

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, June 25, 1990 3:00 p.m.**
 Date: 90/06/25

[The House met at 3 p.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: Statement by the Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: All hon. members are aware that the House commenced sitting today one half hour later than the usual appointed time. This was because of the delayed flight which transported His Excellency the Governor General of Canada to Edmonton, making possible his visit to this esteemed Legislature.

Several procedural difficulties were considered. Hours of sitting are prescribed in Standing Orders and can only normally be altered by motion of the House. Whether adjournment occurs automatically by way of Standing Orders or by motion of the House, the Chair has the power in exceptional circumstances to vary or suspend for a period of time the normal hours of business of the House without question being put. Authority for this is found in *Erskine May*, pages 246 and 247, under the title "Informal Suspension of a Sitting." The Speaker may order a suspension of the normal hour of convening or suspend the House once it has already started sitting, even if it supersedes Standing Orders, on those rare occasions which remind us all that rules must remain flexible and accommodating.

Speakers at Westminster have invoked informal suspensions on the sudden collapse of certain members, on the failure of the lighting system, to investigate bomb scares in the palace, and to attend certain royal functions, among other reasons. The visit of His Excellency would, it seems, rank with the last example, and it seemed appropriate for the Chair, in consultation with the various House leaders, to suspend the sitting for one half hour to allow all hon. members the opportunity of meeting with Her Majesty's representative for Canada.

The Chair will therefore put no question to the House on this matter and trusts all members concur in the judgment of the Speaker under these circumstances. Thank you.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would acknowledge the presence in the galleries of certain former members of the House, and perhaps others will join us during the course of the afternoon. I do hope that all members will join me in giving a welcome to those former members who are in the galleries and those who have come back to visit with us on this occasion.

head: Notices of Motions

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, after question period under Standing Order 40 I'll be seeking unanimous consent for the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta express to Premier Bourassa and to the people of the province of Quebec our belief that the failure of the Meech Lake constitutional accord in no way represents rejection of the province of Quebec, its people, or their culture and further express our unshakable commitment to a strong and united Canada.

head: Oral Question Period

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

Constitutional Reform

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To the Deputy Premier. Canadians now have had a couple of days to reflect on the death of the Meech Lake constitutional accord, and I'm sure the Deputy Premier has spent a great deal of time thinking about it, since he was one of a handful of Canadians who were actually directly involved in the negotiation process surrounding the accord. Now, I'm sure the Deputy Premier must be terribly disappointed, but even he must admit that the process was totally flawed and totally unacceptable to Canadians. The fact that our Prime Minister makes no apology for orchestrating the whole affair and gambling with the future of Canada, I think frankly is disgusting. The Prime Minister is no longer a solution to this problem but very much part of the problem, but I want to say optimistically that I believe that down the way at some point – I think cooler heads have to prevail right now, Mr. Speaker – there will be constitutional talks again. My question is this: has the Alberta government now made it absolutely clear to the federal government that this province will never again be part of a flawed process that leaves out the people of Alberta and the people of Canada in that process?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, I share the hon. Leader of the Opposition's concern for the failure of certain provinces to ratify the Meech Lake accord and, therefore, its failure. I do think, however, that he is perhaps taking an overly simplistic approach to the reasons for its failure, and I would caution against being oversimplistic. One has to recognize the fact that the process which was followed was indeed the process which was established in the 1982 Constitution of Canada, and in examining that process the First ministers in their most recent meeting in Ottawa, which the hon. Leader of the Opposition attended, made it part of the recommendations of the subsequent accord that there would be a thorough review of the process itself. Our government was strongly committed to that particular accord, the companion accord, and believes that indeed we must re-examine the process by which constitutional changes will take place in Canada in the future.

I do want to add, however, that the one key element as it affects Alberta's ambitions with respect to Senate reform had been included in the companion accord, and that of course was swept away with all of the other benefits which would have flowed to this province from the constitutional change, and that was the creation of a commission which would have, in fact, had that full public participation built into that process with respect to Senate reform. That, amongst all the other matters which have been lost to this province, was a great loss indeed and

would have, I believe, gone a long way to correcting the impressions and indeed the process itself with respect to future constitutional change.

MR. MARTIN: I don't deny that there were some good things in that second part of it, Mr. Speaker. But I say to the Deputy Premier: the fact that in '87 behind closed doors a constitution was decided and then it was said, "There can be no changes – not one dotted i or crossed t – it's so perfect" led to the problems that we faced. I'd say that the last closed-door pressure session that shut out every Canadian but the first ministers – there was a visceral reaction against that from the people of Canada and the people of Alberta. I say to you that it's not overly simplistic to blame that on that process. It was one man that brought it about, and the first ministers shouldn't have participated. My question, then, following from the minister's answer: has this government finally learned that refusing to hold public hearings in 1987 was wrong and set the stage for the failure of this accord? This government could have had public hearings as they did in other provinces. Do they now admit that this was wrong?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, Alberta and the actions taken in Alberta did not lead to the collapse of the accord. The hon. member knows full well that the resolution was introduced into this Assembly in June of 1987 and allowed to stand over until the fall sitting. Several months ensued where there was broad consultation in Alberta as to the impact of the Meech Lake constitutional accord. His party decided, which was their right, to form a committee to go across the province and to seek out opinions. Our caucus decided they would take a different approach. In my own case, I held a number of meetings across this province in order to discuss the implications of the Meech Lake accord. But I think the hon. leader will agree with me that attendance at those meetings, including his own, was not that substantial. It was only as events developed in other provinces, subsequent to the passage in this Assembly, that public interest began to increase. I think that was wrong; it should have been there all along.

I certainly do not want to leave the impression that this government was in any way responsible, as implied in the leader's question, for the collapse of the Meech Lake accord. That is not so and should not be part of the impressions left with the people of Alberta or Canada. Indeed, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has already brought forward a notice of motion to reaffirm that the people of Alberta did not bring about that collapse. I would think that it may be a nice political shot to take at this stage of the game, three years later, but the facts do not bear out that Alberta in any way contributed to the collapse of the Meech Lake accord and the subsequent isolation of Quebec.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there was a frustration with this process right from the start. As the minister knows, we came back from our public hearings and said that there should be public hearings. We brought in a lot of other amendments; they were all voted down by this government. Mr. Speaker, I say that the minister really does underestimate that process and what the visceral reaction was in the rest of Canada. I say to him that that was really the major problem in dealing with this whole area, and if he's ignoring that, we're doing it at our own peril. But I'll give him a question to look at the future; there's not much we can do about the past. Will the Deputy Premier take this chance in the Assembly to assure Albertans that the

government has learned from this experience and offer his personal guarantee that any future constitutional discussions, if there are any, will be open to all Albertans through public hearings?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is quite in error to again try and place the blame for the collapse of the Meech Lake accord on this province or the procedures that were followed within Alberta. I quite agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the public was, in fact, disturbed by the process. That was absolutely evident throughout the whole . . .

MR. McINNIS: What are you going to do about it then? That's the question.

MR. HORSMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place is yapping away again. He's not prepared to listen to anything in this Assembly unless it's words that emanate from his own mouth.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is, however, that we are absolutely committed, first of all, to a process by which we once again resume constitutional discussions to end the isolation of Quebec and its 25 percent of the Canadian people. Secondly, we are committed to the companion accord, and that companion accord had a number of items in it, including the issue of determining a new process by which constitutional change will take place in Canada and that will include a process for public hearings. Now, whether or not that should be uniformly determined across the country or whether each parliament is going to establish its own process is surely a matter which must be discussed at greater length. But that is a commitment that our government signed. Furthermore and finally, let me say this: when our Premier signed that companion accord and put his signature to it, it was his firm commitment and intention to honour that, and that will always be Alberta's intention when we sign our name to anything.

Livestock Industry Diversification Act

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the second question is also to the Deputy Premier, and it also has to do with process and democracy. The government has shown its true colours in refusing to allow full debate on the game ranching Bill and subjecting that legislation to closure. It's no secret, at least it shouldn't be, that this Bill is controversial. Literally thousands of Albertans have let the government know in no uncertain terms that they are opposed to game ranching, so the government uses the ultimate procedural club to avoid having to debate this unpopular and misguided Bill. Mr. Speaker, this undemocratic tactic seems to be their new way of doing business on controversial issues. First it was the sale of AGT, and now it's game ranching. I say again: if we learned anything from Meech Lake, process is important. Again we're following undemocratic process here in this Legislature. That turns people off. On May 2, during the Stettler by-election, the Premier was reported as saying, and I quote, "Game ranching is not allowed in Alberta and [we are] not considering allowing it." Now, I'm sure the voters in Stettler took the Premier at his word. My question: how can the government do such a complete about-face on such a controversial issue?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I answered that question in the House the last time it was raised with respect to the fact that the

New Democratic Party in this Assembly, the Official Opposition, made it absolutely clear at the outset that they had no intention of doing anything but frustrating and delaying the passage of the legislation, and when they make their signals so abundantly clear, it is absolutely certain that it is a waste of the time of this Assembly to just listen to such edifying discussions as how to raise elephants in Africa.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, maybe if the Deputy Premier was paying some attention, he would see that there is a relevance to that and know what's going on. I could say to this Deputy Premier: here's a major Bill, a turnaround from that minister and from the Premier less than a year later, and he's saying four hours is too much debate in the Legislature. How can he justify a position like that? Four hours is too much to debate an important Bill?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, there will be more hours than I care to imagine spent on the Bill before it reaches final passage.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that's how long we spent in second reading before he jumped on this undemocratic process. Again this shows a government that's afraid of debate or just wants to get out. I don't know what the reason is.

I want to ask the Deputy Premier this: because there are all sorts of groups around the province that are extremely concerned about this Bill, because we haven't had much time in this Legislature – in second reading only four hours – because of the government's about-face, and because of the widespread dissatisfaction with this Bill, would this government do the honourable thing and leave this Bill on the Order Paper at least till the fall session, till they can have other groups talk to them about it?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, I would remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that second reading has not been concluded as yet, and when the Bill is called again there will be some additional time in second reading before closure is invoked. There will be time in committee, and there will be time in third reading. So for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to try and leave the impression that only four hours is going to be spent on the Bill is quite – I have to search my mind for a word to describe his allegation. It's just not *in* accordance with the facts. That's the best way I can put it: it is not in accordance with the facts. And furthermore, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Glengarry.

Constitutional Reform (continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's any doubt that Albertans were disgusted, as were all Canadians, with the process that we went through in the recent constitutional discussions. Albertans want to be part of the development of a Constitution. They want to be part of understanding what it is that should go into aboriginal rights, what should be a definition of "effective" in a Triple E Senate, and so on. I'm somewhat shocked and surprised by the answer given by the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker, with respect to mandatory review. As I understood the Deputy Premier, he said that the government would consider whether or not this would be done at a national

level or whether there would be individual reviews by the provinces. My first question to the Deputy Premier, then, is this: what possible reasons could the Deputy Premier give Albertans for not having a separate and a distinct process for Albertans to have public examination, public review, on any matter affecting the Constitution?

MR. HORSMAN: The leader of the Liberal Party was not listening. The leader of the Liberal Party should listen again. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. HORSMAN: The hon. leader of the Liberal Party should know that what I said was that the companion accord which was signed in Ottawa – and he was there; he saw it and heard it – said that there would be a new process developed for constitutional change and that that would most likely include a process of public hearings. Let me repeat that: a process of public hearings. What I said today was that it has not yet been determined whether that should be exactly the same in each of the provinces or whether each province should design its own process for public hearings.

It would seem to me quite logical for the people of Alberta to tell us as elected members of this Assembly what type of public hearings they would like to have, so we're going to listen to them rather than tell them what type of public hearings there will be. That's the way the leader of the Liberal Party may want to do it and say, "This is the way it's going to be in Alberta." But we are going to listen to what they would like to say and how they would like to say it, and then we will, in this Assembly, determine how public hearings and public involvement in the development of the Constitution will be held.

I would remind the leader of the Liberal Party that this province led the process of public participation with respect to developing a Senate reform model. How was that done? A select committee of this Assembly was established. It went across this province and across this country, and over a period of almost three years determined what Albertans wanted for a Senate reform model. That was, in my view, a model which should be followed elsewhere in Canada, but that doesn't mean that it should be imposed on other provinces if that's not the system they want to establish. For the leader of the Liberal Party to get up in this Assembly and suggest we are not interested in that process is quite wrong.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted that the Deputy Premier is finally admitting the faults of some of the actions of the government. I'm delighted to hear that the Deputy Premier is going to call on Albertans to see how it is that they would like to set up these public hearings, because the Deputy Premier and his government have denied Albertans that right. My question is simple, Mr. Deputy Premier. When can we expect from the government some initiatives on a new process for Albertans to be involved in a new constitutional thought process, and most particularly, when can we get from the Deputy Premier commitments as to when this public process that he's talking about will start?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the party he follows at the federal level just said: don't do anything for a decade on reforming the Constitution. Isn't that amazing? Now he comes into this Assembly and says today that we should have a new process established. How ludicrous can the leader of the

Liberal Party be? Who does he support? Or does he support his former leader Trudeau, who said, "Let's not do it for 20 years"? Come on, Mr. Speaker. Let's have a little honesty in this Assembly from the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. DECORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, we can't get anything out of the Deputy Premier. He won't tell Albertans when it is this process will start; he won't tell Albertans that there will be a public process. He's going to leave it to somebody in Ottawa to determine it, just like you have for the last three years.

My last question is to the Attorney General, the minister responsible for Indian affairs in our province. Aboriginals in our province have not been happy with the role that our government has played with aboriginals. They've not been happy with respect to the constitutional matters that should go into our Constitution. I'd like to know, Mr. Speaker, from the Attorney General what initiatives he intends to put forward to clearly establish the position of aboriginals from Alberta insofar as that new Constitution is concerned.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party knows full well that I'm the minister responsible for constitutional issues in our government, and I want to just put . . .

MR. DECORE: I was asking the minister in charge of native affairs.

MR. HORSMAN: I know. The hon. leader of the Liberal Party may want to ask whomever he wishes, but the fact of the matter is that what he has just said is absolutely wrong. Those aboriginal people for which our government has specific and direct responsibility, the Metis people, have a clear understanding of what we propose to do, and we fully carried out our commitment to the Metis people after the '87 discussions collapsed.

Now, with respect to involvement of the aboriginal peoples, that was part of the subsequent accord which was reached in Ottawa, and the hon. leader of the Liberal Party knows that and . . .

MR. DECORE: Why were they so mad?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. HORSMAN: . . . yet he comes into this Assembly . . .

MR. DECORE: Why were the aboriginals so mad at you, Jim?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. HORSMAN: . . . and says that it was not part of the deal. The fact of the matter is that under the Constitution of Canada, section 91, the federal government has responsibilities for Indian and, the courts have determined, Inuit peoples. They have left it clearly to the province to determine how Metis people should be dealt with, and before this Assembly today are the most progressive forms of self-government legislation ever devised anywhere in Canada for the Metis peoples of this province. I make no apology whatsoever for that matter.

MR. DECORE: What about the treaty Indians?

MR. HORSMAN: The hon. Leader of the Liberal Party says, "What about the treaty Indians?" The fact of the matter is that he should know his Constitution and know that they are the

constitutional responsibility of the federal government and not the province, but where there . . .

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

Now, the Chair has allowed today almost 25 minutes to be taken up with the first three questions. That's because of the seriousness of the issue.

The Chair also wants to point out that in future the supplementaries must be much more succinct. In addition, once you've asked your question, it doesn't become a shouting match across the floor. You get a chance through your other supplementaries. That's simply got to stop.

The Chair recognizes Drumheller, followed by West Yellowhead.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because Trudeau and his gang have succeeded in derailing a process that was working to achieve true Senate reform, can the Deputy Premier say what the implications are for such reform now that Newfoundland has rejected that process?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the options are not very good obviously. The Prime Minister has said that there will not be first ministers' conferences on the Constitution while Quebec is not participating, and I understand that. Quebec has said that they will not come to constitutional conferences in the future because of the rejection of Quebec by certain provinces in not passing Meech Lake. It's going to be very difficult, then, to get Senate reform back on the constitutional table.

I found it very, very puzzling indeed as to how somebody, including the leader of the Liberal Party, could have said: kill Meech Lake; that will help Senate reform. For the life of me I don't know how Senate reform is going to get back on the constitutional table when the table isn't there. His leader of his federal party says that it will be a decade before we're back at the constitutional table. I hope it will be sooner than then, but I don't know the answer at this stage.

MR. SPEAKER: Drumheller.

MR. SCHUMACHER: A supplemental, Mr. Speaker. One of the mechanisms within the Meech Lake agreement, established by the first ministers in 1988 and 1989, was Alberta's Senate Reform Task Force. It is evident that this mechanism did some very valuable work when one considers the companion accord that was arrived at in Ottawa two or three weeks ago. Does the Deputy Premier see any role for this task force in the future?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, as members know, the mandate that Alberta received from the Premiers unanimously in Saskatoon in 1988 was to conduct the task force hearings, and then that was renewed last year in Quebec City, but because of the fact that Quebec has now said that they have been excluded from the constitutional process and will not attend the Premiers' Conference in Winnipeg later this year if it's held, that mandate is not likely to be renewed. That is very regrettable because in fact the work that task force accomplished was considerable and led to all those additional steps which would have been taken had Meech Lake been passed and the subsequent accord been put in action, including the creation of the national commission. It's a tragedy for Senate reform that Meech Lake has been killed.

MR. TAYLOR: Hogwash.

MR. SPEAKER: Go wash your hog another day.
West Yellowhead.

Utility Rebates

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the government has been getting some correspondence from municipalities across the province who aren't at all thrilled with Bill 26. That's the Treasurer's legislation to allow them to take approximately \$95 million out of the pockets of Albertans by canceling the income tax rebates. I'd like to remind the Minister of Municipal Affairs of the position of some of these municipalities. "The Council . . . of Onoway is strongly opposed to Bill 26," and of course the letter goes on.

We as a Council are definitely against this type of selective taxation and request the Government reconsider their decision to eliminate the income tax rebate.

That, Mr. Speaker, is from the town of Hinton, signed by His Worship Mayor Ross Risvold, and there are more I'd like to table with the Legislature. Will the Minister of Municipal Affairs admit that this Bill is unfair to customers who live in areas served by private utility companies and withdraw this Bill to protect the municipalities?

MR. SPEAKER: Don't bother. The question is out of order because the matter is at Committee of the Whole stage.

MR. FOX: It's about the process, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: No, I'm sorry; it's more than process.
Calgary-Buffalo.

Entertainment in Licensed Premises

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is to the Solicitor General. Proposed changes to the Liquor Control Act will give the cabinet power to regulate entertainment in bars. Now, it seems to me, just as in the case of Meech Lake, that it's totally inappropriate for changes to be made by the gang sitting around in the back rooms without full input and debate by members of this Legislature and the public, and that includes the businesses, on specific proposals, not just ruminations of the minister but specific proposals. Now, last Thursday in response to my suggestions and concerns the minister indicated that he would consider asking the new advisory council being established under his legislation to conduct hearings on the issue. I'm wondering whether the Solicitor General will now agree to have that advisory council being set up hold such public hearings with respect to the proposed entertainment regulations before they are passed?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. This question's out of order as well. The Bill has gone past third reading stage, as a matter of fact.

The Member for Wainwright.

MR. CHUMIR: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Economic Development In Rural Areas

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of economic development. Rural development has

been vital to the survival of our small towns and villages in Alberta, and Wainwright has been no exception. It is felt by many rural Albertans that many of our economic development programs have been geared for big business. What is the government doing to encourage our small business in rural economic development?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report to the hon. member that the Premier has recently established under the Minister of Municipal Affairs an extensive study whereby we are looking at how we can better improve our support for rural Alberta, recognizing that there is some rural depopulation taking place. Notwithstanding that fact, we do have an extensive network of regional offices that does offer a wide variety of specific support programs to both municipalities and individual small businesses within the rural population of our province. In addition to that, we do work specifically with a number of local economic development authority boards with which I meet on a regular basis, and we do have a fairly extensive series of programs for the small business community.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you.

Could the minister explain to us how the management assistance program contributes directly to small business in our rural area and who is eligible for that?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the majority of times we work in conjunction with chambers of commerce in bringing forward the management assistance programs. To date there have been some 6,000 businesses that have worked with their local authorities and our own department in making sure they do have proper business plans and what not. I should share with the hon. member, too, that it was just recently we brought forward our business initiatives for small communities whereby we do have an actual injection of cash so that they can develop their own economic plans to greater benefit and contribute to the development of their community. In addition to that, as I've indicated on previous occasions in the House, we do have our capital loan program, our interest shielding program, and a number of other programs that relate directly to the small business community.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

Employment Standards Code

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's in order: it's not on the Order Paper, nor is it hypothetical. It's about a judgment that was . . .

MR. SPEAKER: We don't need the shots. Just get on with the questions.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, indeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's for the Minister of Labour. The Alberta Court of Appeal recently ruled that the sale of a business creates a break in employment contracts for non-unionized employees. In simple terms this means that long-standing employees could be treated as freshly hired workers by their new employer. It means that non-union employees could suffer cuts in pay, cuts in severance pay, cuts in vacation pay, and have arbitrary changes to working conditions and salaries, among other things. Given the serious ramifications of this decision, will the minister commit to immediately introducing appropriate amendments to the

Employment Standards Code to protect these non-unionized workers?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has raised an issue that is causing some concern to me as Minister of Labour because there's no question that that is not the intent behind the legislation. The Act that the case actually considers is the old employee relations Act and not the new code, although it specifically mentions in the judgment that the provision in the Employment Standards Code, which is new, is substantially similar. Still, the intent had been to protect the employees in cases of mergers and amalgamations and sales, and we are now looking at the options that we can pursue to bring the practice to match the intent that we had.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, the decision means that employees with 20 or 30 years experience may have their salaries slashed or be dismissed on one week's notice. They need to be protected now, not wait for the next legislative session or until the minister gets some kind of opinion. So I would ask: how long does the minister intend to make these employees wait before she's prepared to protect their rights?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, just as long as it takes to get it right.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

Telecommunications Regulation

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. This government is aware that Unitel has launched a massive publicity campaign in support of its application to the CRTC for the right to horn in on the profitable long-distance Canadian telephone system. This is particularly ironic when you consider that Ted Rogers, one of Unitel's major shareholders, is trying to block similar competition in the cable TV industry, where he has a monopoly. To the minister: given that industry analysts have described Unitel's CRTC application as incomplete at best and inept at worst, will this government intervene at the CRTC hearings to oppose Unitel's application or at least insist on some safeguards for AGT customers?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, indeed we are monitoring the application by Unitel very, very closely, and there is some likelihood that we will intervene in order to ensure that the interests of Albertans are looked after. Unitel, obviously, by virtue of the change in jurisdiction to the federal government and by the policy of competition, is entitled of course to make that application. They will do so on a basis that the CRTC will ultimately have the opportunity to examine thoroughly the application in all of its contexts. We will be following it very closely, and in all likelihood, as I mentioned, we will be there in order to monitor the situation.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you. I hope it isn't just likely you'll be there; you'd better be there on behalf of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the Sherman report, which was done on behalf of Canada's telephone systems, including AGT, shows that long-distance competition in countries where it has been allowed drives up local rates and reduces the level of service while at the

same time failing to deliver on the promised productivity gains. Now, given that this government has lost its regulatory control over AGT to the CRTC, will this minister agree today to table any written agreements he has that lead him to believe this federal body will be looking after Albertans' interests, particularly as to local rates?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the Sherman report, to which the hon. member refers, provides – and I believe the hon. member should in fact know this – a basis of application by CNCP that was not near the type of terms that are currently coming forward from Unitel. As a result, the Sherman report based its findings on material and facts that are really not relevant at this point in time from the standpoint of Unitel.

MR. McEACHERN: The same as the Olley report.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. You've had your question.

MR. STEWART: I'm pleased that indeed we have received assurances from the federal government relative to the CRTC firstly taking into account all of the tariffs, all of the programs, all of the services to rural Alberta and embodying those as part of the CRTC regulatory regime. As well, we would be participating along with other provinces in the future development of telecommunications policy. We would be participating in a group of experts to analyze the mechanisms of the CRTC regulatory process in order to improve that, and indeed CRTC will have a presence right here in Alberta.

Lottery Funds

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, it would appear, according to reported statements, that the minister responsible for lotteries has acknowledged that some government employees participated in his June 16 fund-raising golf tournament. I question . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Careful, hon. member; this is a matter of privilege. [interjections] If we could just hold on for half a moment, folks. Just a moment. The Chair is just giving caution to the member because the waters are already clouded. With the question period on Friday the Chair has received not only one notice of privilege with regard to this matter but now two. So I'll listen very carefully to what the question is, and it may well be ruled out of order. [interjection] Thank you very much. Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, would you like me to start over?

MR. SPEAKER: I don't need to hear what you were saying before. Let's hear what the rest of the question is.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for lotteries: assuming that those reports are correct, would the minister inform this House exactly how such government employees participated directly or indirectly in the golf tournament under question?

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, hon. member; the question is out of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Why?

MR. SPEAKER: As previously explained to the House, Edmonton-Meadowlark, if you'd like to clean your ears out. Thank you.

Let's go to Calgary-Bow, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Native Artifacts Purchase

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism. Mr. Minister, in view of the continuing controversy over the native artifacts recently purchased by the Provincial Museum, would you please tell this Assembly when you will deal with the natives to address their concerns?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism and the Provincial Museum have been dealing with the many native bands for decades, addressing the concerns that they have with respect to preserving their religion and their culture, and we're going to continue to do that. On the specific issue of the Sriver Blackfoot collection, which is the subject of some controversy, we invited members, representatives, and other interested parties from the Montana Blackfeet to the museum last week to discuss this. It's unfortunate that one or two of those individuals breached a trust that we were attempting to establish, by attempting to remove from the museum without authority one of the bundles. However, we are going to continue our efforts to meet with those individuals. Next week museum officials, on Wednesday, as a matter of fact, will meet with officials of the Blood Band to continue a dialogue on their concerns, and we'll be meeting with the Peigans in early fall, again to continue to address the concerns natives have with respect to their material, culture, and preserving their religion and these artifacts.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Calgary-Bow, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, as these artifacts are from Montana, would you please explain why an Alberta museum would be interested and involved in the purchase?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some misunderstanding about the origin and the ownership of the artifacts previously and the current ownership. While the artifacts in question were in fact in Montana most recently, they did not all originate in Montana. In actual fact the Blackfeet originated in some respects very close to where Edmonton is now and as far north as Lesser Slave Lake. The material moved back and forth, but I can safely say that a good portion of that material originated with Blackfeet people in Alberta.

The reason our Alberta museum is involved specifically is in an effort to fulfill our mandate to preserve the material, history, and culture of this part of the world. There was a danger that the material involved, being sold by a private individual in Montana, might have gone offshore and been lost forever. We were able to acquire it through the co-operation of the federal government.

In terms of returning the specific bundles to any individual or any specific band, Mr. Speaker, there is some considerable dispute as to the actual ownership of those bundles. Many of the people who put them together are deceased, and that is the purpose of the ongoing discussions. It is our considered opinion and certainly our dedicated effort to work with the Blackfeet

people to revitalize their traditional religions and culture. That's always been our concern, and it will continue to be so.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre.

Brain-injured Persons Support

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 6,000 Albertans every year suffer from various forms of brain injury from motor vehicle accidents, some from sporting events, from bicycle, and even on the playground among children. Yet at a recent meeting, representatives of over more than 30 agencies and family groups supporting persons with brain injury raised the many unmet needs of these Albertans and concluded that out-of-hospital care is marked by inadequacy and confusion and that these people are basically just falling between the cracks. Mr. Speaker, it's hard to know who to ask this question of in fact, because they can't apply to the social services minister for AISH; they can't apply to the health care minister for home care. They don't know who to go to. I don't quite know who to go to, but I would like to ask the Minister of Health if she would undertake to raise this matter with the Premier to determine who these 6,000 Albertans who are brain injured can go to with their families for support in this province.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Associate Minister of Family and Social Services and myself have already raised the issue and at the present time have an interdepartmental committee working on the issue for us.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: On that matter?

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, this must be now the eighth interdepartmental committee that the minister has, yet, as I said, these 6,000 Albertans and their families are suffering each and every day from a lack of concern in terms of who they can go to for in-home support, for attendants to help them day to day. So I would like to ask the Minister of Health or whoever over there can tell these Albertans: who can they go to for support today in terms of proper discharge planning from hospitals, with follow-up, with trained staff in place for these Albertans who so desperately need this kind of care, Mr. Speaker?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have launched, as the hon. member is well aware, some important treatment reviews not only from the point of view of the patient but also from the point of view of training Alberta health professionals with respect to how we might better deal with the growing reality of the brain injured in our health system. That includes the role of the Alberta Hospital Ponoka and the role of health units across the province and the whole supportive role of home care.

I don't have a quick, simple answer, which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre seems to seek with respect to a lot of health questions. I can tell him that we are looking very carefully at the issue. Certainly the question of home care for those under 65 is very much a part of this question as well, although that certainly doesn't just apply to the brain-injured. I would hope that we might be able to come up with a more comprehensive plan for treatment and support services in the community with respect to the review that's already under way.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight.

School Dropout Rates

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government recently announced a commitment of \$300 million to work co-operatively with provincial departments of education in an attempt to stem the high dropout rate at the junior and senior high school levels across Canada. To the Minister of Education: given that Alberta's dropout rate is an alarming 30 percent, does the minister have concrete plans for assessing these moneys in order to address this serious problem without delay?

MR. DINNING: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, is the minister prepared to announce the terms of the federal/provincial agreement and to circulate the information to all stakeholders so that consultation can take place?

MR. DINNING: No such agreement exists, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. We have a couple of points of order. We have three matters of privilege. We have a Standing Order 40. We will start with Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You ruled out of order a question which I asked, and I'm standing under Standing Order 13(2), to the effect that "Mr. Speaker shall explain the reasons for his decision upon the request of a member." I must say that I don't understand the basis for the ruling. In fact, in four years I've never encountered a ruling that I find harder to understand.

The question I asked was with respect to regulations that are proposed to be passed under the Alberta Liquor Control Amendment Act that has now passed this Legislature, and with respect to the process of enacting such regulations. I specifically referred in my preamble to statements that the minister made last Thursday night with respect to a matter that he said he would take under advisement at that time, and I was asking him further to that particular matter. This is a question that is very similar to many questions that have been asked multi times in this House with respect to whether or not the Al-Pac project will be licensed without having further hearings. My question was whether or not the minister is going to have public hearings before he enacts regulations. It's not a question with respect to specific legislation that's before this House in any way.

Now, if it were with respect to the legislation per se, then an issue might arise with respect to anticipation, but since the legislation's already passed and not coming before this House, it couldn't be anticipation. So the only principle that could possibly be applicable is that you can't ask about the Alberta Liquor Control Board regulatory process, and if you can't ask about it now, you can't ever ask about it, and that's got to be a surprise to every Legislature in the world.

So I must say that I am saddened about this, Mr. Speaker, because we all work hard to represent the interests of our constituents and not our own interests, and this is a matter of public interest. I've been deprived, I fear wrongly, of a question, and we don't get that many in this House.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, thank you, hon. member. I'm sure that you have the same kind of concern as the Member for West Yellowhead had.

MR. CHUMIR: No, I don't. This was different.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, this is not a back and forth dialogue.

MR. CHUMIR: It was different.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

There's a great difficulty when the House gets to this stage of the sitting because of the progress of various Bills, and the Chair has made it quite evident on a number of occasions, including at least once earlier this spring, if not twice, as to what the process is. The Chair's hands are tied by that process. The Chair would also like to point out that the Chair's a bit concerned that the hon. member wishes to take things on a more personal level. The member sent a note here that I think is one of the rudest notes the Chair has received in four years.

There are a number of other items that could be dealt with, but perforce the Chair really just needs to draw the attention of all hon. members to statements to the House on June 15, 1989, again April 19, 1988, and again June 30 with regard to 1988. The whole matter of anticipation was ruled out of order there. The sum and substance of it is that once the Bill's gone past the second reading stage, then the hon. members have tied their own hands with respect to question period.

MR. DECORE: How was this anticipation?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. That's it.

Now let's listen to Edmonton-Whitemud, please.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I stand under *Beauchesne* 410(14). I have two points to make in this particular regard. The question and the preamble I had given clearly indicated that it did not relate specifically to the statement that was filed to me. A copy of it was filed to me from the minister responsible for lotteries or his lawyer. It did not state or make any reference to the question of employees involved in that golf tournament. The breach of privilege was related to other matters; the minister responsible for lotteries or his solicitor made certain claims. So, Mr. Speaker, to begin with I need some explanation from your point of view as to how this ties into that particular breach of privilege.

Secondly, again referring to the same subsection, when it makes specific reference to Orders of the Day, my understanding is that the statements that have been filed claiming breach of privilege, the two that I'm aware of, are not on the Order Paper of this day, that they in fact will not be dealt with at this time. So I would like you, if you would, Mr. Speaker, to explain to me how you see this relating to the breach of privilege and how you see it relating to orders of this day, bearing in mind 410(14).

MR. SPEAKER: Well, hon. member, with due respect, to repeat again in case the amplification system wasn't good enough before, the original matter was raised by yourself on Friday. There was a response by the hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services in his capacity as minister for lotteries. Then the supplementary was asked by yourself, and again there was a somewhat spirited response by the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. Within question period itself notice

was given that privilege would be raised. Again, today a letter was received in my office around about noon with regard to the matter of privilege. As a matter of fact, it was in my office . . . Anyway, notice was there that the privilege matter was to be dealt with.

The Chair also had conversation with the House leader for the Liberal Party to say that the matter indeed would not be dealt with today but that the letter had been received. Notice was given to the Chair that another letter of privilege was likely to be forthcoming. That letter, from yourself, hon. sir, was delivered to my office at 12:35. Therefore, both yourself and the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services know that the matter is to be dealt with in terms of privilege. That makes it sub judice because until the arguments can be heard on either side with respect to the matter of privilege, the matter really is sub judice. We have a rule that therefore it is not to be the subject of question period.

Hon. member, you yourself commenced your question today. The Chair intervened reluctantly but gave admonition. Again, the member was allowed to continue, but it was nothing more than leading us down the direction of dealing with the whole matter that is to be dealt with tomorrow, because of the Governor General's delayed visit today, with regard to this whole matter of privilege. That's the reason why you then had your privilege, to use the play on words, of asking the question removed from you today. The matter will be dealt with tomorrow.

Thank you.

MR. FOX: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Are we going now to another point of order, or is this Standing Order 40? Thank you.

MR. FOX: I was going to raise a point of order, if I might, Mr. Speaker, relative to the questions asked and ruled out of order by the Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sure the Member for West Yellowhead can look after himself, thank you.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask under Standing Order 13(1) the reason why I was ruled out of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, again, hon. members, the Chair could also quote back some things there about how not being able to get into question period really is not the subject of a point of order. That's been dealt with in the House before as well. The Chair has gone further to give explanations, and the same explanation given to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo applies to the Member for West Yellowhead. Thank you.

Now, let's hear the point of order, Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 11(1): "Mr. Speaker shall not take part in any debate before the Assembly." It makes it very difficult for members on this side of the House to offer apology or to consider apology if they are unable to pursue a matter and find out definitively whether or not there are grounds to offer such an apology. Last Friday, from my review of *Hansard*, it was the Speaker that interjected during the debate and ruled – or at least admonished the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, indicating that the Speaker was concerned about his comments. The Speaker made no comment about

the fact that "liar" was used repeatedly by another hon. member, clearly out of order.

It seems that we can't, at least as members of the opposition, get to the truth of the matter. The lottery business is not a matter that we can pursue. It's not a matter that we can review in estimates of this Assembly. There is no other avenue open to us except to put questions to the hon. ministers and have them answered, and then if we think it's necessary to offer apology, offer such apology. You give us no alternative, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: With due respect, hon. member, perhaps you would read all of the transcript of what transpired on Friday, because at that stage the Chair was well aware of the fact that the hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services had indeed issued the phrase "liar," that this whole matter would be dealt with – and I said so, if you'd bother to look to page 2136 – when the matter of privilege was dealt with in the House, because the minister had already said that privilege would be raised. When hon. members get themselves off on tangents or hyperbole or whatever else and start getting into the area of making some charges to each other in the House, it is the duty of the Chair to intervene.

Now, hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, you are a little bit off the track here, because indeed the place to do the exploration as to whether or not an apology would take place would indeed occur when we get to the matter of privilege. It's not to be a matter of in question period asking further information. The Chair has pointed out both privately and publicly that tomorrow will be the day that the issue is dealt with. I'm sorry; I'm much aggrieved that you feel aggrieved, that the Chair has not been carrying out its proper function.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 40, the Member for Vegreville on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and request unanimous consent of the Assembly to deal with the following motion under the provisions of Standing Order 40:

Qu'il soit résolu que l'Assemblée législative de l'Alberta exprime au Premier ministre Bourassa et au peuple québécois sa conviction que l'échec de l'accord constitutionnel du lac Meech ne constitue en aucun temps un rejet de la province de Québec, de son peuple, ou de sa culture, et réitère son solide engagement envers un Canada fort et uni.

I think the motion speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: M. le député pour la circonscription de Vegreville has proposed a request under Standing Order 40. Those members wishing to give unanimous consent, please indicate by saying aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Motion carries.
The Member for Vegreville.

Moved by Mr. Fox on behalf of Mr. Martin:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta express to Premier Bourassa and to the people of the province of Quebec our belief that the failure of the Meech Lake constitutional accord in no way represents a rejection of the province

of Quebec, its people, or their culture and further express our unshakable commitment to a strong and united Canada.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There may come a time when a thorough analysis of the process and content of the Meech Lake accord needs to be done by people across the country, but I think we can all agree that it is time now to make it clear to people, wherever they live in Canada, that we remain together as a country, that our futures are much brighter if we renew our commitment to one another and to this country. It's our hope in the New Democrat Official Opposition, and I believe the hope of all members of the Assembly and people in the province of Alberta, that the people in the province of Quebec not interpret the failure of a particular process as a rejection of them or their culture. We think it's important that that message be sent to them as soon as possible, and if the motion passes the Assembly, we ask that that be sent under your hand to them.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I believe it needs to be set out on the record that this whole matter of rejection is created by one individual. It was one individual from 1985 on that talked about Quebec being rejected if the Meech Lake accord was not passed. It was one leader of our country who kept talking and retalking and continuing to talk about that point. When you talk about something long enough, people start to believe it. I think it's important also to note that Albertans didn't like the Meech Lake agreement, don't like the Meech Lake agreement, don't like the process that we went through with respect to that Meech Lake agreement and subsequent constitutional discussions, but under no circumstances can Albertans be interpreted that because they didn't like the Meech Lake accord, they were somehow against Mr. Bourassa or against the Quebec people, against brothers and sisters of our country.

These are difficult times, and such times aren't made easier when expectations are built up in the minds of some Canadians and the hopes and aspirations and expectations of other Canadians are put down or suppressed or held back. Many mistakes were made in this constitutional process from 1985, 1987, just a few weeks ago, and on. We've learned much from those mistakes, and I think all of us can be positive now, can move forward towards the development of new strengths, new alliances, from those lessons that we've learned. I don't want my country to fall apart or to split apart. I want every cultural group, and most particularly those Canadians who live in Quebec, to be part of my country and I part of their country. So we completely and entirely and wholeheartedly endorse this resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Official Opposition for the sincerity of the views expressed by the hon. Member for Vegreville and the hon. Leader of the Opposition in bringing forward this resolution today, because I believe it is a genuine, indeed a thoughtful, reflection of the views of this Legislative Assembly as expressed unanimously in this Assembly in the fall of 1987 when the resolution in support of Meech Lake was passed.

I want to say, though, Mr. Speaker, that I find it hard not to respond to the remarks just made by the leader of the Liberal Party as I would like to do, but in view of the particular importance of sending a positive message, not just to the people

of Quebec but to the people of all of Canada, I urge hon. members to vote in support of this resolution brought before the Assembly today.

But I must say this. The hon. leader of the Liberal Party has said it's the view of one man. He didn't name that one man; I can only assume that he refers to the Prime Minister of Canada when he says that. I can assure the hon. leader of the Liberal Party that if he thinks that is the only person in Canada who feels that Quebec has been rejected by the failure of the Meech Lake accord, then he is sadly wrong and he was not listening to the thoughtful and, I thought, responsible views expressed by the Premier of the province of Quebec over the weekend to the people of Canada. I believe there are, unfortunately, many people in Quebec, perhaps the great majority of them, who feel that indeed English Canada has rejected them as part of this Confederation.

So I welcome what I said earlier: the thoughtful, considered perspective put forward by the Official Opposition in the remarks made today, and I, on behalf of the government, share in expressing those views to our brothers and sisters in Quebec, our fellow Canadians. I thank the hon. Member for Vegreville as well for introducing the remarks in French in this Assembly. I regret that I am not quite capable enough of doing so myself, although I can say in all honesty that I understood every word the hon. Member for Vegreville said in French, and I say that in a kindly way.

I do then urge hon. members of the Assembly to provide the unanimous consent to this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: There's a call for the question with respect to the resolution. Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries, let the record show unanimously.

head: **Privilege**

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would also like to point out for the record that a question of privilege letter was received in the Speaker's office at 11:48 a.m. from the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud had delivered to my office at 12:35 a notice of privilege, and the Member for Calgary-Buffalo at 12:35 also had delivered to my office another matter with respect to privilege. These items will be at least voiced tomorrow after question period.

Orders of the Day

head: **Motion to Resolve into Committee of the Whole**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the members resolve themselves into Committee of the Whole for consideration of certain Bills on the Order Paper.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak to that motion, and in fact I would like to speak against it. I believe it is the intention of the government this afternoon to move into Committee of the Whole and discuss at committee Bill 37, and it's our feeling on this side of the House that we have not had adequate discussion of Bill 37 at second reading; therefore, we are against this motion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll back up my contention that we've not had adequate discussion at second reading. I would remind the government that we had only two speakers in this House at second reading: the minister when he introduced the Bill and the Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition, who spoke at second reading for about 15 minutes and moved an amendment. We on this side debated the amendment for quite some time, as I recall some 18 speeches, a couple of Liberal speeches, some people who moved adjournment on the other side. It was the only debate we've had on the amendment and the subamendments that were passed, and they only addressed certain aspects of the question. There was no opportunity for even myself, for example, as critic for the minister proposing the Bill, to really deal at length and in substance with a lot of the basic facts that are behind this move to privatize AGT. We don't feel we've had a give and take, back and forth, on second reading of this Bill and see no reason why we should move on to the second stage then.

There has been no public debate. The government has released no facts or figures or documents showing why this company should be privatized. We've got 84 years of history going down the tube riding on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and there's been very little public debate, almost none outside this Chamber and totally inadequate debate inside this Chamber. The Bill was brought in at a time when Meech Lake was the hot item and everybody knew it would be, and it's been almost impossible to get the attention of anybody outside this Assembly on this very important issue. The people of this province don't even know it's happening. I've been out in the country a couple of times over the last couple of weeks. I started talking about this Bill and people had no idea.

You know, the government has offered the shares of this company to the workers at three shares for the price of two as a kind of way to try to buy off the workers of AGT, and I can only say that the users of the telephone system are going to pay for that in the long run. Yet there's been very little public debate about that. How many people out there know that? I have nothing against the workers of AGT. They've done a good job; they've built us a good company. But it's really not fair for the government to in a sense try to bribe the workers from standing up for the fact that this is a Crown corporation and has been a successful Crown corporation and could continue that way, to try to get their agenda through using what in effect will be the dollars of the people using Alberta Government Telephones. Furthermore, they've said that anybody that buys the shares can have them interest free. Again, the taxpayers of this province are going to pay.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why the government would be prepared to make those kinds of moves without a full and adequate debate on second reading of this Bill. Second reading is meant to discuss the principle thoroughly and all the basic facts that lie behind what's going on, and we have not had such a debate as yet. They should be prepared to stay here all summer to debate that if necessary. I do not understand what the big hurry is. Is it to get out on the golf courses, or what? I've got a trip to Russia planned in August, but I'll put it off to stay here and debate this if you want to. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Could we deal with the procedural motion before the House, not your travel itinerary and everybody else's?

MR. McEACHERN: Yes.

Well, if we move into committee now and debate this Bill, what are we going to get? An hour and about 10 minutes of debate at committee. Now, I've got five amendments, any one of which is worth an hour or so, Mr. Speaker, and . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Perhaps in your own mind.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, they are. They're very important and substantive amendments to this Bill. I see no reason why with this closure motion hanging over our heads we should start on that amendment process. The minister will stand up at committee and talk for half an hour. That'll cut it down to less than an hour. It's a short day already. We had a lot of other procedural things going on, so this period is being shortened down to a very few minutes. I see no reason why they should get that sort of short shrift.

More fundamental is the fact that we have not had full and fair debate at second reading. There are a large number of issues I wanted to raise based on the principle of the Bill. Sure, I can look at the insides of the Bill and, you know, talk about the 5 percent ceiling on the amount of shares anybody can buy to some extent, but it doesn't get me back to the principle of: why is this government selling off the company? You know, they've been talking about doing it for years, and finally now they seize the opportunity. When they've lost regulatory control, they now seize the opportunity with this Unitel application and the fact that the feds are taking over regulation to decide to give up their ownership rights, the Alberta people's ownership rights of this company. I just find that most offensive, Mr. Speaker, and cannot understand why they would do a thing like that without proper public debate, without full and fair debate in the Assembly, without having facts to put before this Assembly as to why it's good for us.

Mr. Speaker, I've looked at the minister's introductory remarks and the ministerial statement the Premier made the day the Bill was introduced. Quite frankly, they don't rank as any more substantive than the covering letter I made mock of by the chief executive officer of Unitel in their application before the CRTC. That letter said that these guys were coming here to play Santa Claus for us. For heaven's sake, we all know that's not the case. They're hard-nosed entrepreneurs out there to make a buck, trying to horn in on our long distance, the lucrative part of our telephone system in this country.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, it's a procedural motion. It's not a reopening of the discussion of any Bill at any stage. Procedure only. So please make your case.

MR. McEACHERN: Okay.

The fact is that the time is just too short. A little over an hour on committee reading of a Bill that has not had adequate consideration of principle on second reading is just not acceptable to the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. Even today the minister raised some new . . . Well, he's hinted at these things before, and I asked him some questions that triggered him to talk about the kinds of assurances he's been getting from the CRTC. Certainly we need time to explore that. That's really a second reading or principle question: to debate the pros and cons of the Bill and whether or not we should be selling this company. So already we've gone past the stage where, according to the process the government wanted, the agenda the government has, we can get into it in a substantive kind of way, which is something we certainly should be doing.

The government brought in closure the other day and now thinks they can just march this thing through in the next few days, that the people of Alberta will all go on summer holidays anyway and say, "Oh, this is just a bunch of politicians that want to talk too much anyhow, and we don't really care about their procedures." But I think that if the people of Alberta understood the importance of the Bill, if they had a chance to get into a debate about whether AGT should be sold or not, then at least when and if the decision is made, it would be based on some facts and on some public knowledge and information, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to get that out of this process. This process is far too short and far too fast. It's not possible, it seems to me, to deal with committee properly and adequately if you haven't dealt with second reading properly and adequately. Second reading is the time when you go through all those various aspects of the Bill, the things it will do. The Bill is basically going to sell AGT, and the fundamental reasons behind it are something that should be explored and analyzed, and then the effects of selling it need to be explored and analyzed. That needs to be done at second reading.

So I don't see why we on this side of the House should agree to going into committee when we have not had a full and adequate debate at second reading, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly the point I'm trying to make.

MR. BRADLEY: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

MR. BRADLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Under *Beauchesne* 902(1), it states:

A Committee of the Whole is, in fact, the membership of the House itself presided over by a Chairman instead of by the Speaker. Whenever an Order of the Day is read for the House to go into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker is directed by Standing Order 100 to leave the Chair without putting any question.

I would submit that under our Standing Orders, Standing Order 8(1),

After the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly on Monday and Wednesday afternoon, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evening, and on Friday shall be as follows:

Government Motions
Government Bills and Orders
Private Bills

et cetera. We're now under Government Bills and Orders. The Government House Leader was merely indicating to the House that the order would be Committee of the Whole.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: With respect to the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, under Standing Order 18(1):

The following motions are debatable: every motion . . .

(m) made upon routine proceedings that may be required for . . .

(iii) the management of [the business of the House].

By implication, then, Mr. Speaker – I know it's not common in the House for motions of this nature to be debated, but it's our right to debate them if that be necessary, based on our assessment of the situation. I think that given the very limited time, the likely order of business once we are in committee, those of us in the Official Opposition and indeed any members of the

House who may feel some concern about the kind of process being used here are compelled to use every procedural tool at our disposal to make sure we don't allow the business of the people of the province of Alberta to be conducted with undue haste.

Mr. Speaker, I think the provisions of Standing Order 18(1)(m)(iii) are clear. There is indeed a debatable motion. If the hon. member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest doesn't like that, he has the opportunity to change or perhaps stand up and participate in the debate on whether or not we should adjourn into committee and try and convince his colleagues to vote in favour of the motion by the hon. Government House Leader. It's our intention to vote against that motion.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair and the Table have been examining the matter, as a matter of fact, and the Chair agrees that under Standing Order 18(1)(m)(iii) indeed this motion is debatable. The Chair and the Table have also done quick research that indeed, as pointed out by the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, the practice of the federal House is to go directly without debate, but that is not the way our Standing Orders read, unfortunately or fortunately, depending which side of the House you're on.

So the debate may continue, but it had better stick to the procedural issue. We're not going to debate the Bill. There have been two warnings to Edmonton-Kingsway. At the third, the right of being able to speak will be removed.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for ruling in order. As to sticking to the procedure of it, the essence of the reason for the objection to moving on is to point out that some of the things I wanted to say were not able to be said in second reading. Perhaps without getting into the substance of those things, I could at least name a few of the kinds of things I wanted to get into.

I wanted to deal with the Unitel application in some detail, because I think it's crucial to the . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, the motion to go into committee totally cuts us off from any further reference to anything in second reading, and that is the essence of my objection. I've already said that I had a number of different things I wanted to get into in that regard, and it seems to me that's fair justification for asking that the House not now move on into committee. Without getting into the substance, it would seem to me that I can at least name them and indicate the importance of the topic as part of my argument that to move on into committee is something we object to on a procedural basis.

I'm quite happy not to get into the details of them but just the importance of some of these different things. I mentioned the Unitel one already, so I won't talk about it again. You know, what the minister said in terms of the promises of where this Bill will take us, what it will accomplish for us, is something we should have analyzed thoroughly, and got the minister to dialogue with us back and forth in a number of speeches, not just one, where we could debate the pros and cons of what he was saying about what the benefits of privatizing AGT would be.

Another thing: we've got a tremendous amount of information in a book like *The Privatization Putsch* by Herschel Hardin, which talks about the pros and cons of public ownership of companies. It has a lot to offer to this debate: public ownership versus private ownership. We were able to get some of those points on the record in the subamendment, but much more could be said if we were allowed to go ahead with other amendments and second reading at greater length.

We on this side of the House really did do our homework on this issue and had a tremendous number of different angles to put forward and would like to hear from the other side rebuts to those if they disagree with us, why they disagree, and what other arguments they could make instead. We've not been able to get into that kind of debate. It is true that a number of us spoke on amendments and subamendments, but when we passed the subamendment after the closure motion and then moved into the subamendment, the government members started to speak at the subamendment level, making sure we would not get back to second reading level. That's the essence of my argument, Mr. Speaker: that the second reading level has been neglected. As I said, even I, the critic for TR and T, was not able to get on the record a statement about why we disagree with this Bill at second reading, where we could put in a comprehensive sort of analysis of the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, hon. member. I'm sorry. These points that you're now bringing forward could indeed be dealt with at Committee of the Whole stage. The member is himself frustrating his own efforts to get to Committee of the Whole stage to speak. The Chair now removes your right to speak, but I am quite certain there are other members in your caucus who are quite willing to speak to the procedural matter. [interjection] Hon. member, it has transpired. It was done before, and you know it.

The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McEACHERN: Can I just get an explanation as to why . . .

MR. SPEAKER: No, I'm sorry, hon. member. The explanation . . .

MR. McEACHERN: Can I ask for an explanation . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order. The Chair has explained not once but twice. That's the end of the discussion, hon. member.

Edmonton-Jasper Place is recognized.

MR. McEACHERN: Are you saying I was off topic?

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place is recognized. If this continues, I'm afraid you'll be invited for coffee.

Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to support the point put forward by my colleague to try to indicate to other members of the Assembly why the Official Opposition feels they should not support the motion today to go into Committee of the Whole Assembly. Obviously, the outstanding fact about this debate that's to ensue this afternoon is that the government jumped the gun on all of us last Thursday by calling for closure at not one but all three debate stages of Bill 37, which is the sword of Damocles that hangs over this Assembly. Obviously, if this motion were to pass, we would be into a committee discussion of Bill 37 within a matter of moments, which would have to be concluded by 5:30 under the terms of the closure motion. Therefore, another stage of this Bill, an opportunity, will be lost for the sake of a few minutes' debate.

We on this side think it's morally wrong for a government to ram important legislation through the House under those conditions. It doesn't serve the members of this Assembly in

particular to co-operate in such a strategy, because the right to debate is about the only right you have as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Think about it for a little while. Think about the privileges we enjoy as members of the Assembly. Virtually all of them can be traced back to the fact that we are elected with the right to debate legislation, the budget, and certain other items that come before the Assembly. All of our privileges are for naught if you take away debate.

Now, why is it so important that we have an opportunity to debate 37? I think one of the most important reasons is that the government failed to be honest with the people in the last provincial election campaign and indicate to them that they were going to do this during this current mandate. As a matter of fact, the subject did come up during the election campaign. It was addressed by the minister responsible at that time for Technology, Research and Telecommunications, who referred to the issue as a red herring and demanded that political opponents produce some type of evidence to back up the claim that the government was going to make such a move. In fact, he denied it, Mr. Speaker, and went on to say that the future of AGT has still got to be decided in reference to studies in the past where things had not been acted upon.

In our system it just so happens that a government is not forced to stick to whatever it is that they promised during an election campaign. If that were the case, obviously a lot of things that happen in government or through governments would not happen if people seeking public office were forced to live up to their promises. One of the reasons our system of government bestows legitimacy on a government or members of a government who choose to change their policies is that we have the forum of democratic debate and all the representatives of the people can put their views forward and have their views and the views of the electors considered before a change in policy is made. That's a safeguard. That's the way democracy operates under the British parliamentary system on an ongoing basis. There's no such thing as: a government has a mandate to do X, Y, and Z over the five-year term of a legislature and can do that and do no other in virtue of the election mandate. That's not the case at all. The government has authority to act on a broad range of things and, in fact, to change their view provided they go through the avenue of debate.

It does happen that governments, at least in this century in Canada, have had to make – in their own terms, anyway – some very substantial changes in public policy. The one that comes to mind immediately, of course, is Mackenzie King on the issue of conscription. A promise had been given that there would be no conscription passed during the war. The government felt that because of their view of how the war had to be prosecuted, it was important that the government change its policy. In order to facilitate that, they went to the electors directly by way of a referendum. That shows how seriously the Mackenzie King government took the faith of the people, suggesting, "Well, if we're going to change this fundamental commitment, we should go back to you and give you an opportunity to vote." Hence, we had a referendum on conscription.

Now, probably it would be very difficult to persuade this government to have a referendum on Bill 37, but I'm hoping today we can persuade them to have some debate on Bill 37 in the Legislative Assembly, in fact a full debate. My colleague mentioned that there were a number of people who did not have any opportunity to speak on second reading of Bill 37, and I happen to be one of those. I had an opportunity, briefly, to address an amendment dealing with the question of this House's view of whether a natural monopoly should be a public utility,

and I did address that briefly. As far as second reading itself, I was one who wanted very much to speak on second reading, because I have done some research into the history of Alberta Government Telephones and how it came to be that the first Legislature of the province of Alberta made AGT a Crown corporation and how and why it was set up. There's some fascinating history involving some of the most important historical figures in the province of Alberta, and I think those things need to be considered by this Assembly before we move into detailed clauses-by-clause consideration. Unfortunately, we ran up against a brick wall of closure on our way to presenting some of those points in the second reading debate, and we're in a very difficult situation at the moment. I'm pleading, I think, on behalf of others in my caucus that the Assembly try to find some way to allow those voices to be heard and those points to be made.

Now, my understanding as well is that debate may be severely limited on other Bills before the House in second reading. So the House could profitably use its time as an Assembly, rather than going into committee, to deal with some very important second reading concerns.

I would also like to mention Bill 31, Mr. Speaker, which is the game ranching Bill. I believe it's called the agricultural diversification Act.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry; we can't go down to 31. The anticipated business of the afternoon is this particular Bill. I know it makes it very difficult on this, but please come back to the procedural still.

MR. McINNIS: I wasn't sure what all the business might be. I'm trying to make the point that the House should not go into committee, that it should remain in session with the Speaker in the Chair so that we can deal with a number of possible items of business which would properly come before the House only in full session rather than the committee. For example, there's another resolution, dealing with the electoral boundaries situation, which might profitably be dealt with as well. So if the government is at a loss as to know what to do if the Speaker did not leave the Chair, I'm merely trying to provide some helpful suggestions that would get us through the balance of the afternoon in the event that the motion before us is defeated by the Assembly.

We could, as I said, debate Bill 31 merely in light of the fact that there was a suggestion put forward, signed in writing by the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife not much more than four weeks ago this date, May 23, 1990, in which the president of the Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association was told in a signed letter:

No changes respecting the matter of sharing the administration of big game farming with Alberta Agriculture will occur without full debate in the legislature.

Now, full debate to me can mean one and only one thing: that we follow the normal rules of procedure in this Assembly and that the government doesn't panic after a short period of time, for whatever reason, and bring in a motion of closure. There is the notorious fact that unfortunately this matter of game ranching is also under threat of a closure motion as well. It's particularly relevant to this discussion, because here we have a situation where the government is plainly on record taking the opposite view of what's now being put before the Assembly. This one is much clearer than the AGT situation in that the Premier of the province indicated very clearly in a recent election campaign, as recent as during the life of this Legislature

— I'm referring, of course, to the Stettler by-election campaign — that there are letters, signed letters by a number of members of this Assembly, some of which were tabled in the Assembly, indicating that game ranching would not be brought forward by this particular government; also statements on the public record by the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, including the one that was given in writing four weeks ago to the president of the Sherwood Park Fish & Game Association.

These are all indications of a government which is very much committed on the public record to one course of action but is now following another course of action for reasons that they, frankly, have yet to make clear in the debate. I think when we get to debating Bills, generally speaking, on a matter of principle, that would be the time that an explanation for a flip-flop in government policy would be forthcoming. The merits of that particular commitment at the time that it was made could be canvassed thoroughly, and then the changed circumstances, or the circumstances that compel the government to go back on its word, could be canvassed. And that's in the nature of second reading debate that we have an opportunity to discuss those broadbrush developments as they affect a particular Bill.

It's very difficult in committee to focus on the broad sweep of political development regarding an initiative. It's very difficult. It would be impossible, for example, for me to explain to the Assembly what I've learned in my research about the historical origin of AGT, the role that it's played in the history of our province. It's very difficult to relate that to any particular section of the Bill. Therefore, there is some necessity to return to second reading in order to allow for that debate. I know there are quite a few others, because I believe my colleague said there were no more than three speakers on second reading per se; there were only two out of 83. Obviously, normally the Chair would not participate in that debate, but there are 82 eligible and two had the opportunity, so that indicates, perhaps, that as many as 80 members might have something to say on second reading debate of Bill 37, which in my understanding is scheduled before committee. So there's certainly no lack of things to discuss this afternoon, no lack of business that might occupy the Assembly in the event that this particular motion is defeated.

I would also like to mention the question of electoral boundaries, because that is something that we might do . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, we really would have a problem with that because the procedural motion is simply to go to committee. The notification has been given to each of the three caucuses that the matter would be 37, so I really don't think we need to wander down to Motion 14, or whatever the number is, or any other Bill. It's the procedure with respect to this.

At this time the Chair also needs to point out to all hon. members, if they'll pull out Standing Order 23:

. . . be called to order . . . if that member

(f) debates any previous vote of the Assembly unless it is that member's intention to move that it be rescinded.

This, then, refers to the fact that this particular Bill, 37, has gone past second reading; that item has been decided. So to make comments about going back to second reading are totally irrelevant and out of order. Also, the matter that a closure motion was brought in with respect to it, that also makes it as being out of order according to Standing Order 23(f). So it's, the Chair realizes, a very difficult path to walk.

But we're not going to go into the electoral boundaries. The government had decided to come back in the fall to discuss that.

MR. FOX: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, indeed.

MR. FOX: In terms of your comments about the closure motion, my understanding is that we've had oral notice of the intent to move in committee a closure motion, but it's neither before the House nor the committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. That's precisely the point. Some comments have been made with respect to the previous closure motion that was brought in with regard to second reading. Again, that's part of the confusion.

The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, on a point of order, I understand.

MR. TAYLOR: No; I'm sorry. I was just trying to be recognized for debate on it. I thought we were ready to recognize the debate. If indeed it's that . . . I don't have a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. TAYLOR: But I wanted to get up on the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude, perhaps, by pointing out that the Official Opposition is trying to prevent the government from acting with undue – in fact, I daresay obscene – haste in the matter of passage of a particular Bill, Bill 37, because of the fact that were this motion to pass, it seems to me quite likely that committee study of Bill 37 would then be limited to a grand total of 45 minutes, which of course is an even . . . I mean, the government will say, "Well, gee, you've spent little time debating this motion." But even if you added the other half hour or so that has been spent debating it, it's still nowhere near adequate time to deal with very many substantial questions which have arisen out of the concerns that people have over the future of AGT and of the entire telecommunications industry within the province. There are obviously implications in this Bill for Edmonton Telephones. There are implications for other companies who perhaps intend to enter markets in competition with AGT, and those cannot adequately be dealt with within the context of the balance of this afternoon's sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

So that's the primary reason for putting forward the idea that this motion needs to be defeated so that we can return to other very pressing matters which the whole House would want to engage in. I appreciate that I shouldn't mention what those things might be, so I'm urging that the members of the Assembly defeat the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to take a few moments to make it clear that our caucus is very much against the motion of closure for a number of reasons, although we're generally in support of the Bill. But the discussion isn't on the Bill; it's on procedure, and you correctly, so many times, tried to get it back.

Closure was the parliamentary process invented to get something through the House when it was important to get it through the House, Mr. Speaker, when there are maybe bills to be paid or deadlines to be met. Those are all important reasons

for closure, but closure in this particular case, to move the privatization of a company that we are generally in favour of – there is nothing to show why it's a deadline case, why we would have to do it now. In other words, if it's done next month or next week, what's the difference? It's a heavy-handed force against people who have been elected by their constituents, rightly or wrongly. I must admit I've sat here and heard some of the debates and delaying tactics that would be enough to annoy the government. I've played enough sports that I've felt at times like running out and kicking somebody where they should be kicked, but that's what the rules of the game are. We devise those rules so that no matter how annoying, from the government's point of view, the opposition may be by dragging out debate and that, there's a public opinion out there.

I think this is where a mistake is often made by government. By rushing through debate when there's no deadline to be made, they're precluding or taking away the right of the public to start phoning the opposition and saying, "Look; that hundred dollars a day we're giving you to come and sit while the Legislature is sitting is wasted." Instead, what they're doing is taking it on themselves to speak as God for all the constituencies in the province and moving a closure for debate. That's one of the first points I want to get across, that the Alberta Liberal caucus is very much against the use of closure unless we could show in some way or another that there's harm going to be done to the province or to the public of Alberta if this is not rushed through in the next few days.

The second part I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, is that in this particular stage we're moving closure on committee stage. Well, if there's ever a chance in the Legislature to move amendments or to put your ideas forward from both the back bench and from this side, it's during committee stage, and yet that's going to be the stage that we're clipping. Philosophically I can see third reading moving through in a hurry, but to move committee stage in a hurry makes no sense. I would plead with the government to withdraw closure at least for today or maybe two days on the committee stage. But who knows? We have some brilliant amendments over here that might save your bacon or, I might mention, save your rear end. Instead, you're going to whale through and deny the chance for opposition members and maybe some of your own back bench to make amendments. So I think closure at the committee stage is the worst of all forms of closure because there's no chance of letting them come out and letting some of them go through. And there's no indication that there's a deadline.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party wants to go on the record as saying that the government for a change has got their intentions in the right place but their heart, as always, *is* in the wrong place.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there has been for quite some period of time the fear that Alberta Government Telephones was going to be privatized. We talked about it in a number of my constituency meetings that I hold prior to going into session. Indeed, I held a public accountability session prior to coming into this spring sitting of the Legislature, had a number of constituents that came out, and I expressed then my concern that on the government's agenda we would have before us the privatization of Alberta Government Telephones. I waited a long period of time. We went through the budgetary process; we spent 25 days in budget debate there.

We spent a good deal of time looking at other Bills, had a good deal of concern about Meech Lake, and then we had the introduction of Bill 37, the Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that a great deal of time went by, and I was of the opinion for a short while that perhaps I was wrong; perhaps we wouldn't have any Act that would suggest that this government would go ahead and privatize Alberta Government Telephones. But, true as form, what did we get? Towards the end of session, when there were a number of other important issues that were before this Assembly, before all Albertans, indeed before all Canadians, we had the government bring forward its Act to privatize Alberta Government Telephones.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I noticed that today during Oral Question Period we weren't talking about AGT; we were talking about process. We were talking about process with respect to Meech Lake. I heard the Deputy Premier stand up and talk about how there was the opportunity in 1987 for members of the government caucus, after they'd taken some time away from the Assembly, to go around to their constituents, to listen to their constituents, to talk about the process of Alberta's role inside Meech Lake. Well, again what I'm speaking of, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity for all members of the Assembly . . . If we're not going to have formalized public hearings, if the government is going to be bullheaded and push ahead with the privatization of AGT without allowing Albertans to have the opportunity to say what they want to say about this plan, then we ought to have a period of time where MLAs from all sides of the House can go out and visit with their constituents, maybe have the opportunity to visit with constituents from other constituencies. Maybe I could go down to Camrose, where the Attorney General resides, the constituency where the Attorney General is. Perhaps I could knock on a few doors inside his constituency and ask those people what they think about Bill 37. Perhaps I could go down into Calgary or back up into Dunvegan and talk to those Albertans about what they want with respect to Alberta Government Telephones. Because I know, Mr. Speaker, that I have had Albertans contact my office that are very concerned about the privatization of AGT. But we're not even going to be allowed the opportunity to do that. We're not going to afford Albertans the opportunity to come before any public committee, before any committee that's struck by this Legislative Assembly to have their input.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that boasts. Time and time again they take out these wonderful ads in newspapers. Even the Minister of Agriculture; I see his smiling face in some of these newspaper ads that say: "We're having an open session. Call me. Call me up if you've got a problem about government. I'll be in my office between 11:30 and 2:30, and I'm going to talk to you, you average Albertan." Here we have a most important piece of legislation that comes before the Assembly, and what are we doing? We're not even having the opportunity for Albertans to appear before the minister, the members, no opportunity at all. I am quite frankly upset, Mr. Speaker, that I'm not going to have sufficient opportunity to go and knock on a number of doors in my constituency before we get back into committee. I didn't have the opportunity, quite frankly, to speak on the matter of principle on this Bill, but that doesn't matter. What did we get? We got closure.

MR. CHERRY: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Lloydminster is rising on a point of order.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the member a question?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may ask the member a question. The member doesn't necessarily have to answer.

MR. CHERRY: Well, Mr. Speaker, when you're talking about Albertans and how many calls you got, I would like to ask the member how many calls he got, because I never received any. So I would like to know, sir, in your office how many calls you received.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I didn't keep track. I did not keep track. Now, I'll tell you . . . [interjections] Hang on; just hang on. I asked constituents . . . There are a couple of points that I'm going to respond to, because the member asked a question. I think that those constituents that did call in ought to have their position put forward. I've had letters; not a lot.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. SIGURDSON: I don't know. I didn't keep count. I didn't know that we were going to be dealing with closure at this point. If I had known that we were going to be dealing with closure . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair hesitates to interrupt the hon. member, but the Chair must remind the hon. member that this is a procedural motion and is not a motion that opens it up for a general debate of the principle of the Bill. It is strictly the motion to resolve into Committee of the Whole, so the Chair would urge the hon. member to keep to that point.

MR. SIGURDSON: I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for bringing me back to order. If I may take 30 seconds to respond to the member, I would hazard the guess that I had over 10, less than 30, calls and letters. Now, that's not the point. It's not the number that I've had that were sent in voluntarily or the number of people that called in wanting to have more information or the opportunity to express their concerns about AGT. The point is, Mr. Speaker, that I as a member of the Assembly have not had the opportunity to go out and talk with my constituents about this. Sometimes in the role of leadership it's up to the members of the Legislature to go out and knock on doors of their constituents, knock on doors in other constituencies and say, "Well, what do you think?" Sometimes you have to invite the opinion of Albertans, and we're not being afforded that because what we have before us is a government that wants to use the heavy hand of Standing Order 21 and introduce closure.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's just too bad. I disagree with the government using that. So what are we going to do? Well, we're going to try and talk about function. It's the function of the opposition to make certain matters known by bringing to the attention of Albertans through the legislative process that which we feel the government is doing wrong. That's exactly what we are doing today. What we're doing is trying to frustrate a process, and I see that it's sort of working, Mr. Speaker, because

I see some of the frustration on the faces of the members opposite. But that is sometimes the role of the opposition: to bring to the attention of Albertans some of the things that we think the government is doing wrong, to bring to the attention of the government certain amendments that we think might very well correct what we believe they're doing wrong. And if they don't want to do that, Mr. Speaker, then that's fine. They do that at their own peril.

But the problem was that we weren't afforded the opportunity to even bring to the attention of government some of those amendments that perhaps would have corrected what the government was trying to do or is trying to do. Halfway through the process – not even halfway through the process: after 11 hours. The government talks about nine days, but after only 11 hours we had the introduction of closure. There were all kinds of reasoned amendments that could have been brought forward that probably would have saved this debate today. It probably would have saved all kinds of embarrassing situations later on down the road. But, Mr. Speaker, we weren't afforded that opportunity, and the government came back and said, "Ah, we've heard that the opposition is trying to frustrate the process." I watched the Deputy Premier stand up and speak to all Albertans on television, saying that "We're bringing in closure because we know the opposition isn't going to do what we want them to do." Well, that's not our role.

He also said that they're going to bring in closure at every stage of the debate. What kind of democratic role is that? I ask you, what kind of system have we got when the government, after 11 hours, is going to cut off debate at second reading, which is the principle of the Bill that I've not been allowed to speak to, and then they advise us that they're going to cut off debate in committee after a few short moments in time? Well, that isn't acceptable either, because while we're not allowed to talk about the principle of the Bill – we have to talk to the specifics – we're still not going to be afforded the opportunity to move the amendments that we feel are important to this whole process. And, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair is of the opinion that the member for the last few minutes has been reflecting upon a decision that the House has already taken and has therefore strayed from the motion before the House, and that is to resolve into Committee of the Whole.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I was reflecting on a decision, a bad decision, that I think the government made. But I'm also speaking to a decision that the government hopes to make.

MR. DINNING: Anticipation. Speak to the motion.

MR. SIGURDSON: Too bad. *Anticipation*: wonderful hit tune way back when.

You know, it's about the catch-up too.

MR. DINNING: Speak to the motion. Speak to the motion.

MR. SIGURDSON: Don't get too worried, Jim. If you want to interrupt on a point of order, stand up, by all means. Go ahead and do it. I'm not going to be too offended if you stand up.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order.

MR. SIGURDSON: You're calling me to order, sir?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'm calling the Assembly to order.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. How was your speech, Jim?

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, what I'm concerned about is that once we move into committee, what we're going to have is a very quick motion that's going to be moved by perhaps the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, perhaps by the Deputy Premier, that says: well, we want to shut down the process once again; we're going to shut down the process at committee stage. And in the few hours that fall before midnight, we won't have an opportunity to introduce all of those amendments that we want to put forward to try and improve – well, the only way to improve upon this Bill is to totally throw it out and go out and talk to Albertans once again.

Now, when the Premier introduced this particular piece of legislation, when he came in with his statement, he said that it's a major change in policy – a major change in policy. Now, I acknowledge that. We're going from a publicly owned company that's provided us with incredible service over the 84 years that it's been in the hands of the public to a private corporation, a major change in policy. Surely to goodness, Mr. Speaker, there would have been the opportunity . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member's remarks remind the Chair, really, of a second reading debate. Maybe he does feel frustrated by not having – he said he wasn't able to participate in second reading debate, but this is not the time to make that speech that he was unable to make for whatever reason.

MR. SIGURDSON: I agree, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for drawing that to my attention. I suppose the point that I am trying to make is that . . . Now, I'm not allowed to talk about second reading, but the matter is that when we go into committee, there's not going to be any opportunity to talk about a hoist either. And that's part of the process that's being usurped by the motion of closure, that we're not going to be able to use legislative amendments . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member is also already in this – his remarks mention the fact that there were other amendments that would have been very useful. The Chair would request that the hon. member not repeat himself.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. BLACK: Sit down.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Member for Calgary-Foothills. I do appreciate your advice as well.

Mr. Speaker, in that you feel I'm being repetitive, perhaps it falls upon me then to take my place and allow one of my colleagues who perhaps might be able to articulate more ably the position that I want to express. I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Mountain View would love to stand on his feet.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff wishes to contribute.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an interesting discussion we have this afternoon on the motion, but pursuant

to Standing Order 47(1) I would ask that this question now be put.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Agreed? [interjections]
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. McEACHERN: On the point of order . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Hey, sit down.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, do I understand that the hon. member has made a motion that the question be now put? If the member has actually made that motion, perhaps Mr. Speaker could explain the import of that to all the members of the Assembly. Does that mean that we now have to move on, or does that mean that all those who wish to speak to the motion on the floor no longer have that right? My question to Mr. Speaker: is this another form of closure?

MR. McINNIS: I wonder if this might clarify things a little bit. Under Standing Order 47 this is not, in fact, another form of closure. What the member is attempting to do through the backhand is to bring in closure on this procedural debate. He'll find, if he checks all the parliamentary references, that you can only do that in the normal way that closure is done. Otherwise, anybody could stand up and say "the question now be put" on anything, which of course they can't. It's very clear that the purpose of 47 is to sort out the order in which votes are taken and not to be able to cut off debate willy-nilly partway through without following the procedure. At least on the other questions, Mr. Speaker, they were required to provide some notice of the use of closure, but to be able to stand up and move closure instantaneously is out of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: For the information of all members of the House, the motion put forward by the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff is a debatable motion. The question has been called. Are there any more comments on the motion before the House?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker . . . [interjections]

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

MR. HORSMAN:

If the previous question is resolved in the affirmative, the original question shall be put forthwith without any amendment or debate. It is quite clear that this is not a debatable motion, Mr. Speaker. The motion that the question be now put is not a debatable motion.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. First of all, if one were to refer to Standing Order 18(1)(c), "The following motions are debatable: every motion . . . for the previous question." Now we see that the hon. Member for

Cypress-Redcliff has made reference to section 18(1)(c) for the previous question in that 47(1) starts out by saying:

The previous question, until it is decided, shall preclude all amendment of the main question and shall be in the following words: That this question be now put".

So I think that the matter of the previous question is not the one that's on the floor, as I think the Speaker ruled earlier in debate this afternoon. I think he made it clear in his ruling that really debate on the motion that Mr. Speaker now leave the Chair falls under the category of Standing Order 18(1)(m)(iii); therefore, as far as I can interpret the earlier ruling of Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 18(1)(c) is not before the Assembly, and for the hon. member to stand up and attempt to invoke Standing Order 47(1) really is out of order in that it's not relevant to the debate currently in front of the Assembly.

MR. FOX: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it'd be a fair statement . . .

MR. DAY: Citation.

MR. FOX: Well, he cited the citation. What do you mean? The standing order and *Beauchesne* 521(1), Member for Red Deer-North.

I think all members could agree that any interpretation of Standing Orders and *Beauchesne* needs to be reasonable. In order for the interpretation proposed by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff to be accepted, there would be no need for Standing Order 21. That deals with the procedure for closure, that a motion needs to be introduced and one clear day's notice be given before the closure motion can be put in subsequent stages of debate of particular Bills.

There's a good reason for that Standing Order being there, Mr. Speaker. It's to prevent, even in a very limited sense, the truly unreasonable use of power by a government sitting in the majority even though they may not have a majority in terms of support in the public. So I think a reasonable interpretation of the standing order referred to by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff indicates that it can't possibly be applied in this way. If that were the case, Mr. Speaker, then a member of the government side could stand immediately following introduction of a Bill for any reading or any motion and call for the question.

But if I might bring the Speaker's attention to *Beauchesne* 521(1), it says:

The previous question is moved when the original question is under debate in order to force a direct vote on it, thereby preventing any amendments to the original question to be proposed.

We're not proposing amendments.

The form of the motion is "That the question be now put." Once it is proposed, the debate may continue on the original question. I rest my case.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: What's happened here is that the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff has moved the previous question. That's in fact what the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff did. Rule 47(2) says that when that question is resolved in the affirmative, then there will be no further debate, that there will be a vote on the matter. That is where we're at. We're at a debatable motion moving the previous question.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak in opposition to the motion that Mr. Speaker now leave the Chair. I have a number of reasons for making that point to the Assembly this afternoon. First of all, I'd like to refer all hon. members to the actual standing order. The hon. minister back Thursday last gave oral notice of motion that the government intended, upon bringing Bill 37 to Committee of the Whole, to invoke Standing Order 21(1) as a way of dealing with Bill 37 at Committee of the Whole stage debate. He did that *in order*; that is, keeping within the Standing Order itself. He gave that one day's clear notice. But the standing order states that

A minister of the Crown may, on at least one clear day's notice,

(b) in Committee of the Whole . . .

which would become operable if this motion before us were adopted, we would move to Committee of the Whole

. . . move that further consideration of any or all of the resolutions, clauses, sections or titles then before the Committee shall be the first business of the Committee and shall not be further postponed.

What that says to me is quite clear: by giving the clear notice, one day's notice, the government has indicated that when Committee of the Whole is convened, the first item of business would be Bill 37, Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act. That would be in keeping with the standing order, and that would be the total business of that day. It would be out of order then, having given the oral notice of motion and assuming that that motion is made, for the minister then to call another Bill before the committee first. Say, for example, Bill 35, Metis Settlements Act, or Bill 49, Ambulance Services Act: it would be out of order for them to call any of those other Acts. What they would have to do is bring Bill 37 forward and deal with it until it's done or until that time of consideration was passed.

Now, what this means is that the motion was made and brought before the House approximately an hour ago, which meant that had the House agreed to the motion that Mr. Speaker leave the Chair, it would have left for this afternoon a grand total of approximately an hour and 15 minutes to consider totally this Bill at committee reading, as the standing order requires. Now, if we were to assume that Mr. Speaker would after we were in committee recognize an hon. member from the government side, perhaps the minister – it would be quite in order and quite appropriate for him to do that – that member would have had as much as half an hour to make opening comments on the contents of the Bill. For all I know, the minister or another member might have in fact had an amendment to introduce. I can't say that for sure; no government amendments have been circulated yet. But that might have been the case. We would have been down to about 45 minutes left, possibly, for the remainder of debate, at which time if Mr. Chairman were to recognize at that point a member of the Official Opposition, that would be our first opportunity to introduce any kind of debate, any kind of amendments, any kind of consideration such as that; at which point Mr. Chairman could recognize another pro member, a government member, and we would have been left with only 15, 20 minutes, which would only have been sufficient to get another member, perhaps from the Liberal opposition, into debate.

So we could see a scenario in which perhaps only three or four members in total from all quarters of the House would have the opportunity to debate perhaps the most significant public policy legislation in front of this Assembly during this session. I don't think any members of the government could really blame us for being very concerned about such a little amount of debate being accorded Bill 37 at committee stage. I think they in their heart of hearts can understand why we're

opposing this motion this afternoon that Mr. Speaker now leave the Chair. I think they can see very well the points that we're making.

Now, there are a couple of alternatives that the government might have adopted in its handling of this Bill in ushering it through the various stages of the House. For example, I was quite surprised last week that they would give notice for an omnibus form of motion, sort of an all-encompassing notice of motion that at all stages of the reading of this Bill, when Bill 37 comes in the form of committee or before the House at third reading, Standing Order 21 would be automatically invoked. They could have, for example, allowed it to come to committee and allowed for some debate, and if they were unsatisfied with the progress of the Bill through the House, they could have invoked Standing Order 21 later on, separately, at that time. But they chose not to adopt that strategy for ushering this Bill through the House, so that option is no longer in front of them. But had they done so, more debating time would have been provided to members of the Assembly to address the Bill at committee stage.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Another option that the government might have brought forward would be to call for Mr. Speaker to now leave the Chair, say at the hour of 8 p.m. in the evening. This evening would be available to them to do that, Tuesday evening is also available, and Thursday evening is another opportunity where the House sits at 8 o'clock in the evening. The motion that Mr. Speaker now leave the Chair could be made at that particular time. Were the government to adopt that particular option, Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 21(2) becomes operable, at which point there becomes a time limit. As the Standing Order reads, 12 midnight is the hour at which all debate and consideration must be brought to a conclusion and the matter cannot be postponed further and "shall be decided forthwith." Now, were they to adopt that particular motion, I can say that we would still object to the invocation of closure, the invocation of Standing Order 21, but it would at least provide a four-hour time period, from 8 o'clock in the evening until 12 midnight, which would be a total of close to four hours, over three times the length of time that would be provided to us this afternoon were we to have gone along with this motion when it was made at approximately a quarter after 4.

Now, I don't believe for a moment, and I don't want anyone to leave here with the misunderstanding that I consider four hours to be an adequate time period for consideration of Bill 37 at committee stage, Mr. Speaker. I believe four hours is woefully inadequate. Even four hours would prevent us from fully debating the amendments and some of the proposals that we would like to make to the Bill at committee reading. Even four hours isn't sufficient to adequately cover the concerns that we have with the direction government is going. But given that they themselves have already invoked Standing Order 21 by giving oral notice of motion, it would have been only fair for them to have said to themselves, "Okay; four hours gives a much more considered amount of debating time than an hour and 15 minutes." They could have then decided that they could call some other business that could properly be before the House, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair, for that one hour and 15 minute time period. I think that would have only been fair. I am disappointed that they didn't consider that option.

Perhaps in the days – and perhaps the weeks – ahead, for the remainder of the session, before the finish of this spring session,

the ministers responsible for administering government business could give that option due consideration. I'm not, as I say, wanting anyone to be under the misapprehension that we feel that that's in any way, shape, or form adequate, but it would have seemed to me, given what the government knows is our deep concern about this Act, that it would have, I suppose, been a gesture of some form to acknowledge the concerns that the Official Opposition – I should stress "the Official Opposition," the New Democrats; the only opposition to this Bill is coming from this side of the House, from this caucus in the House. It would have seemed to me to be a good and a prudent gesture on the part of the government to have considered that particular option.

I just would say that if the government feels that this is the right way to go, I would have thought that they could have tolerated the kinds of objections and arguments that were being put forward by the Official Opposition. But, again, whatever their reasons are, they're denying a considerate amount of time for those arguments to be put forward in the Assembly. The fact that they would come today, this afternoon at about quarter after 4, proposing that Mr. Speaker leave the Chair and the Assembly resolve itself into committee, I think indicates how little consideration they gave to our concerns and how little time they've afforded us the opportunity to put those concerns on the record in the form of either debate or amendments to the Bill at committee reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, might I speak briefly to the motion by the hon. Government House Leader that the Speaker leave the Chair and that we resolve ourselves into committee and that the previous question be put? Well, the implications of that motion are dire indeed not only for the business of the House today but for the procedures before the House in the future. We on this side of the House have grave concern that as elected members we have ample opportunity to debate the people's business. We were sent here by anywhere from 8,000 to 31,000 electors, depending on the riding that hon. members represent, to examine the proposals of the government in a very thorough way, to debate them at every opportunity to make sure that the decisions being made are indeed the best decisions being made for the people of the province of Alberta, and to propose changes if we think that some changes could be made.

We understand that we can't redebate second reading. Our concerns about time available there are no longer relevant to the debate in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because that's a question that's been resolved. Our concern is that as the Bill purported to be before the committee if we were to resolve ourselves into committee – that is, Bill 37 . . . If we were to move into committee this afternoon in the amount of time given to us, we would not have not only ample opportunity but in fact any opportunity to examine that Bill clause by clause, its implications, and propose amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I end my comments on that note.

[The House recessed at 5:30 p.m.]