would like to know how this is anywhere near relevant to what's being discussed currently. If the Member for Red Deer-North is so intent on educating the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, I would suggest that he save our time and his and perhaps have a meeting in the back room in order to discuss his irrational point of view. In the meantime, if he wishes to continue, I would sincerely hope that he gets back onto a topic that even the minister might appreciate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for not ruling on what is obviously not a point of order, regardless of the fact that the trained seals all clapped when the purported point was made.

I'd like to go on, Mr. Chairman. I have met individually on a number of occasions for discussion purposes with the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore and have quite enjoyed those times. I hope the feeling is reciprocal. But in light of the remarks to meet in the back room, we in this party do not believe in backroom politics. We are an open party, we discuss things publicly, and so I will not take the member up on some kind of backroom discussion. I'm not talking about educating one member; I'm talking about educating those in our province who

need to be aware of this information: those who honestly just aren't aware of it, and those who are stumbling in the dark, as the members of the opposition are.

But under educational services again, and sticking very succinctly to the vote as I have through this entire deliberation, the member for wherever he's from, the Labour critic, purporting to be a tolerant and understanding person, stood in this Assembly and referred to a group of people with whom he disagrees, certain types of contractors who have a certain belief about how the economy should run and how labour should run, and, Mr. Chairman, he referred to them, with one paint of his jaundiced brush, as garbage. This is supposedly an individual who is tolerant and understanding, and referred to a group of people who hold a particular view of economics as garbage.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I of course violently disagree with all tenets of the socialistic faith and also their attempts to convert the rest of us. But do you know what? I never see the socialists across as garbage. I see them as human beings with the potential maybe one day to learn and to be enlightened. But I have never – I have never, Mr. Chairman – referred to them as garbage. The radical labour union movement, the radical side of that, with whom I disagree: I have never referred to them as garbage. And I would suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that our minister of this department has never and would never refer to groups of people with whom she disagrees as garbage. I find that insulting to the supreme, and I'm bringing that out, Mr. Minister or Madam Minister or Mr. Chairman, whoever is listening . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: So the whole world knows.

MR. DAY: . . . so the whole world knows that we do have resources, educational resources which we can use to enlighten people, help us understand one another. We may never agree. We live in a free and democratic society where we can disagree, and we can disagree strongly. But to refer to one another as garbage I really think is beneath us.

Thank you for allowing me the time to address these few remarks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have two matters that I'd like to raise with the minister today. The first arises from certain remarks that the minister made during the emergency debate earlier today and has to do with the whole notion of a right to strike. We on our side, of course, believe that the right to strike is an inalienable right that belongs to all workers in a democratic society. Further to that, Mr. Chairman, we believe that those workers should also be free to join a collectivity or a union of their choice, and if they should vote and obtain a majority, they also have an inalienable right to withdraw services.

Now, it could very well be, Mr. Chairman, that there are conditions or circumstances that arise in a society when that society might make the decision that it would suffer too much pain if workers chose to go out on strike and that the withdrawal of services might seriously jeopardize the well-being and interests of other members of that society. So I think that society can withdraw, under certain circumstances, the right of workers to engage in that action, that there are other rights that might take precedence, under certain conditions, over a worker's right to

strike. But if the society makes that determination and takes away a fundamental right like the right to strike, then that society must be willing to pay or to compensate for the removal of that right. So in this particular case, Mr. Chairman, the case that's before us today, I would argue that the workers should have some other way of determining their income, and I'll make some suggestions about that in a moment. As I said, if a right is taken away, then there should be some extra compensation, and there should also be really fair and effective mediation procedures that workers in those situations should have access to.

The minister earlier today, in her comments in the emergency debate, indicated surprise that the social worker representatives walked out on a collective bargaining situation. Well, why would they do that? I think, Mr. Chairman, the reason why that would happen is that the only way two sides can normally bargain effectively is if a withdrawal of services on the one side or a lockout on the other side causes some pain to both parties. If that's the case, then strikes are kind of a last resort in the collective bargaining process. But if one side goes into those meetings with a hand tied behind its back – that is, that it can't withdraw services – then it's not in any position where it can bargain in any effective way. So for years social workers' wages, for example, have fallen behind that of people who do comparable work in other sectors of the economy or society. If they don't have the right to strike and if we don't want to give them that right to strike, then we have to have some other way of establishing wages for workers that's fair and acceptable to workers in that industry or in that sector of society.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's called collective bargaining.

MR. PASHAK: Well, I believe in free and open collective bargaining, and that's what we believe in. But the only way that you can have free and open and effective collective bargaining, Mr. Chairman, is if on the one side a group has a right to withdraw services and if on the other side, the other side has the right to lock people out. That's the only way that you can have fairness in the collective bargaining process.

AN HON. MEMBER: Pretty archaic.

MR. PASHAK: It's not archaic, and in those societies where you have free and open collective bargaining, you find that strikes are at a minimum because both sides recognize the economic consequences of going out on strike, and it clearly becomes a last resort for them. We happen to live in a particularly intellectually backward part of the western world. In most other parts of the western world we've long since come to recognize that the old master/servant relationship between owners and workers no longer applies; that workers have basic rights which they acquire by virtue of being members of those societies; that principles of fairness, justice, and equity apply to workers as they do to everyone else; and that fair and open and reasonable collective bargaining practices are not only just, but they're the most effective way to arrive at decisions that are fair for both sides in these conflicts or disputes.

Mr. Chairman, the other point that I wanted to raise has to do with vote 5, I guess it is, and the increase in the budget for the Human Rights Commission. I'd like to say that I'm really pleased to see that in the budget. I think that's very welcome. I'm just new to these issues as a result of certain situations that have been brought to my attention in my own constituency. I

hardly even knew that a Human Rights Commission existed, because I've never had to have recourse to it. In effect I never really knew what its caseload was or how it really functioned. I mean, I knew that the Human Rights Commission existed, but I have never had to go before it or pursue a case myself. I am pleased, as I say, that there is a measure contained in the budget to increase its operating allowance.

In doing some research on this, I must say that I did develop some concerns. As I understand it, there were some significant cuts that were made in 1986 which reduced the number of people that could do investigative work for the commission. I'm surprised at the volume of cases they handle. I tried to get a copy of the annual report. I think the only one that I could get my hands on was three years old. I don't think an annual report has been issued since then. In that report it indicated that they get something like 8,600 telephone inquiries, of which approximately 3,000 were deemed to be within their jurisdiction. They look at those complaints, and I don't know if it's because they're understaffed or just what the reason is, but the ones that they actually deal with and open a file on and are actually able to close is reduced to about 160 cases a year. Although a great many of those are processed in less than 30 days, of the 160 or so that I was talking about in that period of time, 110 were completed within the 30-day period or less, 24 took between 30 and 60 days, another 10 took between 60 and 90 days, and 17 took more than 90 days to bring to some kind of resolution.

I'd like to just describe the situation that brought these conditions to my attention. A group of workers, some of whom who live in my constituency, came to me with a complaint regarding a local manufacturing plant. I won't identify the manufacturing plant, but they have approximately 200 employees at that plant, and a good proportion of their employees on the production side are Vietnamese in origin. There are some Chinese, there are some southeast Asians, some Chileans, and there are also some mainstream Canadians that work at that plant. Until recently the employees belonged to an association of workers. They were not connected or affiliated with trade unions; it was purely an in-house or a management kind of union. The executive of the union for a number of years consisted of the mainstream Canadians that were employed at that plant. The New Canadians began to feel that they were being seriously discriminated against. They'd compare their salaries with the mainstream Canadians, and in many cases they felt that they were actually being paid less of a wage than the mainstream Canadians. They also believed that they were discriminated against when it came to, say, overtime opportunities, that they were given the tougher jobs to do and that sort of thing, that advancement up to foreman levels and this kind of thing were denied them.

So, at a vote, this group of New Canadians managed to choose an executive of their own choice. Well, this led to disputes within the organization, within the company. The management refused to recognize the new employees association executive. They started to harass some of the new . . . At least from their point of view, they allege that violations began to take place. People were dismissed, suspended from their jobs, transferred to less desirable work, and subjected to a number of kinds of harassment like that. They went before the Labour Relations Board. There are a lot of issues pending there, and they're dragging on. But as those issues were proceeding, the workers in the dissident group began to feel that even more unfair human rights practices were being imposed on them.

So in sum total, Mr. Chairman, there have been a number of complaints lodged. There are some 20 unfair labour practices now before the Labour Relations Board and some 12 human rights violations before the Human Rights Commission. The new union leader was fired. Other union activists were suspended from work or transferred to lower status jobs, as I've mentioned.

I'd like to try to look at this just briefly from the point of New Canadians on the jobsite. First of all, when they go on the jobsite, there is no requirement that they be apprised of the rights they have under the Individual's Rights Protection Act, nor are they apprised of their rights under the Labour Relations Code. Now, I think the minister has indicated in her response to some questions I asked in the Legislature the other day and in her remarks earlier today that she is beginning to make at least some of this information available in different languages. Well, to begin to do that is a start, but there also has to be a requirement that employers tell their employees just what their rights are both under the Individual's Rights Protection Act and under the Labour Relations Code. That's essential in a democratic society.

Now, when it comes to the Human Rights Commission, there really is no support there for individuals who want to process a claim. Most of these people are like I was, really unaware of the commission and what it does and how to bring cases before it. A lot of these workers too, you have to appreciate, are people that have come from other societies, political states that are highly totalitarian where they had no rights, and they have a tremendous fear of authorities, whether they're policemen or judges or people that sit on human rights tribunals. They're fearful of their bosses, so they're afraid to bring charges forward, cases forward, for fear that they will experience some further harassment on the job. I think there's some evidence to indicate that this is actually happening in the situation we're looking at at this particular plant.

I indicated earlier that a lot of these cases are processed within less than a month. But in fact all these alleged human rights violations that took place in this plant were brought to the attention of the Human Rights Commission back in February, yet they've had no word back in terms of disposition of the cases they're bringing forward. So I would argue that that's an unfortunate and undue delay. What it does to the workers in the plant: they begin to get paranoid; a lot of the people that have supported union activities have, as I say, either been fired or dismissed or laid off from the plant. Workers begin to get the message that if they don't fall back in line with the management union, they're going to be out of a job, so the delay in this case is threatening further the collective bargaining rights of the workers in that particular situation.

So if I had to make some suggestions to the minister, first of all I would say that all of us, particularly the MLAs in this Legislature, should become more familiar with the Human Rights Commission and its procedures, and we should all be prepared to act as advocates before the commission when we hear of complaints or violations. And we can do that. I can take a case forward, and I'm going to send that out to all my constituents. If they've got a problem, I'll help them with it; I'll take it down before them. If it is a person who speaks another language, like if he's Vietnamese, I'll make darned sure I get a Vietnamese interpreter for him and help him process his concern at every stage of the way.

Mr. Chairman, I think also there should be some way of

bringing group claims forward as a category, a class action type of activity. Now, why I think this: if there is a Vietnamese worker in a plant that comes forward to the Human Rights Commission and says, "My rights are violated, because I'm doing the same work as this mainstream Canadian, yet he's getting paid \$2 an hour more than I am," an investigative officer could look at that and say: "Well, there could be a number of reasons why you're getting paid less. Maybe you just don't work as hard. We've got a merit clause in our collective agreement; we think the mainstream Canadian is more meritorious than you. He's indicated that he's more willing than you are to work overtime or to come in on Saturdays if we need him. So your claim is dismissed." But if you've got a dozen workers who come in with the same complaint, then that really provides considerable evidence that what we have is a form of systemic discrimination taking place in this organization, and it calls for even more effective remedial action to be taken against the company or the organization. So there has to be some way of bringing claims forward on a group or class basis.

I guess the final point I'd like to make: as we begin to move in this direction, Mr. Chairman, and really begin to build into our society some means of achieving the goals that are now spelled out in our Constitution regarding personal freedom, freedom of association, and give some significance to that section of the Charter that deals with rights and freedoms, we can do that only if we provide more funding to commissions or bodies like the Human Rights Commission so that they can do their job more effectively and well, provide more support for people who are processing claims, get out to the public a little more effectively in terms of what they do, what individual human rights are. If we all participate in those activities, we'll have a much better social order.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before recognizing the next speaker, would the committee be agreeable to reverting to the Introduction of Special Guests briefly?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly two wonderful ladies from the physical therapists association who entertained government members this evening and talked to us about physical therapy. Our guests are Donna LaRocque, secretary of the Independent Physical Therapists Association of Alberta, and Pat Pelton, president from Fort McMurray district of the Canadian Physio Therapists Association.

head: **Committee of Supply**
head: **Main Estimates 1990-91**

Labour (continued)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of comments – three, I think, to be exact.

Mr. Chairman, I don't have too many questions about this budget, but I do want to express the feeling of continuing anger and resentment that I have in most of our budget presentations, and it's no different here. In fact, it's even greater. To the minister: this budget has less and less in it every year of a qualitative type of information. As we study these budgets and are expected to make some kind of reasoned and rational and educated decision about them and possibly offer an interesting critique of them, I have no idea what we're buying in most of these items. The minister made an explanation to begin with, but I have no idea what we're buying this year: whether we're buying more of it than we bought last year because we need more, because there are more people, because it costs more; whether we're buying less of it because the need has changed. It's extremely difficult to know what it is that we're buying.

It's also very difficult, Mr. Chairman, to know whether or not we're getting any value for what it is we're buying, and that is what causes my resentment. The absence of detail, both ciphers and narrative, is astonishing, and it's getting less. Now, I've made this comment about most of our budgets and made it over several years now, and it's with regret, because what's to hide? What have we got here that we can't explain in greater form what it is? A couple of my colleagues have made comments about such items as 2.0.5, that has been reduced by 25 percent, and 3.0.1, that has been increased by 98 percent. Now, those are mysteries. I expect the minister will answer them, and quite properly. But I think it is incumbent on us when we present budgets to present information that can be understood, and therefore I can explain to my constituents whether or not we are getting value for what we are spending. I don't believe I should have to wait for next year to study the annual report and hope the numbers are in that in order to find out what it is this gave the people of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, just a comment about the member who spoke about equal pay for work of equal value and pay equity legislation. I hoped that by now the minister would have convinced her cabinet colleagues that it's time we took that position in the government of Alberta. This is not unique legislation. I believe it's overdue here, and I would have thought this government could show some faint glimmer of leadership in doing that. It now appears that's a lost cause, at least for another year, but we will keep on trying and provoking and stimulating because I believe the public is way past ready for it. It's overdue here. We look at the study that was done in the federal government and see the numbers, see the results. It begs the question: what is happening in Alberta? I would have hoped that the minister might be interested in doing a similar kind of study here to find out if in fact all the glowing reports made and the convictions expressed are even close to the actual facts of the matter.

As far as the Member for Red Deer-North and his comments, this person is an elected member of this House and I respect that, as I do of all members, but he should have no fear that I will ever try to convert him. That's not a worry for you. You shouldn't be concerned about that. I will never ever, I promise, try to convert you.

MR. THURBER: That's a promise, isn't it, Bettie?

MRS. HEWES: That's a promise.

My last comment is about the Human Rights Commission. I am very pleased that the commission has become more visible,

more active, and more aggressive, and I compliment the minister and the commission on that – the human rights commissioner I believe it is serving. It's come into its own, it seems to me. It is functioning as I think many of us had hoped it would in years back when it was instituted, and I'm grateful for that. I will undertake to the minister that my caucus and I will support the commission and the efforts of the commission as they continue along to grow and develop.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask the hon. minister a couple of questions relating to the general safety services division fire protection branch of her department. She made reference in her opening comments to a government program that dealt with the disposition of underground storage tanks, identifying locations of these tanks and where potential hazards exist, trying to rectify the situation, and I applaud the intent of the program. In terms of application, however, sometimes programs described on a piece of paper don't work out all that well when they're put into practice. I just wanted to ask her a couple of questions that relate to a situation in my constituency, a concern brought to my attention by a Mr. Cliff Sommer, who was for many years a businessman in the town of Tofield and had some land that was home to two small underground 1,000 gallon gas tanks installed in 1946 but that had not been in use since 1978. When Mr. Sommer acquired the property or redeveloped the property, he checked with the provincial fire marshall, wanting to do the right thing, and was told that because of the age and small size of the tanks, he wouldn't be required to remove them. He would have been willing to remove them at the time, but he was told by the people in charge, the provincial government at the time, that that wouldn't be required. So the tanks were capped, and I believe they were capped off with some concrete as well. So he took the required or prescribed remedial action at the time.

He's since been advised by the general safety services division of the minister's department that he needs to remove those tanks. That would be something that would require a considerable expense on his behalf. He would not only have to rip up the asphalt in the parking lot above the tanks, dig the tanks out, and fill everything back in, but he'd have to repave the parking lot. What we're dealing with – we're not looking at tanks that stored hazardous chemicals in recent history. These are two 1,000-gallon tanks that have been capped off and not in use for many, many years, for 12 years, and they were gas tanks.

I'm just wondering what in the minister's mind is the tolerance in this program. What kind of leeway can be permitted in dealing with these sorts of things? How long would this gentleman's liability extend into the future? Upon redeveloping the property, he inquired as to what his responsibilities were and was told, and he complied with all of those. Now the rules have changed, and he's been told he has to do some other things. I'm just wondering if the minister, not only with her ministerial hat on but given her legal background, might be able to comment on what Mr. Sommers' liabilities or responsibilities would be in the future, and is it really necessary that tanks like this be dealt with under the program described by the minister?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Labour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MS McCOY: Mr. Chairman, let me very briefly make one or two comments. I'm sure it's been a long day and many of us would appreciate the opportunity to leave the Assembly for this day.

On employment standards, I wanted to respond at least to one question, which is: what are the biggest causes of complaint? It is in failure to pay overtime or failure to pay vacation pay. Those are the areas in which disputes arise most frequently.

Labour Relations Board. One of the hon. members inquired as to a useful entrée, a useful introduction to them. I could recommend this document, which is called Guide to the Labour Relations Code, a very useful guide. The first third or so of the publication actually speaks to who was on the board when the book was published and how it operates and then goes into a good description of collective bargaining and other such activities. I really do recommend that guide.

Speaking still on the labour relations area, the Member for Edmonton-Belmont, whose rhetoric and style are admirable although extreme, I can only say that if he thinks people are distressed, depressed, and upset, I can't be at all surprised. Probably they have been listening to him.

General Safety Services. The 98 percent increase in vote 3.0.1 is indeed related to the strategic plan, bringing in the new uniform general safety services Act. It is related to the entire division; it has been clustered in the one vote because it does apply to all of them. It does not apply to injured workers, so any questions of that nature I would refer to the hon. minister of occupational and community health.

There is an increase in the fire prevention area. That does include the monitoring of underground storage tanks that was mentioned just a moment ago and also equipment replacement at the Fire Training School in Vermilion, which may hit on one of the member's questions.

Regarding the Human Rights Commission, the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn was commenting on a case that is not only in front of the Human Rights Commission and being investigated there but is also being investigated and adjudicated by the Labour Relations Board. I think we have to be very careful in making any comment or jumping to any conclusions. It seemed to me that the hon. member was making some statements that indicated a conclusion he had reached before, in fact, those two tribunals had reached any opinion whatsoever. I just caution that we want to let those tribunals do the job they have been constituted for.

But in the meantime his colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore had been talking about helping immigrants. I was going to point out the two sections, one of which is being beefed up in Bill 8 – and that is the whistle-blowers' section, which does give protection for people who are involved in any way, shape, or form with complaints to the Human Rights Commission – and also to point out that third-party complaints are a possibility. I'm glad the hon. member, in fact, said that he would be more than willing to be an advocate. I think there are many people in a community who might be willing to be of that sort too.

Sexual harassment was mentioned. I know that several members know that that comprises 30 percent of the workload of the Human Rights Commission. In fact, they have passed a resolution saying they are going to pursue that aggressively, and indeed there is a sexual harassment tribunal now being appointed in a case. It's a three-person tribunal chaired by a lawyer and the two members, one from the local community and one from CUPE.

On attitudes, let me just make this one comment, and I'm sure people have seen it. It's the advertisement Alberta Women: Making it Happen, which was an advertisement portraying women in a number of roles from full-time mother, homemaker, through partner in a family business on a farm, through to high-tech occupations. It is that sort of knowledge and attitude we are trying to get all Albertans to participate in, because we do recognize the diversity of roles that women are playing, and all of their choices are valid. However, it takes some time for those attitudes to change, and we just continue to work on that to the extent we can.

Finally, let me say that the hon. Member for Calgary-North West mentioned part-time workers in government service. I just wanted to mention that part-time workers in fact do have prorated benefits, which is another example of our government leading by example. We have it for our own public service. May I conclude specific comments by saying that I appreciated the comments of the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn in saying that if there is justification – and there often is justification in a society to withdraw the right to strike – then there must be some compensating process of fairness. I just wanted to point out that the ILO, the International Labour Organisation, says just that very thing, that either you should have the right to strike or you should have the right of arbitration that would be equally binding on both parties and it would be ensured that it would have impartiality. We have that built into our legislation in the Public Service Employee Relations Act. Although there is no right to strike, there is compulsory arbitration on those two sides . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: It's not impartial.

MS McCOY: It is impartial. [interjection] Yes, it is impartial, and that is, as I say, the compensating or balancing factor as recommended by the International Labour Organisation.

Beyond that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank everybody for their kind comments. I appreciate them very much. I look forward to reviewing other questions when I receive *Hansard*. For the moment, sir, I will conclude my comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the vote?

Oh. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask the minister one particular question that's very specific. If you've got this built-in impartiality, why is it, then, that Treasury can direct that the economy is to be of paramount consideration in the negotiation process? There is no impartiality based on that legislation, so what you've got are some workers that have no right to withdraw their labour and no impartial means of arbitration. What you've got is the Provincial Treasurer that will stand up and dictate certain economic considerations. Therefore, that shows that there's no impartiality. It's completely biased in favour of the province of Alberta and the government commitment to deficit reduction. So there's no impartiality there at all.

One other. If the minister's going to respond to some concerns that I have, I'd like just one other consideration responded to, and that's the matter of Legislature employees having the right to join a bargaining unit. There are a number of employees that work in this building in Legislative Assembly offices that have not got the opportunity to join a trade union for the purposes of collective bargaining. They're prohibited

under the Legislative Assembly Act. I think that if the minister is going to talk about equity and fairness, if all Albertans have the right, she'd better define or redefine the word "all," because, Mr. Chairman, certainly not all rights apply to all Albertans. That's one tarnished example of some people that haven't any rights to join a union at all. They're our employees, and they ought to have the right to join a union and then bargain thereafter.

MS McCOY: Let me just make the point that the section that used to refer to the Treasurer's report has been deleted. That has been wiped out. That is no longer there. I would invite the Labour critic for the ND Party to check his legislation.

Now, Mr. Chairman, if I might catch your attention, I move that this committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of

Labour, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion of the hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would advise the Assembly that tomorrow afternoon it's proposed that the Department of Technology, Research and Telecommunications estimates be dealt with in Committee of Supply.

[At 10:04 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]

