

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, May 4, 1990 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 90/05/04

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, we give thanks as legislators for the rich diversity of our history.

We welcome the many challenges of the present.

We dedicate ourselves to both the present and the future as we join in the service of Alberta and Canada.

Amen.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the Assembly the answers to written questions 206,207, and 244, and I would like to file with the Assembly a report on Whitecourt particulate emissions.

MR. McINNIS: What about 249?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to file in the Legislature a study entitled *Fraud Alleged in Key Dioxin Human Health Studies*. This study indicates that dioxins and furans, like those found in pulp mill effluents, are much more toxic to human health than was originally thought to be the case.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table with the Assembly today two reports: one, the annual report of the Alberta Association of Architects, 1989; and the second, the annual report for the fiscal year 1988-1989 of Alberta Public Safety Services.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by the Member for Clover Bar.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 29 students from Frère Antoine school in the constituency of Avonmore. They are seated in the public gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher Jean-Daniel Tremblay. I would ask that they now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Clover Bar, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

MR. GESELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 25 grade 6 students from the Colchester school in the constituency of Clover Bar. They are accompanied by their teacher Thelma Carlson, their teacher aid Ruth Van Pettigan, and one parent, Darlene Scott. I want to

especially recognize one of the students, Angie Scott. They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask our guests to rise, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome from the members in the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Banff-Cochrane.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to introduce 68 grade 7 students from Springbank junior high school. They're band members from Springbank band. They, of course, are in the eastern end of Banff-Cochrane constituency. They are seated in the members' gallery all decked out in their uniforms. They look very, very impressive. They are accompanied by their teachers Moira Thompson and Pat Worthington, the assistant principal at Springbank junior high, as well as parents Greg Martin and Ardell McDonald. I would mention that Ardell has a relationship to another very famous Calgarian who is related still to the Calgary Flames. It gives me great pride to introduce them, and I would ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

Social Workers' Strike

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my questions to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Yesterday this government talked about the super system that they've rigged for themselves under the Public Service Employee Relations Act. This is the legislation that even the United Nations said was unfair to workers. Well, the system's wonderful all right. It's so stacked in favour of the government, it's not even a laughing matter. It's this legislation that's forced the social workers of this province onto the streets. Yesterday the Premier said, and I quote, "Mr. Speaker, there is even arbitration within the legislation, fair arbitration." Well, let's take a look at this fair arbitration. The union doesn't have to consent to arbitration; the government can force them into it. Then the government-appointed board decides the issues that will be dealt with. I ask: how can this minister stand in this Assembly and suggest that this legislation is fair to the employees under his jurisdiction?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has asked a question about our labour legislation, and I think that would be an excellent question for him to pose to the minister responsible, the Minister of Labour.

MR. MARTIN: This is the minister that went and asked for an injunction. Surely he must know what's going on. We can deal with the whole government. I recognize that you're all a collective group in this, Mr. Speaker, but this is the minister in charge of social workers who said that it was fair. The minister hasn't even read the Act perhaps. Section 48(1) clearly states that arbitration cannot deal with the following subjects: "the organization of work, the assignment of duties and the determination of the number of employees of an employer." That means caseloads, Mr. Minister. I want to again ask: how on earth can the minister even suggest that arbitration can find a fair solution to this problem?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, now the leader has asked a question in reference to caseloads, and I would like to comment on that because that is something, obviously, that we're

very concerned about. We put forward a position on the negotiating table that called for two representatives from the social workers, two representatives from management, and a neutral facilitator to come back with some recommendations to the ministers responsible.

Mr. Speaker, what we were asking for there is 90 days. We said, "Bring back some recommendations within 90 days," and in 90 days they'd find out just exactly what we're prepared to do. I don't think that's unreasonable. I think it would be well worth the wait: 90 days to see how effective we can be in responding to those recommendations. So I think we've put something on the table that can work. Again I can only reiterate, re-emphasize that we're anxious to see social workers back to work so that we can then see social workers back at the negotiating table where we're sitting and waiting so that we can get on with some meaningful solutions. We can't do it while they're out on an illegal strike.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well that that board he set up has no clout. They could make another recommendation, as they have in the past, Mr. Speaker. It has no clout, and he's well aware of that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the employer can force arbitration, decide what issues are dealt with, and refuse to even deal with the issue of caseloads. Under our laws the employer holds all the cards. That's the problem with this. That's why we're into this dispute, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the minister this: why doesn't the minister admit that these labour laws are an absolute farce, drop the application for the injunction, and get back to the bargaining table and make a proposal for lower caseloads? That'll solve it, Mr. Speaker.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, the member asked the question of labour legislation. The labour legislation in this province is no different from the labour legislation in five other provinces in this country. This is a fair process for the public servants of this province. Let me say that when you have an essential service, when they have a monopoly service, when the people of Alberta have nowhere else to go, then it's fair to have an essential service, and then it is fair not to have the right to strike. But there must be a balance to that. The balance is to have a process for negotiation, a process for mediation, and a process for arbitration that is equally binding on both management and the employees.

There was some allegation that the U.N. says this is unfair. That is not so, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: It is so unfair.

MS McCOY: The International Labour Organisation says . . .

MR. McINNIS: It condemned this.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MS McCOY: . . . if there is no strike legislation, then you must have compulsory arbitration as a process to balance. We have that, and that is a fair process. And it does work, Mr. Speaker. Let me say this does work. The salaries and benefits of the public servants in this province are roughly the same as those of the provinces on either side of us. We are not out of line.

Now, let me address the caseload question, Mr. Speaker. In the negotiations – let me make this point – management put a

proposal on the table for a task force. The social workers' bargaining team put a proposal on the table for a task force. We asked them to discuss details and said: "All right; let's negotiate the details. This is our opening offer. That is your opening offer." What did the social workers do? They opened the door and walked away. "Oh, no; we don't want to deal with the details." We said, "Well, come back . . ."

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister.

MR. McEACHERN: Who asked you anyway?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Order please. [interjections] Order.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my second question back to – I think he's still in charge of the social workers, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say to that minister who came up: she talks about a fair system. The employer, I repeat, can force arbitration . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question. Ask the question.

MR. MARTIN: I am, Mr. Speaker. I get a preamble. It's the second set. Would you tell them the rules of the House?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. leader. The Chair is indeed aware that you're entitled to a preamble, but you did start speaking to one minister then switched to a comment to another minister. Perhaps we could continue.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the process is totally unfair and this government is well aware of it, but they've rigged it that way deliberately. They can talk all they want, but let's look at this government, this great government that loves the laws when it suits them. Since the beginning of this government's dispute with the social workers, the Minister of Family and Social Services has joined with our glorious Premier and other ministers in an attempt to portray these workers as criminals. Fighting for their clients and trying to bring some sanity to the social welfare system in this province is now a crime because of these unfair labour laws of this province. But time and time again this government has shown its open contempt for both the laws of the province and of the country. To hear this government accuse social workers of breaking the laws when its own record is so bad is shameful. What a bunch of hypocrites, Mr. Speaker. Now, I want to ask then: can the minister of Family and Social Services not see the hypocrisy of discrediting social workers this way when his own government's record in obeying the law is so dismal?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, no one is here to discredit social workers. I've said it time and time again: that our social workers are for the most part a very dedicated, committed group of employees. Regrettably, I think they're getting some bad advice at this time. I regret that they've reached the point of an illegal strike. One month, just over a month after their contract expired at the end of March, they chose, as the Minister of Labour pointed out, to walk from the negotiating table. They've chosen to ignore mediation.

MR. McINNIS: They were provoked.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. OLDRING: They've chosen to ignore arbitration, and they've gone straight into an illegal strike. In a month. I don't think that's reasonable, Mr. Speaker. Again, I can only say that I understand some of the issues that social workers have raised. I understood those issues before they went on strike.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Then do something.

MR. OLDRING: They're asking me to do something about caseloads. They're chanting from the other side. Mr. Speaker, let me outline the things that we have done. I think it's very appropriate to take the time to outline those things.

MR. SPEAKER: You can give one example.

MR. OLDRING: The Speaker has already told me he's going to cut me off after one example. I'll wait for a supplementary question, and perhaps I can share it with the member.

MR. MARTIN: I'll try to ask the question so he can get to answer, Mr. Speaker.

It's not bad advice the social workers got; it's bad government they got. That's the problem.

But right now this government is continuing construction on the Oldman River dam without a permit. The Federal Court of Canada ruled that proper procedures weren't followed and canceled this government's permit. They're breaking the law. What you've done with the laws to prevent companies from polluting is just as bad. You say: "Never mind our laws. Here's a certificate of variance that says it's okay." I want to ask the minister this: how does the minister justify having one set of rules for polluters and another set of rules for the workers of this province?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works might want to supplement my answer, but I'd want to again reiterate that no, we on this side of the Legislature are not breaking the laws. Contrary to the members opposite, we have a great deal of respect for the laws of this province. I only regret they don't share that same mutual respect that we have for the laws of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, but sticking, perhaps, to the topic of Family and Social Services.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we have in this province one set of laws for the government and their friends and another set of laws for the workers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, just recently in this House we had lead poisoning in Medicine Hat where children and workers were hurt. Did they close them down? No, they're still doing business. I want to ask the minister flowing from this, the great law-abiding government over there: how does this minister explain his government's failure to enforce laws that would protect workers when it's so quick to take social workers to court when they are trying to save a crumbling social services system?

MR. OLDRING: Again, Mr. Speaker, a good question for the member to pose to the minister responsible.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's after question period.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the minister of social services is responsible for Albertans who need extra help, need extra attention. For three days we've been asking questions of the minister to produce some sort of details, a contingency plan to show how he and his ministry and the officials in that ministry are dealing with these people who need this special care and attention, and for three days we've received no answers. It seems to me that there is no contingency plan. So one more time, on the understanding that when you ask questions often enough you would believe that there would be an embarrassment on the other side and somebody would do something: what are the contingency plans; what are the details, Mr. Minister, to look after these special Albertans that need attention?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, again I would want to take this opportunity of acknowledging those dedicated social workers that are continuing to report in to their place of employment. I would want to acknowledge those dedicated and committed managers that are putting in yeoman service and lengthy hours and lengthy days to be able to respond to the emergent situations. I can only state that for the most part I am very pleased that we have been able to respond to most emergencies – I say "for the most part" – but again recognizing that there's been a considerable disruption of services as a result of this, that the situation has deteriorated somewhat in that we can only expect these managers to be able to respond and keep up for a short period of time. That is why we have chosen to implement the injunction order and restore services as quickly as we can.

MR. DECORE: You'd think there'd be some shame that for four days now we've had no response to a simple question: what are the details?

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you, hon. member. Take your place for a moment, please. The Chair let it pass on the first go-round when the hon. member made the same kind of comments. Please refer to *Beauchesne* 416: "and insistence on an answer is out of order . . . A refusal to answer cannot be raised as a [point] of privilege," and so forth. [interjections] No, no, just . . . Hon. members, maybe I don't like the rules that I have to deal with either, but the point is that the rules are here, so please pay attention to them.

MR. FOX: It was him that we were . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Don't bother pointing fingers as if we're in a classroom.

Hon. member.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. The cities of Calgary and Edmonton have felt the pressure of this matter, the social services strike. The police force in Edmonton is taking extra calls. They say that there are additional costs being incurred. The city of Calgary has established a special fund to look after this. Will the government agree to pick up all the additional costs that are incurred by any municipality to take over these extra pressures on them?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, to a great extent the hon. member's comments are hypothetical. But let's also remember that we have certain organizations in this province who have responsibilities to fulfill, whether they be policing or others, and they're expected to do it and to provide a budget and the expenditures to handle those responsibilities.

MR. SPEAKER: Final.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I've asked this question, but I think, I hope, that the Premier has had an opportunity to give it further consideration. Again, I've received calls from social workers indicating that if they could just get some time, some time with the Premier or time with the minister to talk about the issue of casework overload, they could solve this problem, they could solve the strike. Would the Premier agree to take a few moments today, just a few moments, Mr. Premier, to meet with representatives of the union and solve this problem? I think it can be solved.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it definitely can be solved. There's one way to do it, and that's by coming back and negotiating, returning to your jobs and negotiating.

If there's any shame that should be shared at all in this Legislature, it's the shame that the hon. member, the leader of the Liberal Party, is advocating people breaking the law. If he's been talking to anybody, I would like to know whether he has told anybody to go back to work and stop breaking the law. Certainly we know he hasn't. You know, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a lot of labour unrest in this province.

MR. McEACHERN: Gainers, Zeidler.

MR. McINNIS: Don't give us that.

MR. DECORE: What are you afraid of?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. GETTY: But the members opposite would like to have more labour unrest. I understand that. Because when there is labour unrest, the first thing you can see down there trying to get on a television camera is the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's a bad law.

MR. TAYLOR: It sounds more like South Africa all the time.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. members. [interjections] Order.

Calgary-Fish Creek. Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even though the Yellowhead Youth Centre is located in Edmonton, concern for the physical and emotional well-being of the centre's young tenants is being expressed across the province and, indeed, in my own constituency. Apparently, these concerns have escalated with recent allegations that some of the disruptive behaviour at the centre was not entirely spontaneous and that it may have

even been instigated by others. It's important to put such disturbing allegations to rest. I wonder: has the Minister of Family and Social Services had an opportunity to evaluate them?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, yes, I've had the opportunity of visiting the Yellowhead Youth Centre firsthand and had the opportunity of talking with management that was operating and running the facility, talking to some of the residents that were there, and I received some very disturbing comments. Indications at that time were clearly that they felt that some of these young people had been exploited, that some of these young people had been coached to be disruptive, to create problems-

MR. McEACHERN: Do you have proof?

MR. McINNIS: Have you got proof for those allegations?

AN HON. MEMBER: Come on.

MR. OLDRING: That was followed up . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. McINNIS: You have to have proof, you slime ball. Where's your proof?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Withdraw, withdraw.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to finish my answer.

I did receive a report with 14 managers' names on it reaffirming that. Most recently we have had a number of sworn affidavits to that effect that have been filed with the courts. So it's regrettable, Mr. Speaker. I believe it to have been a very minor group of workers. I think that for the most part, as I said earlier, we have very genuinely dedicated child care workers, but in this instance it appears that a few of them, I think, have gotten a little carried away and perhaps taken some steps that they shouldn't have.

MR. PAYNE: Well, Mr. Speaker, given the serious nature of these allegations, I'm wondering: is the minister contemplating any additional investigative work to reassure himself and our good selves that this preliminary assessment is in fact valid?

MR. McINNIS: He made the allegations. He should put his . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please.

MR. OLDRING: Again, Mr. Speaker, I can only say that it is being pursued, that, as I mentioned, there have been sworn affidavits taken at this time, and that will be followed through the courts.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Advanced Education Funding

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time and again in the Assembly I've asked the Minister of Advanced Education to

explain why it is that the universities and colleges in Alberta are receiving funding that is less than the rate of inflation, and on a consistent basis, over most of the last nine years. In each instance he throws up his arms and says: "Don't you worry; postsecondary education is still our priority. I'm sorry; I just couldn't get it through cabinet." So my question today is to the Provincial Treasurer, who used to indeed govern the portfolio of Advanced Education. What series of priorities is it that the Provincial Treasurer has used to block sufficient funding for the most important investment in our province – that is, that for postsecondary education?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, that question should properly be directed to the Minister of Advanced Education.

MS BARRETT: He can't answer it. He keeps saying he can't answer it.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I take some exception to the manner of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands in expressing what I've said in the past.

I should point out that the hon. member is always anxious to represent the University of Alberta, and that's commendable. There are 28 other institutions in the province, however, in a very successful postsecondary system of education. Because the hon. member refers to the funding question and wants to talk inevitably about comparisons, it's interesting to look at five institutions across Canada, preeminent universities which would be similar to the U of A. It's interesting to note that if one were to add in the tuition fee question, then the funding at the U of A would certainly be on par with other institutions in Canada.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is misleading insofar as he fails to recognize that the Alberta government funds on a per capita basis all universities in Alberta to the tune of \$2,000 less than they did 10 years ago. That's just operating costs. On capital costs, it's \$500, real dollars, less than it was 10 years ago. So his answer is a bunch of malarkey.

I'd like to ask the Provincial Treasurer this. I know the Advanced Education minister doesn't like the reality, but he has in so many words said he can't get the requests through cabinet. Will the Provincial Treasurer admit now that he's trying to reduce the deficit that he and only he caused on the backs of all Alberta students looking for postsecondary education? Isn't that the truth?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, if I may be permitted to respond. We come back to the whole question of dollars this government is committing – and I know the hon. member doesn't like to hear it – the highest per capita . . .

MS BARRETT: I like to hear the truth. I just don't get the opportunity around here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. You just ask the question.

MR. GOGO: The inference, Mr. Speaker, is for someone else to decide whether I'm telling the truth, but the inference coming from the member disturbs me. If one is to look at the expenditures – and it's not a bad idea to look at the expenditures per student – you find that Alberta, out of five universities, is

expending the second highest in the nation. Perhaps the University of Alberta, which is spending the second highest per student of any institution in the nation, has to look at its priorities with how it spends its money.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Alberta-Pacific Project

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While it promises to be an improvement, questions remain about whether the Al-Pac proposal is in fact achievable and whether it could be pushed one step further to exclude chlorine dioxide from the process altogether and, therefore, achieve that all-important objective of doing away with organochlorines altogether. To the Minister of the Environment: will the minister please make a commitment now to open public assessments of this new proposal to test the validity of this proposal and determine whether in fact chlorine dioxide could be excluded and we could achieve an organochlorine-free pulp mill in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, here we go again and again and again. This member has been told on a number of occasions that this whole matter is under review, not only by the government of Alberta but by the government of Canada. That review is likely to take another couple of weeks anyway, and when the thoroughly thought out information is available, we'll be glad to provide it to this government for a recommendation and for careful consideration, and eventually it will be made public through an appropriate process.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the study I tabled in the House today indicates that in fact dioxins and furans like those found in this pulp mill proposal and these pulp mills in northern Alberta are much more toxic to human health than earlier studies had indicated. In light of that study, 300 kilograms of organochlorines going into that river each and every day are still far too much. Will the minister make a commitment to reviewing that study and taking its logical conclusion in pursuing a chlorine dioxide free process, a hydrogen peroxide pure process, which is being utilized now in New Zealand and in Sweden with success?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this government has always taken the logical approach to things, unlike the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark who seems to want to take the illogical approach to all kinds of situations. Just this morning this member, who professes to be a professional, got on the phone and like a wounded banshee yelled and screamed at my secretary, demanding the Whitecourt fly ash report. He then sent down his executive assistant with instructions to sit in my office until he got the report. Well, my executive assistant in so many words told him to go away, and when he didn't, we had to threaten to call security. Mr. Speaker, this kind of behaviour is absolutely outrageous.

Paper Recycling Initiative

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is to the minister of Economic Development. Yesterday I had the pleasure of participating with the minister of Economic Development in an announcement of a major industry that would be located in the town of Redcliff, an industry employing 120

people in recycling paper. During his estimates the minister made comments about guarantees and the backing off of guarantees to companies. Part of the announcement was guarantees. Can the minister assure the Assembly that the commitment made yesterday will be lived with and those guarantees will exist in place for that company?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to participate with a couple of colleagues from the Legislative Assembly in making a very substantial announcement as it relates to the economic well-being of Medicine Hat and Redcliff, also very substantial as it relates to the protection of the environment within the province of Alberta. We have indicated a willingness to provide a \$15 million loan guarantee to Consumers Paper Corporation, recognizing that it is a very important component of the protection of the environment within the province of Alberta. I'm sure the Minister of the Environment would wish to supplement this, because we are working hand in hand as it relates specifically to the recycling industry. I've indicated to hon. members on a consistent basis – a consistent basis – that even though we are going to pull back as it relates to our financial support to industry, the protection of our environment is a key priority of this government, and for that reason we are going to continue to involve ourselves in it.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the Minister of the Environment. Until the closing of the glass plant in Redcliff, Redcliff was a major contributor in the glass recycling industry; now it will be a major contributor in the recycling of paper. Can the minister assure the Assembly . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, both sides of the House. Order.

MR. HYLAND: Can the minister assure the Assembly that his department will work with this private-sector company and assist them in developing a collection agency throughout this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this project in Redcliff is consistent with the comprehensive waste minimization and recycling program that is being created now. Basically, that is to enhance collection and separation of recyclables throughout the province, on a provincewide basis, and to provide incentives and encouragement for companies like Consumers Paper Corporation to establish in this province and to take those materials and add value to them. Of course, the third component, one of the most exciting components, is to stimulate markets by having government buy back, on a priority basis, those recycled materials. So this fits very, very well into the program that is being developed.

Education Funding

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, the Calgary board of education recently wrote to the minister expressing a serious concern regarding their inability to adequately accommodate rapidly growing enrollments in parts of that city. The board has committed all of its discretionary capital funding into building a new high school and does not have approval from the department for any other new construction. What commitments can the minister give today that families moving into Calgary and settling in new areas of that city will not be forced to accept

lengthy bus rides to attend overcrowded classrooms in inadequate buildings for their children?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, a full commitment that each and every one of those children will get a quality education in the city of Calgary.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, there are other communities in Alberta which are expected to have significant student growth in the next few years. If the government is serious about wanting the provincial economy to improve, surely they realize that an important part of attracting people to Alberta is an adequate school system. It is not only Calgary which will run into this problem, Mr. Speaker, and the minister can't abrogate his responsibility for funding to the local boards. They can't plan when they don't have the projections to work with. Has the minister's department performed any comprehensive research to evaluate the changing demographic patterns and their effect on demands for new schools, or is it . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Enough.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I can tell members of this Legislature that this government has committed \$1.2 billion worth of capital spending over the last decade to Alberta's school systems: \$1.2 billion of Alberta taxpayers' dollars. That is a significant commitment, a significant contribution.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has some interesting demographics. He is correct. We are facing an increasing number of students coming into our school system, some 7,000 to 8,000 new students each year for the next five to seven years. We must accommodate those children. This government, when it announces its capital plan for school construction sometime before the middle of this year, will live up to that commitment to a quality education, a first-rate education, for each and every child in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

Centennial Foods Ltd.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. A few days ago he announced that a group calling themselves Centennial Foods had obtained \$2 million in loans and loan guarantees to build a waxy barley processing plant somewhere in southern Alberta. I was informed yesterday that waxy barley seed, which we don't have very much of in this province, has to be imported but has been turned back by the federal government. In other words, it's not allowed to come into Canada because it's not registered. Now, in view of this government's rather dismal record in financing food processing in this province all the way from Sexsmith to Pocklington, could the minister tell us whether or not they checked out, before loaning the taxpayers' \$2 million, if this seed was available for planting to fuel this plant?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon had reviewed the announcement of the ADC financing package, he would have seen the word "conditional" in there. It was \$1.5 million in direct lending, a \$500,000 loan guarantee at commercial rates on a conditional basis, subject to quite a number of conditions. If those conditions are not fulfilled – you know, first of all, they've got to decide on a site, they've got to

contract acres, they've got to establish sales contracts, they've got to bring money into the process, they've got to bring other financing to the plant. Until then, the ADC money does not flow. I understand there's been a bit of a hiccup at the border with respect to the condition seed arrived in at the border. I'm sure that can be worked around. But there is no ADC money into this at this point in time.

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have a supplementary, Westlock-Sturgeon?

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hiccup was more of a belch. Nevertheless, can we would look forward to a \$20 million grant, provisionally, processing bananas one of these days?

Could the . . . [interjections] They have a lot to start on over there. Could the minister . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. TAYLOR: Could the minister tell us whether any cost/benefit analysis or any financial study was done before the government was committed to this provisional loan, as he's called it, and if so, would he file it with this House?

MR. ISLEY: Might I try to educate the hon. member just a little bit. The Agricultural Development Corporation is a Crown corporation of this government that is involved in farm lending at the producer level. It's also involved in lending to the agribusiness industry, and we're reinforcing and strengthening its lending at that level. You may realize there's even an Act before the House, that you will have a chance to debate on that. In my judgment the Ag Development Corporation is run by very capable staff. It's run by a very capable board of directors. It has a good track record in coming through some pretty tough times. The process . . .

MR. DECORE: So what's the answer, Ernie? What's the answer?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, you've been cautioned once.

MR. ISLEY: The process, if you understand it: in legislation they have a lending limit. The only reason these OCs have to come to cabinet is because it's above that lending limit. The answer is that ADC did the same type of due process on this application as they do on any other application, and I'm ready to debate their track record with you at any time.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Geriatric Care Centre

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February of 1988 I chaired a committee that developed this paper, *A New Vision For Long Term Care: Meeting the Need in caring for the elderly*. I'd like to thank the Minister of Health for the initiatives that she and her department have taken with regards to implementing a number of these recommendations. Recently there has been some disturbing news with regards to the geriatric assessment centre that was to be developed in Calgary at the Colonel Belcher hospital. It's my understanding that the

Calgary hospital district board is now changing that direction with regards to this geriatric assessment unit that will be giving the highly specialized staff training in geriatrics. I was wondering if the Minister of Health could please indicate to the Assembly what direction this board is taking and if indeed there are some changes being made.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, there's no change with respect to the request of the Calgary District Hospital Group to look at the establishment of a long-term geriatric assessment centre of excellence in Calgary, and that responsibility rests with that hospital group and still does. I did meet with the Calgary district group about a month ago, and they requested of me that they be given time to look at the configuration of the services they offer, including the looking forward toward the geriatric assessment centre on the three sites, the Rockyview, the Holy Cross, and the Colonel Belcher. I was happy to give them the time, as they requested, to review that configuration of services.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Could she indicate whether the Colonel Belcher would retain their operating room suites in the acute care setting or if, in fact, it would be totally developed into a long-term care. Or would there be some changes with the Holy Cross in regards to this?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the answer to the hon. member's question. The board asked, as I indicated, for some time to look at the configuration of their services. Presumably they're looking at exactly the questions raised by the hon. member and others. I haven't given them any direction as to what they should come back with. I'm looking forward, though, to what I will be receiving from them in due course.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud, if there's time.

Social Workers' Strike

(continued)

MS MJOLSNES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Family and Social Services has blamed social workers on strike for placing kids at risk when in fact these kids have been at risk long before this strike. In this province we have thousands of children who are fed by food banks, who suffer from malnutrition, and who go to school hungry. Children are being left in abusive situations because child welfare workers cannot do investigations. Foster children and foster parents are being placed in dangerous situations because they are not receiving the services they need. The list goes on. I'd like to ask the minister: when will this minister quit blaming social workers and admit that it's the policies of this government and their lack of caring that are placing kids at risk in this province?

MR. MARTIN: That's right.

MR. OLDRING: Wrong, Mr. Speaker. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Let me talk about . . . I'm glad to have this opportunity now of talking about some of our initiatives as it relates to reducing caseloads.

I'll talk about child welfare first. It was of interest for me to note, Mr. Speaker, to start with, that our child welfare caseload peaked at April '89, when it went as high as 8,350; that our caseload in fact dropped as of February '90 and we were down

at that point to 7,850, a 6 percent decrease. At the same time, in '86-87 we had 704 full-time equivalents working in our child welfare division. In the '89-90 budget that was increased to 884, an increase of 180 employees at a time when this government reduced the overall number of provincial employees by 2,300. I recognize that you can't look at just caseload, but if you look at caseload plus face-to-face investigations, which is part of their responsibilities, again I would want to point out that those numbers are down as well. In May '89 they peaked at 9,900. In February '90 they were down to 8,900, a 10 percent decrease. Over that same time period we added . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. Perhaps something for the supplementary.

Supplementary.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the minister can spout off all kinds of figures, the facts speak for themselves. The social workers are on strike because they know that this government and this minister are responsible for placing kids at risk in this province. I'd like to ask the minister then: when will this minister accept responsibility for ensuring the well-being of children in this province and quit blaming others because he can't do his job properly?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that I accepted those responsibilities just over a year ago now when I was sworn into this office. As I mentioned, we have introduced a number of initiatives to try to address caseload. But I'm going to come back to my earlier comments. Again, we are concerned for these children. The member opposite can refer to them as statistics, but we refer to them as children. We know that they're not just meaningless numbers. We know that there are real people and real situations and real faces behind those numbers, and I'm anxious to find additional initiatives. I've outlined only a few. We're also piloting caseload management modules in some of our offices as it relates to child welfare. Mr. Speaker, we are anxious. I am anxious for the sake of those social workers who are being eaten up inside. For their sake, I'm anxious to see them come to a more sensible position, to see them return to the work force so that they can get back to the negotiating table, because they know they can't, not while they're out on an illegal strike. We are committed to working with them. We want to be partners in delivering these essential services, but we can't do it while they're out on an illegal strike.

MR. SPEAKER: All right. Before we deal with the points of order as raised, could we have unanimous consent to revert to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Thank you.

In this order: Stony Plain, Redwater-Andrew, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**
(reversion)

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege of introducing to you and through you to the members of the Legislature 10 students and two teachers from Memorial composite high school in Stony Plain. During early March in

Okotoks they placed first in the western regional academic decathlon. On April 27 in Oshawa, Ontario, they placed second in the national finals. They came within one question of placing first. I also understand that they won the most individual members. I would ask, as I quickly call their names, that they stand and after the teachers are called receive the traditional welcome of the Legislature. First off, next to the rail, is Ken Tough – Ken, you can wave – Bob Carver, Randy Wichuk, Heather Caltagirone, Darcy Quartly, Jodi Zahara, Andrew Breckenridge, Rhea Hildebrand, Brad Jones, Kurt Ludwig; teachers, Mr. Wegner and Mrs. Munro.

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and to the rest of the Assembly 70 grade 6 students from the Redwater elementary school. I'm sure they're having an enjoyable and informative morning at the Legislature. They're accompanied by teachers Mr. Hrynychuk, Ms. Arsenault, and Ms. Grainger, and parents Mrs. Miller, Mr. Brisson, Mrs. Hoeran, Mrs. Cornellsson, Mrs. Witwicki, Mrs. Zinyk, Mrs. Serben, and Mrs. Wacowich. They're seated in the members' and, I believe, public galleries. I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce 33 grade 6 students from Our Lady of Peace school in the constituency of Edmonton-Jasper Place. They're studying the legislative process, and I think they've learned today that we feel strongly about the issues we deal with in this Chamber. They're accompanied today by their teachers Linus Feist and Bert Facciotti, and I'd like them to stand, please, and receive the recognition of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services on a point of order.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would refer you, sir, to *Beauchesne* 409(1), 410(10), and 412. Earlier today in the question period, in what I sincerely hope would simply be a matter of emotional runaway, the Leader of the Opposition made a statement that the government of Alberta has broken the law with respect to the Oldman River dam. That simply is not the case. *Beauchesne* clearly allows words to be used with respect to this matter, and that's put quite simply as a barefaced falsehood, it's dishonest, it's untrue, it's false. Whatever the motivations of the Leader of the Opposition are, they would not come into question or play by me. But in talking to this point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to *Alberta Hansard*, March 13, 1990. A question was addressed and a response was given. *Hansard*, page 45, states in the response from this member:

Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important to make it very, very clear that the Federal Court of Canada document that was issued today contains no decision or order halting construction of the Oldman River dam.

The next statement in *Hansard* is a response from Mr. Martin: "That's beside the point, Mr. Speaker."

The court order of that day – and I can quote again from the court order, although I've done it before in this Assembly – makes it very, very clear, and I quote from the Federal Court of Canada court order: "an order in the nature of mandamus be granted directing the [federal] Minister of Transport to comply" with the environmental assessment and review process guidelines

order SOR-84/467 and that "an order in the nature of mandamus be granted" directing – once again referencing the federal court – Fisheries and Oceans to comply with the environmental assessment review process guidelines order SOR-84/467. Mr. Speaker, Alberta is continuing the construction of the Oldman River dam on the basis of all the approvals granted to the province, and to this point there has not been any suggestion by anyone in any court of law that the province of Alberta has broken the law with respect to the Oldman River dam, and these statements are wrong . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The hon. minister has made the point with respect to the issue.

On this same point of order.

MS BARRETT: To the learned minister who likes his B numbers, I would also refer him to B number 31, which says that "a dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege." It goes on to cite . . . I would suggest that he read the entire section 26 to 31 on this matter. In fact, these are not points of order. But as the minister decided to engage in discussion of the substance in reference to the Official Opposition leader's comments, I would like to suggest to the minister, first of all, that he recognize that the court order quashing the right to continue construction and the Alberta government's decision to continue construction of the Oldman dam does in the opinion of some, whether he likes it or not, constitute a violation of the law.

In the second place, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out that while there are many laws available to remedy unfortunate and in fact negligent situations such as continuation of production at the risk of workers' health and safety at the battery plant in Medicine Hat, the Alberta government chose to do nothing and in fact blamed the workers. Those were the points that the hon. Leader of the Opposition was making. If the minister doesn't like it, well that's too bad, but that's a matter of opinion; it is not a matter of point of order.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, thank you, hon. members.

First off for clarification, the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Service was raising a point of order. It was not a question of privilege. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands then made reference to *Beauchesne* 31, which deals strictly with the matter of privilege which was not a question at issue. Indeed, it's a matter of dispute as to understandings of legal positions. The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services has indeed read from an official document, and the matter is there in terms of the record.

The Chair, however, wants to go on to point out another aberration which occurred in question period with respect to a number of the questions raised by the Leader of the Opposition. They were really probably in violation of a number of sections in *Beauchesne*, some of which can indeed be quoted, because question period is not a matter of standing up and asking questions of a minister about legal opinions. If the record is examined, you will find that a number of those sections in *Beauchesne* were indeed in probable breach. So rather than read them all out, the Chair will make reference to *Beauchesne* 408(1)(c), again 409(3), 410(13), and 411(1). While it was allowed to proceed today, it really isn't the purpose of question

period to be asking legal opinions and especially to be asking the Minister of Family and Social Services to make comment about legal actions or lack of legal actions with respect to other departments. Perhaps questions in a more general form might have been addressed to the head of the government rather than to a particular minister.

With regard to another point of order, the Minister of Career Development and Employment.

MR. WEISS: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In rising to a point of order, I'd ask you to refer to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, and I'd like to cite several citations. I'd refer, first of all, to citation 485(1) with regards to unparliamentary language where it refers to:

Unparliamentary words may be brought to the attention of the House either by the Speaker or by any Member.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker:

When the question is raised by a Member it must be as a point of order and not as a question of privilege.

That was on page 142. I would then further refer you, sir, to 486(1), where once again it refers – I won't ask the indulgence of the House to read it entirely, but it says:

It is impossible to lay down any specific rules in regard to injurious reflections . . .

And so forth.

Then once again also, on page 150, in citation 492 such words are used as – and I refer here, sir – "Scum bag" and "Sleaze bag." But, sir, to you, I would ask for your ruling and interpretation as to the decorum of the House and refer back, then, into the general citation 491, where

the Speaker has consistently ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken.

It goes on then, of course, to cite "disorder in another context, and therefore . . ." what the ruling regards to be "unparliamentary."

In particular, sir, I felt that the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, in using the words "slime ball," while it's not specifically laid out as I've indicated in citation 492, certainly in my interpretation it would not appear to be a proper use of words and term. I would ask for your ruling on that and would appreciate your guidance in that respect, sir.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I do appreciate the comment made by the minister about temperate language in the Legislative Assembly. It's difficult sometimes to find words that describe a government that provokes social workers into going on strike so that they can come down like a ton of bricks. There's no truth whatsoever to these scurrilous . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. Order, hon. member. Are you finished with that little burst of energy? Perhaps you'd now like to talk to the question at issue, which is whether or not you made the comment and are prepared to do the decent thing and withdraw if you did.

MR. McINNIS: Well, the problem here, Mr. Speaker, is a simple one. I can't find another word to describe a minister that makes allegations like that with no proof whatsoever and then says he's going to investigate after the fact.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, a certain phrase was heard. Perhaps you would be good enough to withdraw the phrase.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, have you ruled that term unparliamentary?

MR. SPEAKER: I now so rule it to be unparliamentary.

MR. McINNIS: In that case, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the word.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Now, on an additional point of order, the Minister of Recreation and Parks.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it's a continuation of the same point of order under . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With due respect, I'm sorry, that point of order has been dealt with. Please take your place.

All right. Now, if this is a new point of order, which is not what the hon. minister said – if this is a new point of order – Recreation and Parks.

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Under 489 of *Beauchesne* there is a list as deemed unparliamentary language since 1958. The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place just used the word "scurrilous," which is listed in there, in reference to the minister of social services. I would ask your judgment on that.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, in that particular instance, the Chair will have to check the Blues, because the Chair did not hear it. It might have been one of the interjections. I was interrupted. It might have been in the flow of words that was going on when the Chair rose, and therefore it was cut off from being recorded in *Hansard*. Thank you for bringing it to the attention of the Chair. I'll review the Blues, and we'll have to deal with it on Monday.

The Chair would like to point out that it's one of the difficulties in question period of the shouting back and forth across the hall. It's having a tendency to grow. It should not. If, indeed, the Chair is going to have to stand up more frequently and count burned-out light bulbs on the ceiling in future, so be it. We'll waste the time of question period.

There certainly is no need to be shouting down hon. members on each side of the House. There's certainly no need to be shouting down before a minister even gets a chance to stand up and to get out the first five words. I realize that some members of the House have a great capacity in terms of their lungs and their volume to be able to shout across the Chamber. They are heard more frequently than others, and oftentimes they're brought up short by the admonition of the Chair. The Chair is not, indeed, picking on any individual members, but if this tendency continues, the Chair is going to start picking on all members. As part of the responsibility of the Chair with regard to the House, it's not a question of anybody being picked on. It's a matter of trying to bring out from all members, which I'm sure the Chair is able to count on, which is, indeed, the respect of the parliamentary process in this place.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would ask the committee to please come to order.

head: **Main Estimates 1990-91**

Executive Council

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would invite opening remarks by the Premier and by ministers and members responsible for the various votes.

Mr. Premier.

MR. GETTY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recognize that when we are dealing with the matter of Executive Council estimates, we automatically move into an area of very broad responsibilities because of the fact that I chair the cabinet, and therefore we really can discuss virtually anything any member would like to talk about. It's difficult to know what interests various members, and it's difficult for me to know what I should concentrate on in discussing the broad responsibilities that a Premier has. I'll try to answer any questions that are raised during the committee study of our estimates, but I think members would find it valuable, and I think it would be valuable, if we had the various categories that are broken down on page 159 – if we had each of the members responsible speak regarding those responsibilities. I think it would help a great deal in providing the information to the committee that is required in studying these estimates.

For instance, the minister responsible for native programs. One of the large items of expenditure that has never appeared before in our estimates is the Alberta Metis Settlements Accord, and that is a large dollar amount this year. Members can refer to page 161, and we'll see it's some \$34,295,590: a large increase in this vote; a new vote and a large responsibility. Then, of course, we have the whole area of the Northern Alberta Development Council; I would like to hear from the hon. member Dr. Elliott. In the area of professions and occupations, I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore can provide us with information that would be valuable to the committee. The hon. Minister of Energy with regards to the Energy Resources Conservation Board – and as we go through the list, I think it would be helpful for all members to hear those responsibilities.

For my part, my participation at the beginning of this – and of course there should be opportunities to respond to questions. Perhaps to be contemporary, it might be helpful if I talked about the Western Premiers' Conference which we are about to commence. I'll be leaving Sunday with certain members of the Alberta government for Western Premiers' Conference activities that commence Sunday evening. Perhaps I can just briefly discuss that Western Premiers' Conference, because it's current. One of the important responsibilities I have to fulfill is meeting with the western Premiers and then moving in August into a full Premiers' conference, and probably in between that period of time a First Ministers' Conference that would be talking about constitutional matters.

In any event, the Western Premiers' Conference starts Sunday afternoon in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. It's an important conference. It's particularly important this year because we've broken our agenda up in a way that we normally don't. On the Monday, after opening festivities and activities on Sunday night with the people of Portage la Prairie, we will be going through what I would consider to be the normal discussions on an annual basis that western Premiers would participate in. We'll be looking, as our number one agenda item, at the whole area of agriculture, the health of agriculture, and an outlook for the future. We'll also be assessing reports from our Agriculture ministers on the federal farm aid proposals, and to make sure

that we have a co-operative western reaction, we'll to some extent be following the lead here of the Premier of Saskatchewan, because he is the Minister of Agriculture for that province as well. Nevertheless, all members know that Alberta has agriculture as its number one economic priority, so I can assure all members that we'll be participating fully in that discussion.

Our second agenda item that I'm looking forward to is this whole area of federal monetary policies. There's no doubt that the federal government have now got themselves into an unbelievable situation where we have high deficits, high interest rates, and higher and higher taxes. That has to be bad for this country. The Alberta government recognized this some time ago and has led the public reaction, has led the struggle against what I consider to be a completely wrong high interest rate policy for this country. We now have the interest rates higher on an historical basis in comparison with the United States interest rates than ever before, and it has to hurt. We have a dollar that is artificially inflated because of these high interest rates, and it's damaging the ability of our country to compete internationally. So high interest rates will be a focus of our discussion. I hope to obtain from the western Premiers the same solid support that I received last year and then take that support on to the annual Premiers' meeting to once again stress with the federal government, the Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance, and of course the governor of the Bank of Canada, that they are wrong and they must change that policy.

We'll also be talking on a co-operative basis of continuing our opposition to the goods and services tax. We'll review whether there are legal ways in which that tax can be opposed and other information that the various Premiers will bring with regards to opposing what is a bad tax.

We'll be discussing the recent federal budget and the way the federal government has off-loaded their deficit onto provinces in trying to deal with their deficit rather than cutting their own expenditures. They have merely passed the responsibility for those expenditures to the provinces and have had an impact, obviously, on the ability of provinces to fulfill their responsibilities.

One of the important economic matters we'll discuss will be an update on the operation of the free trade agreement with the United States. One of the contentious items in that free trade agreement was the whole of area of: how do you handle disputes? We now have several of these disputes going through what we refer to as the disputes settlement mechanism. That mechanism is operating, I think, very well. I'm going to want to hear how the other Premiers consider that mechanism is working, and then obviously we'll be able to judge whether the free trade agreement is in fact being effective. We'll get a report, as well, on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the GATT negotiations which are so important, particularly to our agricultural producers, and the huge problems that we face on international markets with subsidies in the European Economic Community and the United States.

In the area of general western Premiers' co-operation, the co-operation amongst the four western provinces, I'm looking for strong co-operation in dealing with the environment, the jurisdictional matters, the problems we have with the federal government changing the rules in the middle of the game. We will be making sure that we deal with those problems in a co-operative way. I'd like to have all the Premiers back Alberta in this matter of making sure that you cannot use environmental jurisdiction problems to restrain, restrict, or even control the

development of Alberta's natural resources and other provinces' natural resources when these natural resources and their development are clearly our responsibility under the Constitution.

We'll continue to discuss ways in which diversification is proceeding. I know the other Premiers recognize that Alberta has made a dramatic breakthrough in diversification. They are learning from some of the things that we are accomplishing here: how the Alberta economy now is strong and healthy and so much more broadly based than ever before in the history of this province. Where you could have the energy industry weak, flat actually, and have a housing boom in Calgary and Edmonton; unemployment dropping dramatically; the highest per capita retail sales in Canada; the strongest flow of investment into a province in history: all of these things show that while certain parts of our economy, our traditional ways of building Alberta's economic strength, are weak now, we still have a very strong, healthy economy. Everybody across Canada recognizes that the reason for that is the dramatic diversification breakthrough; that while it's been talked about in the past, it has now happened in this province, and the reason it's happened is because we've made it a commitment of our government, and we've gone out and used all the financial levers at our disposal to make it happen. I think it's fair to say that other provincial governments are viewing the Alberta progress here and studying it to see if they can as well participate in a stronger diversification, as we are here.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

This whole area of rural development is one that the Alberta government is pressing and now has on the agenda. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has a heavy responsibility in this regard and, of course, is co-ordinating rural development within our province, because we are determined that in the smaller centres in Alberta we want to have the quality of life and economic opportunity that can be enjoyed in the larger centres. We're going to keep working at this diversification, decentralization, and rural development in the key ways that a provincial government can, and that is: providing economic opportunities, providing transportation, providing quality of life opportunities, whether they're recreational, community, or other opportunities. You can see it happening across our province. Just recently the other western provinces sent ministers here to meet with our minister to see his game plan and see the progress we've been making, and it is substantial.

Another area of western co-operation is this area of electrical energy. The Premiers are looking at the possibility of a full western Canadian electrical utility grid, so that whenever there are problems, emergencies, any one province can tap into the provinces' electrical energy supply. I think if we can handle it, if the costs are not overwhelming and the benefits are there, then it would be a good base to build for the future handling of emergencies and the future strength across western Canada.

Alberta will also be bringing the other provinces up to date on our science and technology initiatives: the council that we have established on science and technology, which the members here have support so strongly, and also the national forum on science and technology which will held in Edmonton.

I'm pleased, too, Mr. Chairman, that we are going to have an additional opportunity at the Western Premiers' Conference to talk about those initiatives that will enhance family life, strengthen the family tradition in western Canada. I'm extremely

pleased that other governments right across Canada have followed the Alberta lead in this focus on strengthening something that is such a foundation of our province, such a foundation of our country, and that is family and family life. I think members will find that if we can continue to focus on strengthening the family, we will see that more and more the strength of the family will be able to reduce the number of social problems we have, because families who can deal with their own problems will not throw them onto the backs of governments or the community.

We'll be talking, too, about the future health care in western Canada, and indeed all of Canada, and how we can make sure that we provide the quality care that Canadians, western Canadians and certainly Albertans, enjoy and expect and still have it provided at a cost that the taxpayers can afford. That's an ongoing matter we deal with at every Western Premiers' Conference and every annual Premiers' meeting.

Something new in this meeting is that we will have a governor from the United States join us. Some of the Premiers – and I'm one who is looking at this with some interest – want to strike a more detailed relationship with the governors of western states, so that there's a better understanding, a better flow of information, a better transfer of knowledge about the needs, how we could co-operate together in the western United States and western Canada. So we have Governor Sinner of North Dakota joining us. That will be late on the Monday afternoon, and it will be a part of our discussions on future co-operation between states and provinces. Governor Sinner will be carrying the message on behalf of many of his colleagues in western United States.

Now, I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, that this was what I would call a normal Western Premiers' Conference first day. But on the second day we as western Premiers are dealing with something that has intensified over the past few weeks. As members know, I flew out to Vancouver to meet with the western Premiers regarding Meech Lake, and we established a Meech Lake task force. We will be dealing with the report of that task force on the second day. That task force met for two days in Alberta; it was the top constitutional experts of the four western provinces. I must say that they have prepared a report, a report that the Premiers have discussed in an hour-long conference call and will be discussing in detail on the Tuesday part of the Premiers' conference. Members should consider how important it is now that the western Premiers try and bridge the gap that is existing in trying to get ourselves a constitutional accord, a constitutional amendment that brings together the whole family in Canada.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

If you consider the four who will be meeting on Tuesday, three were in the Meech Lake and Langevin Block discussions. Three of us have participated in the negotiations, carried the Meech Lake accord through our Legislatures, and support it very strongly. As members also know, the government of Manitoba signed the Meech Lake accord: the former Premier, Premier Pawley. The current leader of the NDP in Manitoba, Mr. Doer, was then a member of Mr. Pawley's cabinet, and so he accepted and supported Meech Lake as well. It's interesting that Premier Filmon was moving to pass a resolution on Meech Lake – presumably, although I'm not sure, with Mr. Doer's support – in the Legislature in Manitoba, when, if you recall, Premier Bourassa brought in certain language legislation which seemed

to really sour the opinions of Canadians. Obviously, it seemed to change dramatically the feeling in the Manitoba Legislature, because they terminated their discussion and debate on Meech Lake. We now have a gap that exists between what Manitoba considers should be in the Meech Lake accord – and how do we close that gap? That's basically what we're going to be trying to deal with on Tuesday: how do we close the gap that exists between at least Manitoba and the other provinces, and then also not just consider it from Manitoba's point of view but how does it fit in the national perspective? How does it fit with regards to the province of Quebec, of course, and other provinces, particularly the province of New Brunswick and Newfoundland? So that's going to take a lot of our time and, I think, a lot of our patience and tolerance and understanding and caring about our country.

For our part, Alberta will be looking at any ideas to improve Meech Lake. I think all members know that I've said it's not a perfect document. But then it wasn't a document that could be dictated. It was a document that was negotiated between 11 equal participants, and therefore there was give and take and you ended up with an accord or an agreement, not something that is normally everything you might want. But I'm looking forward to the potential for improving that Meech Lake accord if we can.

I want members to just think for a moment about some of the hurdles that are before us now. We'll be meeting on May 8. The House of Commons committee will be bringing down their report on May 18. The government of Manitoba, who will be involved in the negotiations with us on Tuesday, have a process that takes them roughly a month to carry any resolution on certain matters through their Legislature. That means that somewhere around May 23 the government of Manitoba must start the process of any endorsement of Meech Lake or Meech Lake plus companion or Meech Lake plus parallel accord. Then, of course, we know that we have the June 23 date. So we have in front of us, then, May 8, when we'll be meeting; presumably an important report coming from the House of Commons committee on May 18. There's only a seven-day window – five if you say it's May 23; perhaps seven if you say it's going to be May 25 – in which any negotiations can go on as a result of the House of Commons committee, and then on into what should be a period when first ministers must meet. That would seem to me to mean that first ministers must meet between May 18 and May 25 at the latest. I told the Prime Minister this, and I think there's just a new understanding of the process, because it won't help us if we're meeting sometime in early June and it's too late to be able to do anything of a positive nature.

Now, I understand some of the concerns the Premier and people of Manitoba have regarding Meech Lake, and I have some ideas that I think may be able to close the gap that they feel, in improving the Meech Lake accord. There are some ideas I think I can propose to the western Premiers that they might build a consensus around. The important thing is that getting a consensus in western Canada can't create a greater split on a national basis. It has to close the gap there as well, and that is why we're in what I consider to be such very, very difficult times for constitutional progress, constitutional amendments in our country. We have a short period of time; we have extremely important responsibilities. I only conclude this discussion because I don't want to get into more now than I'm going to say with my colleagues the western Premiers except to assure members here that we have some ideas that may well deal with

their concerns, could close the gap and, we trust, might fit the process of a companion resolution and then help to heal the national discord, the national crisis that we could be heading to if we cannot deal with a constitutional accord that brings all members of our country together into the constitutional family. I've said before that we have the potential in Canada to be a great nation. There's no doubt in my mind but that we will not be a great nation, that we will never be great unless we are able to bring all of the parts of this country together in a unified way.

So I'll conclude this comment on the discussions on Meech Lake by saying that the Alberta government will be working, first, for a united Canada in these discussions now until June 23; secondly, for strong, equal provinces unable to be dictated to from the centre, as has been in the past; and thirdly, for meaningful opportunities arising from these discussions for the kind of Senate reform that we all believe in in this Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, I perhaps went on a little bit about the Western Premiers' Conference, but I thought since it was timely, since we're leaving on Sunday and it's only one of the many responsibilities – and I'm going to have my ministers and members discuss their responsibilities – I thought I would just lay out for the members of the committee some of the thinking that I have, going into conference.

I would propose now, Mr. Chairman, that we have the ministers responsible for these various areas give a very brief description of their responsibilities, and then we would deal with members' comments or questions.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Chairman, a point of order.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, Edmonton-Glengarry; a point of order.

MR. DECORE: I wonder if the hon. Premier would agree to split . . . You're asking the Assembly or the Chair to split the areas of responsibility. Could we split this one, dealing with Meech now, and perhaps make some comments and have you answer some questions, if you're able to answer those questions? I'd like to pursue this because I think it's a very important issue for Albertans to better understand.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I think what's more critical here in this request is that if each member of Executive Council who has responsibility under this section's votes takes up the half hour, there will be no opportunity at all for opposition comment, and that would be, I think, the more important area to pursue at this point. So if the leader of the Liberal Party, for instance, wants to spend time on Meech, let him do so, but I think it'd be very unfair to this Assembly. Given the recent co-operation that we've engaged in in Committee of Supply, I think more important is to let some opposition comment in prior to going to other members of Executive Council.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure about that comment, because I anticipate that we'll have lots of time for back-and-forth discussion. The ministers or members who are going to speak are going to speak very briefly. But I found it unfortunate in the past that there has been no discussion and look at the dollars that each of them is responsible for. If they are not able to discuss it now, how do we ever have any coming to grips with the dollars involved, which is this committee's responsibility? I understand and I appreciate the comment from the leader of the Liberal Party, because Meech Lake is so important. I would say,

Mr. Chairman, if we want, in some period of time, to zero in just on Meech Lake before we go to the other members' responsibilities . . .

MS BARRETT: That's a farce.

MR. GETTY: Well, if the committee doesn't want to do it, then fine. We'll go on with what we said we were going to do then, Mr. Chairman: in brief, the comments by the various ministers. Then I'd welcome the discussion with the leader of the Liberal Party on this important matter of Meech Lake.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would now ask that members responsible for the votes under Executive Council make brief statements as suggested by the Premier. I'd like to begin by calling on the Member for Grande Prairie, responsible for the Northern Alberta Development Council.

DR. ELLIOTT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's with real pleasure that I make comments on the Northern Alberta Development Council. This council is a unique organization. It's responsible for the socioeconomic development of a major portion of this province. We can refer to the area as that area that lies north of a line that would be drawn somewhere from Grande Cache through to Whitecourt – these are towns which are inside the northern area – to Fort Assiniboine, to Athabasca, and on through to Lac La Biche, Elk Point, Bonnyville, and in that area.

That particular area that I described represents 60 percent of the landmass of this province, and in that area we have only 10 percent of the people of this province residing. The other way of putting that, Mr. Chairman, is that 90 percent of the people in Alberta live in the southern 40 percent of this province. The concern there is very clear, and that is that we have very few people living in a very large area of this province. The distances are massive, and the population is very thin on the ground.

We look after such concerns as everything from education to the health care needs of the people of northern Alberta, concerns which are sort of caused by the fact that the distances are so great, whether it's roads, airstrips, ambulance services, nursing stations, and all of the other things that require or provide the services which people need but that are not necessarily available unless there are sufficient numbers in population.

The Northern Alberta Development Council is in its 27th year, but it was in 1973 that it was reorganized to provide a council of 10 members and, most important, to provide for public meetings. We have 10 northerners on this council, eight of which are public members and two of which are MLAs. The public meetings are held six times a year, one every second month, in some specific area throughout the north in order to receive briefs and learn of the concerns of northerners. And there is the key to this whole operation: having northerners bring their concerns to the council in the form of briefs. Just a week ago last Tuesday night we met in Spirit River, and there were 28 briefs presented covering all of the issues of the community that were government related so that we could bring them back to the various ministers, working through the MLAs of the community, of which there have been several because of the distance people traveled, and help line departments in understanding the needs of the north and getting good answers out there. To date we've had 2,200 briefs in the life of the council, and this coming meeting at Fox Creek on May 15 will be the 100th public meeting of that council in northern Alberta.

Every Member of the Legislative Assembly is invited to come and see us go to work.

The work of the council is brief driven. It's the brief that causes the council to pay attention to the issues. An accumulation of briefs on the same issue will cause us to do specific research on that area. These things will eventually go through to workshops or major conferences. Frequently we get publications, and I was going to make reference to one which I think is a very specific publication that was released recently. We called it Trends, and this is the publication, Mr. Chairman, we filed here in the Assembly. It gives a very specific discussion about the economic and social trends throughout the north and is an excellent background on how the north is developing: areas of rapid development and areas where there has not been much development. Perhaps education and health care needs could be some of those areas.

A brief comment on our bursary program for northerners. It's a program where we attempt to encourage northern people to receive advanced education and then practise their profession in the north. It's a very successful program, and we think it's great.

With those introductory comments, Mr. Chairman, I'll sit down and ask for questions, if there are any questions. But in doing so, I'd like to thank the Premier for the opportunity to chair this council. It's been an extremely important challenge, and it's an extremely exciting area in which to work. I also recognize that I work with the minister responsible for northern development, the Hon. Boomer Adair. I'd like to also mention a thank you to our executive director of the northern development branch, Mr. Rick Sloan, and his professional staff: excellent workers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Attorney General, who should have been first.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Chairman, this is the first year that native affairs have been in the Executive Council estimates, due to the work that we've been able to accomplish with our Metis settlements federation and the accord that the Premier recently signed last July. This gives me also an opportunity to review the significant progress that we've made in dealing with our native population in our province, progress unparalleled in any other province in Canada, and this comes through the leadership of our Premier, the president of our Executive Council.

I go back to 1987 at the First Ministers' conference on aboriginal rights. That was the culmination of about 11 meetings that related to self-government for our Indian population, and Alberta's position was: yes, you have rights; yes, we would like to give you some self-determination, perhaps even ultimately self-government. But we needed to know what was meant by self-government. At the meeting the Premier also said that we as a province will take responsibility for our Metis population; we won't bargain off their rights with the federal government; we take that right.

On the Indian side we've worked very, very closely with the Indian Association of Alberta and their president, Mr. Roy Louis. We've been able to accomplish two agreements that we're now waiting to be signed off officially between the federal government, the Indian bands, and the provincial government. That's for the Sturgeon Lake Reserve, with Chief Ron Sunshine, and the Whitefish Lake Reserve, with Chief Eddie Tallman. In both these instances, through sitting down with the two governments, federal and provincial, and the bands and their councils,

we've been able to work out an accommodation of land and money that satisfies the responsibility of the Canadian government and the province through our Natural Resources Transfer Act. These weren't land entitlements such as negotiations going on with the Lubicon Band, but there were people missed in these counts, and through accommodation and working together, we've been able to accomplish those.

In matters with the Lubicon nation and their quest for a reserve, this is a true land entitlement. Their band was not accounted for at the time Treaty 8 was signed off. Again through Treaty 8 and some of the conditions in it and our Natural Resources Transfer Act, there is a responsibility on behalf of Alberta, and more so on behalf of Canada, to work with the band and to accommodate them with a package of land and money which will allow them to have a self-sufficiency, a self-determination to get their infrastructure in place and to be proud of their heritage and to be able to work again with the governments to get off welfare rolls and become more self-sufficient.

I commend Chief Bernard Ominayak and his council for the work that they've done with our Premier, with our negotiators, in signing the Grimshaw accord whereby we have determined a land base for them. Now we're continuing, and we must continue, to work with the three parties again to get their infrastructure in place. Sure, there'll be some tag ends that will have to be left for negotiation perhaps later, but we should not continue to hold up progress in that area.

The United Nations recently came out with a finding – they've been studying for the last three or four years a representation made by the Lubicon nation – where they said that they were not being treated fairly. They said that, yes, in the past they haven't been treated fairly, but the offer and the process that Canada and, of course, Alberta has had is a very, very significant participation, through our Premier; that that offer is offsetting and is overcoming some of the deficiencies in the past. Now I hope that all three parties will come back to the table and we can, before the end of this year, be able to proudly stand up and say that the Lubicon nation have their land and have their infrastructure in place. We're also working with the Woodland Cree Band, which are neighbours to the Lubicon Band. We're only starting to talk and negotiate to find out who is eligible and what process should be put in place.

But I'd like now to reflect on what is uniquely provincial jurisdiction, and that's the Metis people. There is unparalleled progress being made in how we are coming to accommodation with our Metis people. The Metis people – I don't want to do it unfairly, but for discussion purposes they really are grouped in two ways: one, we have eight settlements, and they have a federation of these settlements; the off-settlement Metis are represented by the Metis Association of Alberta. Through the leaders of both of these groups we've gone on a two-pronged effort to address the unique needs of both groups. Mr. Larry Desmeules and his councils, through the Metis Association of Alberta, have worked with our government. Just in December the Premier signed a framework agreement, a three-year agreement which brings the Metis Association and the government closer together in formulating policies and understanding our government programs so that we make them easier to deliver, to accommodate the Metis and make them again more self-sufficient.

The votes that are in Executive Council are more particular to the other prong, and that's the settlement federation. Over the process since I've had the responsibility for native affairs,

I've worked very, very closely with the president of the federation, Mr. Randy Hardy, and all council members to take from resolution 18, which was passed unanimously by this Assembly in 1985, progress so that 1.2 million acres of these settlements can be transferred to these people, so that we can set up a form of quasi-municipal government where there's a prescribed election procedure, and work this legislative package together with a financial package whereby over a period of seven years and through a transition commission, the self-determination of the Metis on the settlements will be accomplished. They'll also be self-sufficient so that they can continue with their economic development. At that stage the jurisdiction the province has through the Metis Betterment Act will be repealed over this process and the jurisdiction transferred to the Metis and their various councils. Those are very, very significant and very, very unique contributions to our native people, unparalleled in Canada.

At this time I would have liked to recognize all of the individuals that have worked with us, but also exemplify the extremely deep interest, the compassionate way we've done this through our Premier.

I welcome any questions. If we don't get an appropriate time to answer them, I assure all members that questions will be answered in writing.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Energy: Energy Resources Conservation Board.

MR. ORMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Energy Resources Conservation Board and the chairman report to Executive Council, and the Premier has delegated responsibility for that board to the Minister of Energy. I'd like to just provide a few brief comments, Mr. Chairman.

First, I'd like to read the mission statement of the ERCB, and that is: the ERCB facilitates and regulates the responsible development and careful conservation of Alberta's energy resources; in doing so, the ERCB attempts to bring fairness and a sense of balance to the conflicting needs, concerns, and perceptions of the people of Alberta, their government, and their energy industry.

The ERCB administers some eight different Acts of the Legislature, and may I say that in my dealings with government, this government and other governments, I believe the Energy Resources Conservation Board has done one of the finest jobs anywhere on this planet, Mr. Chairman, with regard to co-ordinating their responsibilities.

It's clear that in a province such as Alberta where we have a potential conflict in terms of resource development, whether it be agriculture and energy or the new one, being forestry, they are in many ways at odds in terms of their ultimate objectives to develop the various pillars of our economy. It is not an overstatement to say that the Energy Resources Conservation Board, in dispatching its responsibilities, has allowed for uniform development of our agricultural industry, our energy industry, and is now working towards the complementary way in which our economic strategy is developed in terms of the forestry industry. I don't think I have to go through the areas of potential conflict, but it's certainly clear that they have done a very fine job working with the agricultural sector and the energy sector in terms of these pillars of our economy.

In that connection the Energy Resources Conservation Board in 1988-89 had a number of application to that body. I'd like to

just run through a handful of those applications and in parenthesis, Mr. Chairman, point out how few of these really went to a hearing. The well licences were around 7,000; 15 went to a hearing. Pipelines: some 4,000 applications; two went to a hearing. Hydroelectric transmission: 52 application; three went to a hearing. Power plants: 14 applications; zero went to hearings. Oil and gas related and other production facilities: about 3,200 applications, with a cumulative total of 14 hearings.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the reason I point that out is because it lends weight to my opening comments about the enormous number of applications that have impacts on the agricultural side and other areas and, as I indicated, in many ways are in conflict with each other yet are able to deal with these issues without going to the hearing process. I think a perfect example of that today is the Caroline hearings right now before the ERCB, and they will be in hearings for about three or four weeks. Husky and Shell have competing projects to develop the sour gas in that area. The respect and the competence of the ERCB has allowed government, at least at the political level, to not have to get involved, because there is so much respect for the process. As I've indicated, with thousands of applications, less than 25 to 35 hearings I think is a remarkable accomplishment.

As a result of that accomplishment and the respect that that board has universally, Mr. Chairman, that will be the model for the natural resources conservation board legislation that we will be bringing to this Assembly very shortly. It is clear in my mind that the difficulty we have had with the AI-Pac hearings, as the Premier has indicated in the past, is that it's really the first time we've ever done anything of that nature outside of a regulatory process. It is my belief that with the natural resources conservation board in place and ability to deal with the renewable resource development, it will allow for an orderly application, environmental impact assessment, intervenor considerations, preconference hearings. And it is my hope that with these applications we will see the same statistics as the ERCB has, that we will be able to direct a number of applications and not have to go to the full hearing process.

So, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to point those out, and I guess it's really an endorsement of the great work that the ERCB does. I'd be pleased to take any questions in that connection.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Co-ordination and Advice Respecting Women's Issues, the hon. Minister of Labour.

MS McCOY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'm delighted to rise and raise these issues, and I am pleased to be speaking primarily on behalf of the Alberta Women's Secretariat and the Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

We're often asked what our goal is, what our objective is, and the Premier and I have talked about this quite a bit in designing where he wants me to help Albertans get. We've kind of brainstormed a little about what the future will look like if we achieve what we would like to see. So I thought maybe the best way to describe our objective is to describe what we think the future will look like in Alberta in the early years of the third millennium; that is to say, only 10 or more years from now.

So let's start with a brief tour of the future, and let's start right here in the Alberta Legislature. You'll notice that half the MLAs are women, and they come from many backgrounds. Many are former homemakers; one of them is a master electrician; many of them are children of parents who were born outside of Canada. Over on the government benches, which are of course overwhelmingly Progressive Conservative, you'll see

that 12 of 27 cabinet ministers are female, which is not parity but not bad. Interestingly, there is no minister responsible for women's issues.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is there one for men?

MS McCOY: And there is no minister responsible for men's issues either, and that, of course, is because of the good work that the government did during the '90s. Gender is no longer an issue.

Well, now let's take a quick flip through the Alberta government phone book. Just as encouraging. We don't have time to count, but women are listed in the top jobs of every department. Obviously, the employment equity measures we took in the '90s – things like job sharing, mentoring programs, career counseling for women – have all had their effect. In fact, female politicians and senior officials are no longer news. In fact, it's the reverse that is news, and so you get headlines now like: "Edmonton Elects First Male Mayor in 25 Years." Or you get one like this: "Fathers in Calgary are calling for affirmative action because there hasn't been a man on the Calgary public school board since 1989, when women swept all the seats." There are some intriguing book titles too, like "Real Men Do Housework: The Young Father's Guide to Balancing Work and Family."

On the work front we see that one of every two workers is female. About half of management jobs are held by women, and about half of all doctors and lawyers are women. Women own most of the small businesses in the country. Job sharing is common and flextime the norm. The term 9 to 5 is a quaint anachronism, as are the terms part-time, full-time, and retirement. People now speak of adjusting their commitment to the work force to accommodate their changing life circumstance. Other outdated phrases include the glass ceiling, wage gap, and the Cinderella complex. No great loss there.

So how do you like the future so far?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Great.

MS McCOY: Think it sounds so farfetched? Well, it isn't, you know. We are well on our way to achieving that future. I really am upbeat about the future of women, particularly under the leadership of the Hon. Don Getty. But neither he nor I are naive, and we do know that we have a long way to go, because the wage gap and poverty and family violence and a need for affordable day care are all still major issues.

But in dealing with today's concerns, we do need to keep our eyes on the future, and we need to build faith in our power to get there. That's why we as a government have introduced a mentoring program to encourage women in the public service to aim for top jobs. That's why we are expanding our Stepping Stones program, so that schools across the province, all the young people in junior high schools across the province, see women in nontraditional roles, explaining how they got their jobs as pilots, fire fighters, carpenters, technicians, chiropractors and other such jobs. That's also why we have produced a television spot called *Alberta Women: Making It Happen*. It shows women achieving their dreams in a variety of fields, from homemaking through family partnerships on the farm to electronics and to volunteering. That's why we have career counseling programs and entrepreneurial training programs for women. That is why in the last year or so we have appointed women to the Alberta Research Council, Land Compensation Board, Alberta Securities Commission, Human Rights Commis-

sion, Environment Council of Alberta, Alberta Opportunity Company, AOSTRA. We've doubled the number of deputy ministers in our service. We have more and more women in management. We've expanded and given more resources to the maintenance enforcement program which helps single mothers. We have, in fact, reorganized our administrative support services in the government service, which gives a leg up to those who are at the lower end of the scales. We've done all these things and many, many more. Although I know the time is so limited, I could, in fact, talk for an hour on these subjects.

But one thing that perhaps brings it all into focus is the budget. The Premier insisted in this budget, in a deficit reduction budget, that the moneys we are spending in the programs in support of women be increased by 14 percent this year. It was a 29 percent increase over two years ago to \$130 million. Now, I would say that that is a commitment, a commitment that is outstanding. We have a long way to go, but with support like that the Premier has truly launched us into that future where gender is no longer an issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before going on to professions and occupations, the Chair would respectfully request that speakers endeavour to be as brief as possible.

The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In May of '89 the Premier appointed me as chairman responsible for the Professions and Occupations Bureau, and I thank you for this interesting challenge. As well, I have been appointed as chairman for the Council on Professions and Occupations, responsible to give advice to the Solicitor General on matters pertaining to administration policies, health, social service discipline committee, and so on.

Over the last 25 years professions, the services that they provide and the environment in which they function, have changed dramatically. There have been a number of new disciplines, and professional services are becoming increasingly complex and specialized. The potential for disputes within each of the professional organizations seems to be growing, and more and more people than ever are seeking establishment in fields that want to claim the rights of professionalism and gain the status of professional. The need for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the provision of many services, especially in health care, has led to the rethinking of the traditional approaches and utilization of professions in search of more and more efficient policies regarding the quality and supply.

Public perceptions are also changing, and in the past professionals were regarded to be experts and very knowledgeable in their fields. They were the authority that diagnosed problems, prescribed treatment, and performed very essential functions. Professionals themselves were primarily concerned with the standards and the public protection and, above all, serving the people and their needs. The authority and integrity of the professions were in the past rarely questioned. However, today the general public take more and more active roles in decisions affecting their lives and well-being, and they're becoming more educated, sophisticated, and self-reliant and less likely to feel that the professionals know best about their problems and their needs. Likewise, the belief of the primary objective of professionalism serving the people and protecting the public has increasingly given way to this perception that professions are

mainly concerned with promoting their own interests, and this is a primary concern of the bureau.

The government of Alberta has responded in a number of ways to the changing environment with professions: in 1980 the first minister responsible for professions and occupations, and in 1985 established the Professions and Occupations Bureau. The minister and the bureau have worked constructively and successfully with professions and government departments in giving them new policy and directive and finding better ways to promote to the public the public interest and protection to the public with regards to their discipline. The second is to enhance the public confidence in professions and the system which regulates them by ensuring that they are more open and accountable to the ways they serve the people. Recently the bureau has released the discussion paper governing the principles and policies of professions, and I would like to commend the number of professionals who have submitted briefs regarding the policies governing their association.

Again, I'd like to thank you, Mr. Premier and the Solicitor General, for helping me in this department. It has been indeed a great challenge, and I'm certainly enjoying it. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families, the Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the interest of brevity but also to give the intent and motives of the council the significance they're due, let me make up two quotations for you and for the Assembly here. The first quotation that I'd like to use is the following. It says: "The nation and the family walk hand in hand. As goes the family, so goes the nation." The second quotation is this one:

Families are the cornerstone of our society where we learn our values, nurture our sense of health and develop the skills with which we live our lives.

Nothing we do as a government can be more important than nourishing and supporting Alberta's families in all their diverse forms.

Those quotations seem as if they could have been written on the same day, Mr. Chairman. In fact, one was written over 2,000 years ago and comes from Plato, and the other was spoken not that long ago by our own Premier. They very clearly point to the significance and importance of family. It is exciting for Albertans that we have a Premier who has a vision for many aspects of Alberta life – a vision for economic development, a vision for care of the environment, and a vision for education and other things – as many political leaders do, but I find it even more exciting that we have a Premier who has a vision for the strength and importance of families, a vision as enunciated as few political leaders in today's realm.

To give you an idea of what the mandate of the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families is, let me state briefly that it's been stated that the council will seek practical advice from all Albertans on how the government can strengthen the family; "recommend ways that the government can encourage the partnership between community service components of public, private and volunteer agencies"; assist in creating public awareness of matters of interest and concern to family; and advise the minister on impacts on the family that are associated with proposed government initiatives or even existing initiatives.

The Premier's council on the family was one of a number of initiatives that was clearly enunciated in the Speech from the Throne showing the long-term vision and range and planning of the government in this particular area. One of the other things

that was enunciated clearly in the Speech from the Throne in 1989 was that there would be a conference on the family, and accordingly the Lieutenant Governor's Conference: Celebrating Alberta Families became a reality. There were about 500 Albertans who came together in February of this year in Edmonton. They brought varied perspectives to the discussions regarding Alberta families. The report that has now been compiled will be part of the action agenda for the family, as it takes that report and blends it in with its mandate, which I've already alluded to. The Hon. Helen Hunley was the patron of that conference, and I think we can summarize by using some remarks that she had in terms of where this council will be going in involving all Albertans in looking at the family and what can be done to strengthen it. She said:

Promoting strong families, helping them stay together and cope with challenges and stress are shared responsibilities – a partnership of individuals, families, communities, and governments in Alberta.

And, it is in the spirit of that partnership that I believe we must work cooperatively to continue to build on our strengths. The family is the strength of this province.

I'm very pleased to be working with the Minister of Family and Social Services and to be asked by the Premier to serve in this capacity. I think the future for Alberta's families, because of the vision that's been enunciated and led by the Premier, is exciting. I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome all members of this Assembly and all Albertans in having input in the direction that we will go.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Mr. Premier.

MR. GETTY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think all members recall the excitement and enthusiasm which swept across Canada and certainly swept across Alberta when we were greeted with Rick Hansen's world tour. As I recall, certainly crowds turned out to cheer him on in this province that were probably unmatched anywhere in Canada except perhaps in his home province of British Columbia when he was near the area where he grew up. It was important that someone like Rick Hansen making that kind of an effort not just hit that high peak of attention and then have the whole effort just slip away without having some lasting legacy. I was inspired by Rick Hansen. You know, we have a world where there are very few heroes anymore, and I would say that Rick Hansen was probably an outstanding Canadian hero. We wanted to not lose the attention that he brought to the abilities and qualities of people who have disabilities.

Therefore, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities was created, and this Assembly appropriated dollars, which I think were an excellent investment in the future. The council was established by an Act of this Legislature on May 27, 1988. It has a chairperson and 13 individuals, and they have terms of either two or three years. There are presently four full-time support staff and an executive director. Members will note that the budget for '90-91 is \$722,000.

The major achievement, I think, of the council has been to go across this province and educate people on looking at those with disabilities as equal and deserving of the right to participate fully, equally in Alberta society. I think that is starting to happen. One of the important accomplishments was the new vision statement, Towards a New Vision of Abilities in Alberta.

The council proposed five principles in that report, and we consider people with disabilities in this light: in light of their individual responsibilities and personal control that they can establish; equality, that they be considered equal; that they have equity of opportunity; that they are allowed independence in their community; and that they are able to participate as full citizens. The public announcement of our cabinet acceptance of that vision paper in December of 1989 was a demonstration of our government's commitment to move to a new policy direction, and we encouraged the council to then come up with their new Action Plan.

On March 30, 1990, not long ago, the council publicly released its Action Plan. It contains 55 major recommendations. It's directed at virtually all parts of Alberta life, but this is also directed at virtually every department in our government. The recommendations call for policy changes by our government with specific objectives and even sets target dates for completion. That Action Plan was developed over the past 12 months, and I want to congratulate the chairperson, Gary McPherson, and his executive director, Eric Boyd. I met with them just two days ago and realized the tremendous contribution they are making to Alberta and more specifically towards people with disabilities. But they are making a great contribution. They are fine Albertans, and they're working very hard to raise the level of awareness of Albertans towards people with disabilities.

Over the coming months the council will work with individual ministries of our government to develop strategies for implementation of their Action Plan. Now, the council knows, as all members in this House know, that we have financial limitations.

Nevertheless, I think if we get a breakthrough here of thinking in the government's various departments, accomplish that – and in some areas we can make changes without any additional dollar expenditures, and in other areas the changes are desired and needed – then the government and the departments will have to rearrange their priorities and reallocate existing resources.

So, Mr. Chairman, this council has made a great contribution to our province. In order to make sure that I don't take too long, I'll skip some of the things I was going to say in terms of more details. But I do want to say that the importance of the education of the people of Alberta can't be understated, because we have this tremendous potential, tremendous capabilities there in the bodies and minds of people with disabilities, and we've got to make sure that they're able to fully participate in Alberta's society. I want this Assembly and this committee to know, Mr. Chairman, that we will work and work hard and work with the council in every way possible to live up to the vision and the action plans which they have put before us as a challenge.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Water Resources Commission, the Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [interjection] Jealousy will get you no where, Westlock-Sturgeon.

The objective of the Alberta Water Resources Commission is to advise the Lieutenant Governor in Council on policies and programs respecting Alberta's water resource. To that extent the commission is composed of 11 members: myself as chairman, the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche as the second MLA on it, four public members at large of the province, and five assistant deputy ministers and other senior officials from five government departments. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to pay

tribute to the previous two chairmen of the Water Resources Commission: first, the late Henry Kroeger, who chaired that committee from the time of its inception, whose committee idea was part of his brainchild, and who chaired it until his passing a couple of years ago; then for a short period the hon. Member for Dunvegan chaired the commission.

The commission has had a number of people on it, and some of these people have just put in their time and have chosen to resign: one being Ike Lawrence from High Prairie, who put in a lot of time and a lot of years on the commission; and the other being Mrs. Margaret Lounds from the city of Calgary, who was one of the original members of the commission, who has now taken up other duties on the Calgary school board. There were also three assistant deputy ministers, or that equivalent level, this year that have moved on to better and bigger things: Mr. Dennis Surrendi from Municipal Affairs, who *is* in the gallery now in a whole new position, a whole new challenge; Les Cooke, who is assistant deputy minister in the forestry division, who went on to become a deputy minister in Saskatchewan; and Brian Sullivan from economic development.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

So besides the two public members we have a number of new government members. It's going to be a challenge in the future and in the coming years to look at the things, as water is very important to the environment and affects the environment. The commission is involved in a number of continuing studies throughout this year and the years to come. Just to give a couple of examples of the work that we've been involved in and continue to be involved in: one of wetland policy management and conservation policy review; western irrigation district study, related along with the district – just to name a couple of studies that the commission is involved in.

Mr. Chairman, with those few words I would be pleased to answer any questions that may originate.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Alberta Public Safety Services and Public Affairs Bureau. Hon. minister.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's indeed a pleasure to be able to participate in the estimates for Executive Council this morning. There are two factors that come under my responsibility, that responsibility provided to me by our distinguished Premier. One *is* the Public Affairs Bureau, Mr. Chairman. The dollar adjustment in terms of those vote 9 estimates is .4 percent from last year. It's essentially a hold-the-line budget.

I'd like to just spend a few seconds, though, dealing with Alberta Public Safety Services, probably in many ways the least understood organization that we have in government but in very, very many ways one of the most important organizations that we have. I really very much appreciate the support that I've received from my colleagues so far to be able to stand in this session this morning and ask for a 48.4 percent increase in terms of the estimates. That's very much appreciated.

Earlier today I tabled the annual report of Alberta Public Safety Services for the fiscal year 1988-89. By way of alerting members, if I could just draw their attention to the items that we have on pages 24 through to 27, it gives all the members a complete understanding of the kinds of courses and the kinds of events and the kinds of plans that we're involved in in this province of Alberta. It gives you numbers of how many

hundreds and hundreds of Albertans are involved in many aspects associated with emergency planning.

I have a series of responsibilities in terms of ensuring that a number of plans are in effect in our province, Mr. Chairman. The Alberta survival plan, a follow-through to what happened in the Cold War in the early 1950s right up through to very innovative plans that we are now preparing or have prepared; the government response plan for sour gas emergency; search and rescue in Alberta; emergency response plans for dams; the foreign animal disease eradication plan; the government support plan for chemical spills; the plant pest emergency support plan: just a few. Of course, there's a lot of highlighting with respect to disaster assistance. We're involved and responsible for that. It wasn't too long ago that the Premier announced in Sexsmith, Alberta, the disaster assistance plan for northwestern Alberta. That plan is well under way. Since 1986, Mr. Chairman, some 10,000 individual Albertans have been affected in one way or another by disasters in our province. The government has responded quickly, immediately, and the number of complaints that we've received are minimal in terms of the 10,000.

I just simply want to conclude by saying that of the small group of people that we have at Alberta Public Safety Services, all Albertans should be very, very happy and pleased that we have such dedicated people who are prepared to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year in making sure that Albertans do have a safety factor that they can be comforted with.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would first like to register my protest that of the less than two hours we have to deal with the estimates in this department, we have less than 40 minutes for members of the opposition to question how this Executive Council money will be spent. I have to ask the Premier and his Executive Council: what are they afraid of that they don't give us more time, that they have in fact spent nearly an hour and a half?

To get on to the . . .

MR. GETTY: That was information.

MS M. LAING: No. I think it would have been much more helpful if the information had been given in regard to questions that we asked, rather than rhetoric.

In regard to vote 4, the Co-ordination and Advice Respecting Women's Issues, I would note a significant increase to this department, something that we welcome. However, I would note that 24 percent of the increase went to the Women's Secretariat, which is an arm of the government that does what the government wants, is a government bureaucracy. One cannot deny the value of some of those programs. The minister has appointed an excellent advisory council of which I believe she is justifiably proud. She has given the advisory council a miserly \$5,000 increase for this fiscal year, yet this is the very body that speaks with Alberta women, that does research, and can bring forward innovative recommendations that will meet the needs of Alberta women, and that in fact should be instructing the minister as to the kinds of initiatives that the Women's Secretariat should be carrying out.

I note the minister has great commitment to the Stepping Stones program and promoting women in nontraditional work.

I have nothing against that. However, I might suggest that in saying that the only way women will earn a decent income is to go into nontraditional work is to suggest that the work that the women have traditionally done is without value or is not as valuable as the work that men have done, and that is one of the attitudes in this society that we are trying to overcome. So I would recommend to the minister or would ask her to reconsider her allocation of funds. To give an increase of \$294,000 to what is essentially a government bureaucracy and a mere \$5,000 to the advisory council seems to me to have the priorities in the wrong place.

I think of the many recommendations – the maintenance enforcement recommendations, the midwifery, the pay equity – just excellent recommendations from this council, who will now be unable to continue the kind of work they have been doing in the past because they will not have the funds that are necessary. They have had a less than cost-of-living increase, and it's a shame to waste the talent of the women on that council in this way.

I would now like to turn to vote 8, which deals with professions and occupations. I would note that for a number of years the social workers have been lobbying the government in regard to a new social workers' profession Act. I would ask the member responsible when we will see that new Act, and given the member's comments about how valuable it is to have professionals deal with their own professions – that is, they are the people that should be able to judge each other and impose standards – whether or not this member is willing to give social workers control over their name. Because one of the problems that we have seen in this province is that anybody can call himself a social worker, and only registered social workers are covered under the present Act, and unless this is corrected, there is no recourse through a professional body to deal with people that call themselves social workers and who act improperly.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

So I think that if we really truly recognize that this is a profession and that we recognize their capability to monitor, to police themselves, to discipline themselves, then they'd better be able to define who they are. As a psychologist – any person can't call themselves a psychologist, and then those of us that belong to the profession are chartered psychologists. Psychologists define who psychologists are, and the Psychology Profession Act has given the right to name to psychologists. So I would ask the member responsible for the professions to respond to those questions.

The third vote that I would like to speak to is vote 10, the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families. I dare say, Mr. Chairman, there is not a person in this Assembly or in this province who does not value families and who has not said – since Plato said, "As goes the family, so goes the nation" – that families are the cornerstone of our society.

However, translating that rhetoric into action is quite another matter. I attended the Family Day celebrations. I attended the conference. I was most impressed by the speakers at that conference. I would ask the member responsible, then, how the money that has been allocated for this council in support of families will be spent in the coming year. He has said that they will be seeking advice from Albertans. I'm wondering how that advice will be sought. Will it be by invitation from groups that he has determined can give valuable input? Will there be a general call so that all people – and I would suggest all Alber-

tans are concerned about families – can in fact give advice, give input? Certainly we were concerned at the conference that some groups of people were not included to the degree that we would have hoped, so that some groups representing certain needs of families did not have a fair voice at the conference. I would also ask: when will the report from the conference be available and to whom? I would also ask: when will the advisory council be named, and when will that be made available to us?

I would note that the member responsible for the family also noted with some pride that in addition to having a vision for the economy and the environment and education, the Premier also has a vision for the family. Well, that very separation troubles me, Mr. Chairman, because everything we do impacts on families, and everything that families do impacts on those other areas. So to separate them out and say, "Isn't it wonderful that now we have somebody concerned about families," is somehow making a wrong separation.

Again, the commitment to families. I still see that the healthy mother of a healthy four-month-old infant is expected to work if she has been relying on social assistance. That is no commitment to family. That is commitment to fiscal responsibility or deficit reduction. I ask: where is the commitment to the families that live in poverty and continue to live in poverty? Where is the commitment to families where the main wage earner is unemployed, when we have an 8 percent unemployment rate in this city? Where is the commitment to families that try to live on the minimum wage and therefore live in poverty?

I am deeply concerned that being committed to family sounds very nice; however, bringing in the kinds of supports to families that are really required is something this government has failed to do. We must recognize the diversity of families as did the participants at the conference. We must see how their needs may be different than many of the people in this Assembly see those needs. We have to hear from all families and how they see the government being able to help them.

I would suggest that if this government is truly committed to families, they look at how their economic policies impact on families, how their labour policies impact on families, how their education policies impact on families. I think of the rural schools that are closed and children having to ride on a bus for two hours and there's no school in the community that can be the centre of that community life. That's no commitment to family. So I would suggest that if you are truly committed to families, you don't separate it out. You make it a part of every department in terms of funds allocated and legislation and policy.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is it the wish that the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway take the remaining time?

Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Rather interesting what's going on in the Assembly today compared to what's going on on the steps out there. Here is a bunch of Tories in here talking to themselves, and out on the steps there's a bunch of workers talking to themselves and no Tories out there to talk to them. Very interesting. Well, at least it will be on the record whether you guys listen or not.

I've prepared a few remarks for this debate on the assumption that I might get a chance to speak, and as it turns out I am, although it certainly didn't look like it because the government

decided to set up as big a filibuster as I suppose they could given the time they had. [interjections] Well, since when would the Premier be followed by five or six or seven, or whatever it was, people who stood up and spoke for 10 minutes each?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, hon. member. Please proceed with your remarks.

AN HON. MEMBER: You're just wasting your time, Alex.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, the people out on the steps are not wasting their time. They're telling this government a very clear message.

The Premier's office spends some \$4.24 million, and I guess I would just like to raise the question: are they getting good value for their money? Of course, the answer is a simple no. All we've got to do is look back at some of the records. It starts, of course, with the leadership race, in which he got a \$20,000 donation from Cormie. The leadership race, as I recall, had the least debate of policy issues, particularly from the man who became Premier, of any leadership race I've ever seen. Of course, his leadership race was chaired by a couple of guys, Les Mabbott and Al Olson, who show up later a number of times in other government things.

We're looking at the record of the Premier, and that's what these estimates are about. Vote 1, it says right here: Executive Council Administration, to give it its correct title, \$4,241,245. It includes the Premier's office, the Executive Council office, and the Lieutenant Governor's office. So what the question I'm raising is: have the people of Alberta had good money for the office of the Premier? And I'm saying no, they haven't.

All we have to do is look back at some of the record. On November 1, 1985, he won the leadership. On November 13 he was sworn in. On November 15 he was given a paper indicating that FIC and AIC were in a lot of trouble and that the government might have to lift their licences. Of course, they didn't get around to doing that until 1987. Of course, he didn't read the document – so he claimed, anyway, in his testimony to the Code inquiry. Well, when the Code inquiry asked him to testify, he actually put out a little document saying that he didn't know that something would have to be done. He didn't say he didn't know about the problems. So he weaseled out of it in that way. Right after he was elected as the leader, of course, he had to take a three-week holiday in Palm Springs . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, would you please come to order and deal with the programs involved in this year's estimates? There is great breadth, it is true, in Executive Council, for the debate of current government policies, but the topics that you are raising have been well debated in this Assembly in years past. Let's proceed with the current estimates and the programs reflected therein.

MR. McEACHERN: I'm just reviewing the record and the estimates and whether the money that the Premier gets for his office is well spent or not, and in fact it's not.

In any case, the Premier weaseled out of the Code inquiry and didn't have to testify personally, as of course did the former Premier, the two people who should have testified. [interjections] Well, this government spends money on the Code inquiry, some \$25 million or \$30 million to run the Code inquiry. They stand up every day and tell us that it was the most thorough and powerful inquiry possible, which is nonsense; it

was not. If you had a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, it would be much more powerful than the Code inquiry as they set it up.

I'd like to tell the Premier just some good political advice. When he got elected to the leadership, he had to go on this holiday, as I said earlier, and then after he got elected in Edmonton-Whitemud, he went on another holiday in January and February for about five weeks. I door-knocked all through that period of time before Peter Lougheed resigned and right through that whole period. Had he called an election in November, the people of Alberta were willing to give him a big mandate and say, "You know, we've got to give him a chance, don't we?" That was the sense on the doorstep. After two long holidays and finally getting around to calling the Assembly on April 3 and then an election on April 10, they started to question. Does this guy really want to govern this province, or doesn't he? That's why there are 16 New Democrats in this Assembly today. They would not have been there if the Premier had called the election earlier, when they didn't know what kind of a Premier he was going to turn out to be. But when they decided that he didn't really want to govern this province all that badly, that he'd rather play golf in California, then they decided they needed some opposition in this Assembly. So we have provided that opposition.

Now, this Premier came into office that first summer of 1986, when the Gainers workers were on strike, and we had a lot of arguments and debates about that in this House. The labour laws that came out of the Reid globetrotting are the worst labour laws in North America, and believe me, that's bad. Some of the southern states have some pretty harsh labour laws, but this government was able to outdo them, passing Bills 21 and 22 by closure, by forcing these antediluvian labour laws on the people of this province.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, point of order.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Point of order, the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, *Beauchesne* is very, very clear on the point of relevancy in terms of debates and estimates. What we have here before us are the estimates for Executive Council for the fiscal year 1990-91. To this point in time, after listening to the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, we have yet not arrived at the year 1990-91, and I think *Beauchesne* has rules for relevancy. I'm sure that the Premier would be happy to deal with the estimates for the fiscal year 1990-91. Perhaps relevancy is important because I'm sure that all distinguished members of the Assembly have important things they've been wanting to do today, rather than hear a monologue which has nothing appropriate to the subject matter at hand.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On the point of order?

MR. McEACHERN: No, there's no point of order. He's just interfering and taking my time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, all right. Order, then, Edmonton-Kingsway. It is customary that when a point of order is raised, I call upon representatives of the other parties to comment. Since there are no people further commenting, the Chair would rule that in fact the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services has raised a legitimate point of order, and

I would request that the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway make remarks relevant to the estimates.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, all you have to do is look at point 7, Public Service Employee Relations. I'm talking about the labour laws of this province, and it's perfectly related to vote 7, although I was intending to do it under vote 1, which is totally broad in its base. There's no reason in the world why one should worry about which vote I'm saying it under.

The fact is that the labour laws of this province have been condemned by the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations as being unfair. When Zeidler's goes on strike, this government sits back and says, "Oh no; they've got to settle it," knowing full well that those workers don't have a hope in terms of fighting the company under the present labour laws, these present labour laws which allow scab labour to take over from people that are on strike. So they say, "Okay, go ahead; strike all you like for four years," but as soon as some public civil servants want to go on strike, then the government gets all excited and says: "Oh no, you can't do that. There's a law . . ."

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, hon. member. [interjection] Hon. member, order please. The Speaker of this Assembly has ruled that a word . . .

MR. McEACHERN: Oh, right. We can't use the word "scab." That's fine; I'll use "replacement workers."

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would you consider withdrawing that word, please?

MR. McEACHERN: I'm sorry I used the word "scab." It offends some people, so I will use "replacement workers" from now on. Put blinkers on if you like. Incredible.

So, as well as allowing replacement workers to break strikes, this government has also allowed the 24-hour lockout thing so that companies can lock out their unionized workers and then hire them back as nonunionized workers within 24 hours. Those two provisions have basically broken the backs of the unions in this province, although they keep reviving. If you push them hard enough and long enough, they'll come back, as any of you can see if you just go out and look on the steps of the Legislature right now. The labour laws in this province should be changed in both those regards. If you put those kinds of restrictive laws on their behaviour and then push them hard enough, anybody will eventually rebel.

I just met a social worker that I worked with at the Youth Development Centre nearly 20 years ago. She came up and said hello to me, and she said: "You know, for nearly 20 years I've been carrying the load for this government, and they just keep dumping more and more on my shoulders. Now, the minute I stand up and want to fight about it, they say, 'Oh, you're breaking the law.'" They want to bring an injunction in to tell them you can't go on strike, and all those kinds of things. If this government doesn't realize that they're treating those workers very unfairly, then they are sadly mistaken. It's all very well for the minister of social services to stand up and say, "Oh, we care about the people that these workers are taking care of day in and day out when they're on the job." These workers want nothing more than to go back to doing their job. They just want to be able to do it fully and completely and feel like they've got some job satisfaction because they know they're doing a good job. When their caseloads are so heavy that they can't do a

good job, then eventually they start to say, "I can't work under these conditions; I need some help."

I can't help thinking that the rather stupidest move this government made next to, I guess, passing Bills 21 and 22 is when the former minister – let's see; which portfolio did she hold? Social Services; that's right – decided to hire 67 policepersons to police the social service system to see if anybody might be getting a few extra bucks that they didn't have coming. You know, if the government had just decided to use those 67 people as extra workers in the offices to help ease the load, that would have been about one worker per office for the whole province. There would have been a lighter load, and the encouragement that would have accrued to the workers in thinking that the government does care – they are giving some extra help and some extra staff to handle these caseloads – would have been tremendous, and those people would not be on the streets today.

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you condoning a rip-off?

MR. McEACHERN: That's not a rip-off. I'm just saying that the workload of the average worker at that time was so great that instead of putting in 67 new workers to be policepersons – and believe me, the way that would work is that the best workers in the system would be taken out of the system and be told to act as policepersons. So then they would go back in and supervise the remaining workers plus a new worker that would have to replace them, who would of course be new and learning their role and having difficulty doing it. So, had the government hired those extra 67 people as extra workers to help carry the load, that would have cut down the number of mistakes that were being made by social workers.

Social workers don't purposely allow anybody to bamboozle them into giving them extra money. So when or if that happens, it's an accident on the part of the social worker, certainly, because they don't intend that that should happen. It's a matter of not having time to sort out the details and investigate to see exactly what's happening well enough to be able to stop it from happening sometimes. The more you push them, the more you overload them, the more that's going to happen. Taking the best workers out and turning them into policepersons to keep an eye on this kind of thing is not nearly as helpful as hiring 67 new people to actually get in there and help do the job. That message came back to me a number of times from a number of different sources, from people who would know.

It is my understanding that the government has put no particular offer on the table and has refused to talk about caseloads. [interjection] Well, a zero offer is a zero offer. If you're not prepared to talk about caseloads in the bargaining, why would you expect . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, order please. I have concern with the relevancy of your very recent remarks. Would you please endeavour to deal with the estimates?

MR. McEACHERN: But I just said that this related to the Public Service Employee Relations Act, and that's what I'm talking about. So how can that not be related to that? You jump to tell me that the strike that's going on on the doorstep of this Legislature is not related to public service employee relations? Is that what the Chairman is telling me?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chairman was of the opinion that you were dealing with social services estimates, which have been discussed previously in the Legislature. But let's just see what you have.

MR. McEACHERN: No. The bargaining part, the social services department bargaining with its workers, would surely be a labour relations thing, not a social services thing per se.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if he can't stay on track, we'll take their time.

MR. McEACHERN: No. I don't have any trouble staying on track. I just have trouble understanding what the Chairman is saying.

The point I want to get across to the minister of social services is that when he goes to bargain with those workers – he wants them to come and sit down and bargain with him. Unless he's prepared to put working conditions – that is, the caseloads – on the bargaining table, as far as they're concerned, there is no offer. That's really the key that he has to get into his head if he's going to talk to these people in a way that will resolve this dispute. That's a fairly common sort of theme in labour bargaining, in case the minister didn't know. The only time I've ever gone on strike myself in 25 years of teaching was over a management-related issue. The management – that is, of the Edmonton public school board – would not agree to talk about the size of our classes in the classroom as part of the bargaining process.

Maybe the Tories have trouble understanding this, but sometimes people don't just go on strike for dollars and for selfish reasons. In fact, one of the things that astounds me about your philosophies and the way you put them forward in this Assembly is that the only time you worry about incentives and talk about people needing an incentive to do better is when you're talking about somebody at the top end of the economic scale, like doctors and businesspeople. Then you have to worry about making sure that you provide incentives so they can earn more, so they can do better, so they'll work harder. Did it not occur to you that people at the lower end of the scale, if you give them a proper salary and decent working conditions, will also work better and harder and more effectively, that people on social assistance also need some incentives to work more and better? It's part of the philosophy that gets in the way of this government dealing with labour people and social services people effectively, because somehow they believe that incentives only apply to the people at the top end of the scale.

The only incentives they offer people at the bottom end of the scale and workers like the ones on the doorstep are negative incentives. You know, "We're going to throw you in jail if you take a few too many dollars from social services or we're going to make you pay it back in a very punitive way. If you're a worker that wants to go on strike, we will bring in labour laws and get an injunction to say you can't do that," when in fact anybody should have the right to strike. I mean, at a time when the laws are being made in the streets of eastern Europe, why would this Premier say that the laws should not be made in the streets of what's supposed to be an open democracy, where people can express their views and have a right to opinions and have the right to organize and form unions and bargain . . .

[The member's speaking time expired]

MR. DECORE: Mr. Chairman, first of all, I note that it is now 5 to 1, and I noted that the Premier invited dialogue, particularly on the Meech Lake matter. I wonder if the Premier would agree that the opportunity for members of the opposition to pursue this whole area of Executive Council come up at a later time and that the Premier arrange for that to happen. We have some pretty strict time lines that we're facing. The hon. Premier invited dialogue, invited discussion and debate on Meech Lake in particular, and I'd like to see that happen. I wonder if he would respond to that.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Chairman, I must say I am disappointed that the hon. member hasn't been able to participate, as I thought he made a valid point that we be able to discuss the matter of Meech Lake. I think he could make a contribution there. As you recall, the Official Opposition House leader objected to that. I'd certainly be prepared to discuss with our House leaders whether, in the series of activities that must go on in the House, we can find an opportunity to have a further discussion on Meech Lake in this kind of an informal atmosphere. I don't know if we can, but I'm certainly prepared to discuss it.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Chairman, on that commitment that the Premier has given – I think this is such an important area for pursuit, and I think that there are things that the Premier can tell us that may allay a lot of the concerns that I have in particular, and I'd like to see that opportunity given. So on that note I'm prepared to adjourn these proceedings, because with four minutes left, there's really nothing I can pursue.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Did you make a motion, hon. member? [interjection] He didn't?

Those in favour . . .

MR. DECORE: With a clear understanding, Mr. Chairman, that the Premier will use his office to attempt to find us some additional time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chair certainly understands that, hon. member. We do have two or three minutes left before the usual hour of adjournment, if you had some remarks. However, you've indicated you wish to make a motion to adjourn debate.

All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the department of Executive Council, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Having heard the report, do the members concur?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Before the Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader, earlier today at the end of question period there was a point of order that was raised by the Minister of Recreation and Parks dealing with the use of the word "scurrilous" by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. In examining the Blues: the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place was interrupted immediately upon the uttering of the words, and therefore it's not known as to whether or not that member was directing that word "scurrilous" at anyone in particular. Therefore, the Chair is unable to rule it out of order on that basis and to ask for withdrawal. However, it does underline what the Chair mentioned earlier today, that, really, in terms of this Chamber there should be a better regard for things parliamentary, including the language. Thank you.

Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the information of hon. members Monday next will be Committee of Supply in the afternoon with the Department of the Solicitor General. Monday evening will deal with Government Bills and Orders, second readings, Committee of the Whole, and perhaps third readings.

[At 12:58 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]

