

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, February 16, 1994 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 94/02/16

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

### head: **Government Bills and Orders** **Second Reading** **Bill 7**

#### **Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1994**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 7, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1994.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to the second reading of this Bill. I want to discuss several of the issues that were raised in previous discussion to have them for the record. First, with regards to the appropriation for health care, in the debate on Monday night and Tuesday night we tried to make it very clear that although we certainly understand why this appropriation Bill has come forward to shift money out of the capital account into operating, we do have very serious concerns about the necessity for that, because it really does reflect in the health care system a failure to implement the types of recommendations that are found in the latest Auditor General's report.

In that report there are a number of recommendations that are brought forward. I will not go through them, but they're set out in some detail, Mr. Speaker, and some of them are in fact a repeat of previous years' recommendations. I think it is very clear that had the government followed those recommendations, the necessity for a portion of this appropriation Bill would not have been there, that the \$122 million expenditure overshooting wouldn't have happened had there been the performance measures, had there been some way to assess the distribution of costs in the health care system. So we hope, then, that this is the last time this will occur, that the very stringent strictures of the Auditor General will be followed, his recommendations for improving the efficiency of the health care system will be followed so that the targets that are put in place for the various sectors will be met, particularly for health care. In the Auditor General's report, it's very clear that there is a problem in the health care sector in the delivery of those services and that the recommendations of the Auditor General haven't been met.

So while we're going to certainly vote yes in favour of this appropriation Bill, we think there is a serious problem that really isn't a laughing matter. It's a problem that there's a lack of control, a lack of performance measures in that sector, and it's very clear that the Minister of Health is aware of that and certainly from her comments of the previous evening is going to work hard to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General's report. Certainly in the Public Accounts Committee I'm sure that'll be a major focus of interest.

In the context of the national infrastructure program it's clear that here, too, this is, I think, something that we obviously support because we have a concern on this side of the House for jobs and job creation. We think that the expenditures under this program will have a positive effect on the economy, and we're certainly very pleased to see the structure of a per capita grant that the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism has put in place.

His statement is that the per capita grant will be allocated, then, to local governments on the basis of their priority setting. This is a point we want to make very clear for the record, that the minister has said clearly that local government will give a ranking and that the minister in terms of allocating those funds will follow that ranking. That is what has been said. That is what we will hold the minister to, because it is an issue of local control by government, and we would not want to see the bureaucrats here or ministers here making decisions for local government. So we hope that indeed the minister will follow through and that it will be number one ranking that will be chosen for funding by the minister.

I've made my points, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a maiden speech for the spring session I wanted to say a few words on Economic Development and Tourism. One of the concerns I have and watch – and this is speaking generically rather than the actual dollar expenditure. I notice how the province goes about economic development. They make much about rural development, but if there's anything that's been bearing the brunt of the cutback of the government and government services it is our towns and our villages. Our school system seems to be decimated. No one knows what school is going to be open, what school is going to be closed out through the rural areas. Unlike the city, a school is quite often an economic centre. That's where the people come in, not only the children coming into the school on the bus routes, but that's where the people come in to do their shopping, pick up their mail, and exchange the evils and things that have befallen the Conservative government since they were children. That once proud party is now trampling its escutcheon in the mud. They get together in these small towns where the schools are and talk about what's happened and what is happening to Alberta.

There's a great air of uncertainty out there through the rural community. The so-called Economic Development and Tourism policies of this government seem to sound well in this Legislature but are not going over rurally because the rural people seem to be bearing a great deal of the brunt. We heard only today in question period: no idea of how many jobs were going to be created rurally or in agriculture. The Minister of Energy got up and said how many people were working at roughnecking and working out on the rigs. Well, that's been all my life, but that is up and down like the fortunes of the federal Conservative Party. You can't bet on that at all as any way of determining how the future is going to develop. They would count on the oil industry. It fills in and fills up from time to time, but it doesn't do it.

We saw something on community bonds. We tried to get the minister of agriculture in that long all-night sitting we did last spring while the press were sleeping – that's a big mistake we made; we should have kept them awake. I think three days were crowded into one day, as I recall. The minister of agriculture wanted hundred percent guarantees, and he was going to try a system of a few experimental areas. Well, first of all, a hundred percent guarantee sounds as if this government hasn't learned anything, and that's why I'm a little bit worried about their Economic Development and Tourism: they're still trying to pick winners. They should know right off the bat that one of the reasons they give out a loan – if the fellow has a blue and orange membership card, he or she is already a loser. So that is no way to try to pick winners. They should be able to divine a system but with a lot less guarantee. I can see a 40 or 50 percent guarantee, because after all if you're rich and you put money into something

today and you lose it, you can deduct it from income tax, and you do get a 50 percent write-off. So why not allow the rural people that maybe don't have that kind of income a chance to get the 50 percent write-off ahead of time?

Also, the minister of agriculture, the canola king of the north, the socialized canola king of the north, came out with the idea that he was going to try some experimental policies. Well, we're still waiting for the experiment. The only experiment that we're getting done in Alberta is that the public is having to endure an agriculture minister that sometimes maybe isn't too clear as to where he is going.

So Economic Development and Tourism out through the rural areas is really a joke. They're closing down the schools. They're closing down hospitals. They're moving the whole economic structure that developed around schools and hospitals, and nobody knows where it's going. In the city if you close a school, close a hospital, it means jumping on the bus for another 15- or 20-minute ride, but when you close a school or a hospital in a rural area, you throw out the whole economy, because if there was a school or a hospital located in that area, it became a shopping centre, it became a business area.

There doesn't seem to be anything going on, and I await – I was going to say with bated breath, but I'm not that foolish – the minister of agriculture's efforts at experimenting out here in the rural areas with his so-called community bonds. He waves it high in question period about once every week, but then it dies again. So I'd be very, very interested. I've got some communities that would love to use his community bond. Thereby he'd serve a double purpose: he would be investing in a community that was astute enough to vote Liberal, and secondly, he would be able to show the rest of the people that he wasn't prejudiced. So I've got the communities if he wants to try to experiment by putting out hundred percent guarantees. As matter of fact, we'll even take a 60 percent guarantee. He can take that other 40 percent and put it up in the canola country if he wants to keep that plant going at government and taxpayers' expense.

8:10

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to vote this money in, but it'd be very interesting to see where it goes. I don't think the Treasurer really cares. Once he has made the book entry and sent it out, it's gone.

I'd like to add one other last feature. Alberta is the only province that has not signed up with the federal government yet. If we are indeed going to sign up with this infrastructure program and if indeed we are to take the front bench at their face value, that they were going to consult and let local government do it, I wonder if the government – I don't know who I would direct this to because the little coffee klatch I have right across from me here are discussing last night's hockey game. Nevertheless, maybe one of them is in on the thing.

MRS. McCLELLAN: No, it's not.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Not the hockey game?

MRS. McCLELLAN: No.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The way he was waving his hands around, he looked like he was high-sticking somebody in the corner there.

Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to know, if they would go so far, is if the local government is going to be the driving force – they're going to listen to that, and that's a good thing; I think I want to give them credit for that – can they in turn ask local government

to consult the people in their own area? It won't be done just in the town council or the county council all by itself, that the county council will say: "Hey, Mr. and Mrs. Community, have you got any ideas? Have some input." So if you're willing to discuss it with local government, maybe you could ask that local government to throw out to their community how much money they think they're going to get and what does the local community think would be best done with that money. That might be a little rider you could put on it.

Mr. Speaker, my voice is wearing thin. My Smith Brothers cough drops will only go so far. If I was closer to the front bench, I'd breathe on them, but I'm not. All in all, I will give them some time now to go ahead with whatever they're going to come up with.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My comments to the Legislative Assembly tonight will be brief on this point. I do want to begin by indicating that the basis upon which I will be supporting this Bill is on the basis of the Provincial Treasurer's representation to the House both on Monday and, I believe, on Tuesday evening that there were no new funds in this procedural Bill, that this was a mechanical piece of legislation to take advantage of the fact that there is a shifting of moneys from operating expenses to capital and from some capital accounts to other capital accounts. I understood that to be the Provincial Treasurer's statement on which he based this Bill, and it is my hope that when he speaks to this in closing debate, he will reaffirm that view clearly and concisely and unequivocally.

Now, having said that, Mr. Speaker, why is this commentary necessary? Why is it necessary for me to stand up at 8:15 this morning . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: This morning?

MR. GERMAIN: This evening. Has no one ever made a Freudian slip in this House before? That is, nobody except the Speaker?

If you notice in the 1993-94 supplementary estimates, there is some appropriate footnote information on page 15 which speaks about the capital for the Legislative Assembly. Just a few lines above the final bottom-line number there is a commentary that says that, "The approved 1993-94 Operating Expenditure will be reduced to offset the increased Capital Investment requirement of \$128,815." Now, my understanding is that in some accounting and bookkeeping circles that would be presented as a reduction in the above figure that relates to capital investment, but it is reassuring to see that footnote there. So that initially would support the Provincial Treasurer, and no undertaking would be required, except that when you go to the similar presentation of the information both in Health and in infrastructure, you do not find those same representations indicated there in the asterisk information, at least that I could find. The Provincial Treasurer is the Provincial Treasurer. He says he has it covered, and he says there is no new dough.

MR. DINNING: And you believe him. Because he's an honourable man, you believe him.

MR. GERMAIN: The Provincial Treasurer, Mr. Speaker, asks me to confirm in the Assembly that I believe him because he's an honourable man. It is the characteristic of the House that people

make two speeches for every one they make here. They make one on their feet standing, and they make one narrating in the sitting position into the commentary of the House, but to the extent that the Provincial Treasurer asks me to confirm that he is an honourable man, I say this: he has given me no indication to disbelieve that statement.

I must say as well, while we're on the subject, that I received a very low blow the other day from the Provincial Treasurer. He suggested that my topcoat button was a lethal weapon. To the extent, Mr. Speaker, that that is an implication that I am chunky, I resent members opposite talking about any personal disfigurements that they feel I might have.

I want to move on to the infrastructure program, Mr. Speaker. What I understood the province's annual share of the infrastructure program to be was \$86 million, and \$40 million is presented in the budgetary information. If I am wrong in my understanding, the Provincial Treasurer no doubt, when he closes debate on this issue, will correct me, but if in fact \$86 million is being spent this year on the provincial government's share of the infrastructure program, then I would be curious as to where the other \$46 million is coming from.

Now, finally, the Deputy Premier on Monday in this Legislative Assembly indicated two things about the infrastructure program. He indicated, first of all, that the municipalities and improvement districts would make the decisions, and he indicated that infrastructure would be given a wide and all-encompassing definition. I want to caution the government that when I was filling up my car with gas this evening at the service station immediately across the street from the Legislative Assembly, it was clear that the service station attendants were not born yesterday and did not come down in last week's snowfall. The individual who took the money for the gas noted the description on the credit card and stopped processing the transaction and instead indicated to me that he'd heard that a community centre was going to be built with some infrastructure money somewhere in the province of Alberta. If that is in fact the case, it might be the first trembling and the first warning that maybe the definition of what constitutes infrastructure enhancement under this program should be looked at very carefully.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are other members here that want to express their views. I know that they have waited patiently to do so, and I will conclude my comments tonight.

Thank you, sir.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see we're getting that sorted out.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to follow up on my honourable and svelte colleague from Fort McMurray and his comments.

MR. DINNING: Is he swell or svelte?

MR. BRUSEKER: Swell or svelte. Either one is equally complimentary.

MR. GERMAIN: It means well proportioned, in good physical shape.

8:20

MR. BRUSEKER: Absolutely, and loath would I be to disagree with him.

Just a couple of closing comments. My hon. colleague from Fort McMurray has raised some interesting points. I read carefully and I listened carefully when the Deputy Premier was speaking two nights ago regarding the infrastructure program and the \$40 million proposed to be expended under that program. As I reviewed the figures that he put forward, even to the sixth decimal point, which are interesting calculations but meaningless to the average taxpayer . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Seasonally adjusted too, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Seasonally adjusted, no doubt.

The figure that he quoted was just over \$172 million, which divided by two is the \$86 million per year. I looked a number of times to see a response to my question of Monday evening – where is the other \$46 million coming from? – and to the similar question just put this evening. I could not find the answer. I am interested to discover if the Provincial Treasurer can answer the question as to where the other portion is coming from, because as I understand it, it is a two-year program. The provincial government share is \$172 million, divided by two is ballpark \$86 million.

My colleague from Fort McMurray has also mentioned an interesting point with respect to the kinds of projects. I have heard many conversations going on in the city of Calgary about various projects that are at least up for consideration. I guess I'm still in a quandary as to exactly how it is that the ultimate decision is going to be made with respect to the nature of the projects that are going to be assigned. I guess I'm a little bit leery, I must confess, with the concept that the provincial government is simply going to rubber-stamp anything that comes forward. I'm hoping that the Provincial Treasurer will address that concern about the kinds of projects that are going to be selected, I guess, right across the province, not dealing just with the city of Calgary but in any municipality regardless of the size of the municipality.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, just a question I guess more of curiosity than anything else. In the Bill we have before us today, Bill 7, under the section on Economic Development and Tourism the sum there is \$40 million, but the figure of \$39 million is printed under operating expenditure. I wonder if the Treasurer might explain why it's under operating, because I understand that this is to go to basically build things, and that doesn't seem to me to be an operating kind of a budget. I wonder if the Treasurer might clarify that for me because I don't understand, quite frankly, why it would be listed as that. I understand the need for \$20,000 to get the program up and running and administration and overhead, I guess, which is going to be involved with this particular program. It seems to me that as they're listed, it seems kind of backwards or contradictory, and I wonder if the Treasurer just might elaborate on that.

Mr. Speaker, those are all the questions that I have, and I'll look forward to the response from the Treasurer.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer to conclude debate.

MR. DINNING: Well, I would just be delighted to, Mr. Speaker. You know, it makes me proud to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly, to be here at 8:23 on a Wednesday evening to serve the people of Alberta, to have watched the performance of some of my colleagues across the way. It makes me proud, and it really genuinely makes me glad to be back in this Chamber. It just seems like yesterday that we were here all night.

I am pleased to be here explaining what's in Bill 7. First of all, my comments for my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud. He spoke of overspending in health care. Let us be clear, because I know the hon. member would want to be reminded of the facts, that in May this government brought down a budget for Health that identified \$122 million that was to be found through the consultation exercise. There was a major consultation exercise in May and June leading to the 15th day of June, when the ultimate referendum took place, the ultimate consultation took place. That was when Premier Klein and the Conservative government were re-elected to office to serve the people of Alberta for a five-year mandate. Mr. Speaker, we then went on and in early July, July 19 if I'm not mistaken, the Minister of Health announced some 67 and a half million dollars worth of savings, reductions in the health care budget to achieve the savings that had to be found.

Then on October 4 there was a further announcement by the Minister of Health and the Premier of the province explaining a number of cost savings that had been proposed, including identifying some \$60 million worth of health capital equipment purchases that were now not going to take place. In addition to a number of projects under the auspices of the minister responsible for Public Works, Supply and Services a number of health-related projects under his responsibility would also not go ahead so as to fund some \$60 million required to fund the operations of the health care system. That was announced, as I said, on October 4. It was reiterated again on November 26, when the Premier talked with Albertans about seeking 5 percent savings with respect to compensation budgets in the public sector, and it has been repeated repeatedly, Mr. Speaker, ever since then.

So these are not new dollars. I would tangentially answer the question of the Member for Fort McMurray: these are not new dollars; these are reallocated dollars. This is virtually a wash in the province's net spending position. I will have a chance to share with hon. colleagues some seven days and 20 hours from now just exactly where underspent and unspent and lapsed dollars will be found to give the whole picture for all hon. members. As is our wont, we would want to provide Albertans and Members of the Legislative Assembly with the whole picture, and they will see that in our budget documents on that day.

Mr. Speaker, I then go to the subject of infrastructure. The minister responsible for the program, the Deputy Premier, on page 34 of *Hansard* made it very clear how this program was going to be driven. This is a federally initiated program under the auspices of the federal government, now led by Prime Minister Chrétien, and he advised Canadians that this was something that he was going to do. With the opportunity of that \$172,732,000 that would be made available for the infrastructure program in Alberta, the provincial government felt that it could do no less than to match those funds, primarily from unallocated, existing, approved dollars for 1993-94. So as to get the program kicked off before April 1, 1994, in this current fiscal year, we were able to identify dollars that would lapse, that had been appropriated but would not be required for expenditure. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud would want us to do, we're being frugal with Albertans' dollars, and we found ways to save those moneys. Given that the infrastructure program was on our doorstep, we have in fact in an early fashion, before April 1, 1994, identified those dollars and begun to allocate them in the current fiscal year, rather than waiting till the next fiscal year. As for the remaining \$46 million over this next 12 months, I will share that information with hon. colleagues when we convene at 4:30 on budget day.

Naturally I will take and put in my diary and my newscippings the praise heaped on me by the Member for Fort McMurray. I'm sure that will go in with several other comments that he's made in

the past and I'm sure other future laudatory comments that I would want to share with my children and grandchildren down the road. Being damned with faint praise – you take as much praise or damning as you possibly can, but the hon. member across the way would probably say that as long as they spell his name right, it doesn't matter what they say about his buttons or about him.

What constitutes infrastructure? Mr. Speaker, this is in large measure a municipally driven infrastructure program. That is in many ways what the federal government proposed when they first initiated it. If there is some concern on the part of hon. members across the way – their leader said the day after the last federal election that he has access to those back rooms where he can make convincing cases that of course a Conservative government might not be able to. I can hardly wait to hear the advice that the Minister of Finance took from the Leader of the Opposition when that Minister of Finance brings down his budget six days from today. I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry was there in Ottawa making his case. I know, because he told me, that he has access and he has convincing access to those back rooms. So he has had a hand in the budget that will come down next Tuesday from the Minister of Finance for the government of Canada.

8:30

I would refer members to page 34, about how the infrastructure program is going to operate. Clearly, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism said:

We would deliver programs in the province of Alberta on the basis of applications from municipal governments. Now, I want to make it . . . clear that that's the way we're going to do it in Alberta. In other provinces in this country the provincial government has determined that it would decide how these dollars are going to be spent on the basis of its municipalities, but this is to be a municipality initiated program in the province . . . Municipalities will know what their population is. They'll know what they're eligible for. They will send a letter to us outlining what projects they want to have considered under this program. We agreed on one consideration: that projects submitted for funding consideration must . . . have the endorsement of the initiating local government by way of a formal resolution or motion, and a copy of the resolution or motion must accompany the application.

I know I wouldn't have said it as well as the Deputy Premier said it on the evening of February 14, but I would say once again that this is a municipally driven program.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, and hearing the positive comments from members across the way, I would recommend Bill 7 to the House for second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

#### head: **Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Moved by Mr. Friedel:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Moved by Mr. Decore that the motion be amended by the addition of the following words: Since the Klein government has embarked on an education restructuring program without the input or

approval of Albertans, it is our duty to respectfully submit to Your Honour that Your Honour's present government does not have the confidence of this House.

[Adjourned debate February 15: Mrs. Mirosh]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of the amendment to the throne speech, expressing a lack of confidence in the Klein government, as placed before this House by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I regard education, continuous upgrading of education and training, as an investment in the future . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: When are you going to do it?

MR. BENIUK: Mr. Speaker, I gather you've given approval for the dogs opposite to be unleashed, to use the term of the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I regard education, continuous upgrading of education and training as an investment in the future, the foundation stone of progress, of economic and social and cultural advancement. [interjections] The hon. members opposite who are laughing obviously do not regard education as important.

#### **Point of Order Parliamentary Language**

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw is rising on a point of order.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A point of order, Standing Order 23(j). I personally take exception to being called a dog. I certainly didn't make any comments nor interrupt the hon. member across the way, and I would like him to retract those comments.

MR. BENIUK: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the Deputy Premier made a comment, and many people on this side of the House had been silent. He referred to us as dogs. You did not intervene. I gathered the word "dogs" is now appropriate in this House.

If I may continue, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. That is not a correct assumption. Words can be used – the meaning of words take the complexion of the atmosphere in which they're spoken. A word can be parliamentary in one context and unparliamentary in another context. But the whole theme of this is that we should try to keep as much decorum as possible. The atmosphere that prevails this evening is not the same as the atmosphere that was prevailing during question period.

The Chair is not going to be looking favourably on this member's use of the word "dog" under the present circumstances. The Chair will be endeavouring to ensure that this kind of language doesn't happen. The Chair has to admit that it did not hear specific members referred to as dogs this afternoon, but of course the Chair didn't hear everything that was said this afternoon because of the high level of other activity that was going on that shouldn't have been going on.

In the context of this evening's remarks, the Chair feels that the hon. member might consider withdrawing that epithet.

MR. BENIUK: Very well, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the word "dogs" and replace it with the exact words spoken by the hon. Deputy Premier: barking dogs. Would that be appropriate?

MR. SPEAKER: No, it would not. This is not the same circumstance as prevailed during question period this afternoon, so it would not be appropriate.

The hon. member may proceed with his remarks if he wishes to proceed.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. BENIUK: I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, I regard education, continuous upgrading of education and training, as an investment in the future, the foundation stone of progress, of economic, social, and cultural advancement. Education breaks the poverty cycle, enhances the opportunities for all our citizens to maximize their potential, improve their future incomes and living standards, and create greater financial security for themselves and their families.

#### **Point of Order Parliamentary Language**

MR. HAVELOCK: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I hate to drag this out. However, I do not recall hearing the hon. member withdraw the remark. I would like to have that on the record, certainly.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair heard the hon. member say that he would withdraw the remark, and then he went on to say that he would like to substitute the remark with "barking dogs," and the Chair said that that would not be appropriate. The Chair took it as having been withdrawn.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education breaks the poverty cycle, enhances the opportunities for all our citizens to maximize their potential, improve their future incomes and living standards, and create greater financial security for themselves and their families, for our society, and our province. A well-educated population is the Alberta advantage. Only through a publicly funded, universal, quality, world-class education system from kindergarten to grade 12, combined with world-class postsecondary educational institutions – our universities, colleges, and technical institutions – can we ensure that our citizens, our society, our province will flourish economically, socially, and culturally into the 21st century.

As Albertans we must strive to ensure that our young people are encouraged to finish high school and go forth to college, university, NAIT, wherever their dreams and abilities take them. Society must invest in these individuals for they are our future, the future of our province, of our society. Cutbacks to the education and advanced education budgets signal to our youth that the Klein Conservatives regard our youth as surplus, discarding them, relegating them to dead-end jobs, underemployment, unemployment, denying them an opportunity to maximize their potential and their contributions to society. Through reduced funding for our universities, colleges, and technical schools, the Klein government must accept prime and direct responsibility for the closure of university faculties, the merging of university departments, the destruction of our Alberta advantage.

Through reduced student enrollments at our universities, colleges, and technical schools, through ever lowered student quotas, a major bottleneck is created, restricting, blocking the entranceway into postsecondary educational institutions, sentencing

an ever growing majority of high school graduates to a loss of self-esteem, destruction of self-confidence, deep depression, low paying part-time jobs, and even onto social assistance and financial dependency. Sentenced to lifelong poverty, denial of personal and family life-style opportunities, changed to unskilled manual labour jobs at the bottom of the pay scale.

8:40

The Conservative government's policy of deliberately withholding, decreasing, denying adequate funding for postsecondary institutions will result in ever fewer and fewer of our young people having an opportunity to acquire an education essential to meet the challenges of and fit into a modern society and to acquire good paying jobs in a modern society. The Alberta advantage will cease to exist, and in the future the Alberta advantage will be referred to in the past tense in historic terms as something that we once had.

Mr. Speaker, the Klein government has charted a path for Alberta and Albertans backwards into historic time, deliberately dismantling, reducing in size and quality, destroying the most crucial infrastructure pillars, that were the most essential in the creation of our Alberta advantage. The Klein Conservatives have code named this process restructuring.

Through the hard work, toil, arid sacrifice of our parents and grandparents, vital infrastructure support pillars were established that transformed Alberta into a prosperous, economically and technologically advanced society, a civil and caring society with a healthy, well-educated population, education being the most crucial, the most essential foundation pillar. Mr. Speaker, our Alberta advantage is our world-class universities, colleges, and technical schools, our universal, publicly-funded school systems that provide quality education from kindergarten to grade 12, our acute care and extended care hospitals, a health care system that is the envy of the world, our public service employees who are dedicated, honest, and hardworking, our cultural institutions that broaden our appreciation of the nonmaterial, the multicultural, and cosmopolitan qualities of life. The Klein government's rampage in dismantling, reducing in size and quality the most essential, the most crucial educational, medical, social, political, cultural, and governmental infrastructure support pillars is destroying, ending our Alberta advantage.

Our heritage from our parents and grandparents, created with painful sacrifice, is being rejected, tossed on a garbage heap. Without these essential infrastructure pillars we are destined for Third World status. The proud but vulnerable democratic tradition that we inherited from the United Kingdom is being undermined as the Klein government usurps the powers of the democratically elected school board trustees and grants dictatorial power over all school financing to the Minister of Education, a pawn of the Premier, making the election of school board trustees every three years a hollow exercise.

Mr. Speaker, the Klein Conservatives have generated fear, anxiety, emotional and economic stress among our fellow citizens by restricting, curtailing the acquisition of knowledge and rejecting humane treatment to those economically disadvantaged in our society, including injured workers, the unemployed, the underemployed, the highly educated, the undereducated, the young, the old, the newborn, men and women. While being financially poor and underemployed or unemployed is not a crime, the government's policies on these individuals should be a crime. Lack of education leads to dead-end jobs, to unemployment, underemployment, which in turn lead to economic and emotional stress that triggers violence in the home and in society and contributes to a high

crime rate. The level of poverty and hunger of old and young in this province is totally unacceptable. Many children go to school hungry and find it difficult to concentrate on study. Many seniors live on subsistence budgets. We are losing the productivity of a generation of adults whose self-confidence and self-respect has diminished because they are forced by circumstances beyond their control to live in poverty and endure a bombardment of statements and policies from the Klein government that further undermines their self-worth. As a society we cannot afford this loss. As individuals we must be repelled by such government policies, for we, our families, our neighbours could be its next victims.

The Klein government's throne speech refers to Alberta being a trading province and the government's desire of improving Alberta's performance in the global market. Mr. Speaker, quality, high-income jobs tend to be concentrated in areas where the population is highly educated. Just look at the Silicon Valley and the Harvard area. There is no high-tech Silicon Valley in Haiti, Guatemala, or New Zealand. We have an efficient, modern medical system, the envy of the entire world, because previous governments encouraged and financially rewarded our citizens to excel, to advance their knowledge, to become medical doctors, dentists, and nurses, and not by rewarding failure to study. The Klein government's policy of encouraging and financially rewarding deskilling will surely lower the standards of medical knowledge and medical care in our hospitals. This is not acceptable in a civil, enlightened, humane, modern society.

Mr. Speaker, we have a healthy population because previous provincial governments opened hospitals, not closed them. All Albertans must ask themselves: why is this happening? Why are our most essential, most crucial educational, social, medical, and cultural foundations being dismantled, undermined, destroyed? Why? Why indeed? History shows that the phase that Alberta has now entered is not unique. It has occurred in many countries throughout history. The dismantling of vital infrastructure pillars, the basic foundations of a society, tends to be followed by a period of economic, social, cultural, and political decline. Great powers have vanished from the face of the globe after entering this phase. There is a term derived from Constantinople from the Byzantine empire that explains this process: iconoclasm. An iconoclast is an individual, a person who attacks cherished beliefs, traditional institutions, a breaker, a destroyer. An iconoclast is not required to provide a positive alternative. Iconoclasm occurs when a mystic, a demagogue, develops a following and achieves political power. It appears that Alberta has now entered an iconoclastic period in its history. Mr. Klein's government is busy dismantling, undermining, destroying our traditional, cherished educational, medical . . .

#### Point of Order

##### Accepting a Member's Word

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is rising on a point of order.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to refer to *Beauchesne* 494, Acceptance of the Word of a Member, and I'd also like to point to 428(a), being offensive. I find some of the statements offensive and untrue.

8:50

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Which ones?

MRS. FORSYTH: All of them.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would remind hon. members that there's never going to be unanimity of opinion in this Assembly, and that is one reason why speeches have a certain time limit.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

### Debate Continued

MR. BENIUK: Premier Klein's government. . .

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Referring to a Member by Name

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would remind the hon. member that there is no Premier Klein's government. There is the Premier's government. We do not use surnames in this Assembly.

MR. BENIUK: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I do believe others have referred to it as the government of the person with that last name.

### Debate Continued

MR. BENIUK: The Premier's government is busy dismantling, undermining, destroying our traditional cherished educational, medical, cultural, social-political institutions that made Alberta a socially, economically, and technologically advanced and prosperous society with an educated and healthy population. God help our citizens. God help Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against the motion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I think this is technically my first speech, my maiden speech. I would like once again, if I haven't had the opportunity, to extend my congratulations, sir, on your election. I know it's late but no less sincere. I'm sure that all my colleagues here in the House will do their best to uphold the principles of nearly 800 years of British parliamentary tradition, upon which this Legislature has been built. I find with great pride that we in Calgary-Egmont have had the great honour of having not one but two of your predecessors in the Chair. The hon. Dr. David Carter was my immediate predecessor and MLA in the constituency of Calgary-Egmont for close to 11 years. Dr. Carter very ably served his constituents and will be remembered for his loyalty and sensitive contribution to the constituency.

Prior to 1971 the constituency of Calgary-Egmont was part of Calgary-Southeast as well as Calgary-South ridings and was represented by Arthur Dixon. Like yourself, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dixon served as Deputy Speaker prior to his appointment as Speaker in 1963. The hon. Art Dixon, who very ably represented Calgary-Egmont during the Manning years, would love to be back to represent an area that not only includes the communities of Fairview, Acadia, Willow Park, and Maple Ridge but now includes many of his friends in the proud communities of Ogden, Millican, Lynnwood, and Riverbend. In fact, I should note that the residents of the communities which comprise Calgary-Egmont have always had and continue to expect first-rate representation in the Legislature.

Calgary-Egmont's first member of this government, the late Merv Leitch, served in this House for three terms, from 1971 to 1982, and was appointed to the portfolios of Attorney General and Provincial Secretary, Provincial Treasurer, and later as the province's Energy minister. The late Merv Leitch, who contributed so much to Calgary-Egmont and Alberta, would no doubt miss the good people of Kingsland, who are now, through

redistribution, well represented by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, the hon. Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to report that Calgary-Egmont is the largest constituency, not in population but in registered voters, in the province. There were some 28,498 electors enumerated in the last election. Regrettably, only 58.1 percent of these electors voted, but even with this low turnout they still provided me with the second largest Conservative vote for this government in the province, second only to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier said it best when he said that Albertans, when given a choice between the future and the past, will choose the future every time. Another way to say that is to say that Albertans are positive, optimistic people who don't want to dwell on the negative, pessimistic ideas of the past and, given a choice, chose optimism on June 15, 1993.

I don't understand why the Leader of the Opposition continues to counsel doom and gloom. Doesn't he realize that Albertans are a positive and generous people? I listened to his remarks. Some of the remarks in his reply to the throne speech said that Catholics are under siege in this province. Mr. Speaker, Catholic education is not under siege in this province. In fact, 85 percent of all Catholic boards are what are considered have-not boards and will benefit through our plan. I heard him say that there would be larger classrooms, less access. I heard him say that we were gutting the system. I'm not sure that I've heard so much kilokaka in my life. We heard about the fact that this government was using the New Zealand model. We heard about divisions in our society, and then we heard about the Stockholm syndrome. I don't know where they get all this stuff, but nothing could be further from the truth.

In Calgary-Egmont, Mr. Speaker, all 81 polls chose positive change. They chose to trust our leader and our two-part plan, which includes balancing the budget in four years and promoting the Alberta advantage. This government is staying the course that voters approved on June 15 with its pledge to balance the budget within four years. We can no longer borrow money just to provide Cadillac services in health care, social services, and education. The people of Calgary-Egmont don't want the best of everything; they just want affordable services and not at the expense of a deficit.

For many years rationalization and downsizing have been catchphrases in the private sector. Government has been slow in reducing its own waste and duplication. I remain confident that this government will make the necessary reductions in a compassionate and fair manner to Albertans and all provincial employees.

Another way that the budget will be balanced is by making sure we live within our means. To do so, we must use common sense and innovation. The fact that more than half this House is comprised of rookie members from all walks of life presents an opportunity to do things differently and to do things better. Even before the election, Mr. Speaker, this government among other things downsized the cabinet, cut ministers' salaries, consolidated many government departments, as well as eliminating the MLA pension plan. It consulted with Albertans in its budget roundtables.

9:00

Privatization is the realization that government has modified its way of thinking, realizing the private sector can do as good or an even better job than government. Privatization can increase the number of small businesses in the province. A strong fiscal plan and a healthy economic climate are essential to the province's success as it celebrates its centennial less than 12 years from now. We must promote the Alberta advantage to its fullest. The

province has some of the lowest taxes anywhere in this country, not to mention no provincial sales tax. Our first-rate universities and colleges have produced one of the most educated and talented work forces anywhere. We also have a good transportation and high-technology infrastructure and a clean environment. Combined with strong sectors in energy, agriculture, forestry, and tourism the opportunities for new and existing businesses in Alberta are abundant.

Mr. Speaker, this blueprint for economic development was based upon the views of Albertans through another consultative process called *Toward 2000 Together*. Future prosperity will depend on this government's ability to keep Alberta competitive and attractive to new business. The elimination of red tape and duplication of services provided by various levels of government and departments will make it easier to do business in the province. I want to emphasize that the only way we will be able to accomplish this government's ambitious program will be through continuous consultation with Albertans. For some time they've told us loud and clear that they want to be consulted more often and not just during election campaigns, and that's what this government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, I've looked for statesmanlike qualities in the Leader of the Opposition, and I find that I have to revert to a definition or an explanation that I heard recently. The difference between a politician and a statesman: a politician is someone who only is concerned about the next election; a statesman is concerned about the legacy he leaves the future generation. I now think I know why the Leader of the Opposition is a 68 percent leader and our leader is a statesman.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. We all like to be statesmen here, and we all think that in fact we'll come forth and be positive. You listened to some intelligent comments come forth from the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont. He starts off very positively, ends with a comment like: I know why a leader of the Liberals with only 68 percent of the support of his party is a politician and our leader is a statesman. I think if we go back and look at the record, the last time anybody ever had any sort of popularity poll for the hon. Premier, it was about 55 percent. So let's not lose sight of that.

Mr. Speaker, I stand up to speak in support of the amendment, of course, because as I walk through my constituency, the areas that I bump into and the people I bump into are just the exact opposite of what I am hearing today here. Every time I turn around, the lack of confidence in this government is brought to my attention, time and time again. I just want to do a quick review as to why this is in some cases. We have heard the side opposite hang their hats here on the major consultation. It's more correctly called the major charade of the decade; that's what it is. This implementation that started before we ever had any of the information gathered from the roundtable clearly proves that, and then the implementation of the actions does not reflect the input of the roundtable. So the major consultation is the major charade. Let's not lose sight of that. Does that instill confidence in Albertans? No, it doesn't, not for a second.

Let's look at one of the masterful jobs that the sitting government undertook here to instill confidence in the public. That was the privatization of ALCB, Mr. Speaker, more correctly called the ALCB fiasco, a study in how not to proceed. First we entice hardworking Albertans to put their life savings on the line to go into business, to capture the entrepreneurial spirit, supposedly, that

this government wants to see. Then we continue in business, as it was pointed out quite nicely by the Member for Edmonton-McClung the other day, and undercut their prices. We promise the food giants won't compete against them, because they know that that is not a very level playing field to start. Then we change our mind and draw them in. Then we change. That's not good enough. Let's build a wall. That'll change the matter, and that will make it better. Then we change our mind and decide they'd better wait. We'll wait till the fall before we put a whole bunch of mom-and-pop businesses out of business. Does that instill confidence? I suggest not.

Let's bring it into focus here a bit. I think the members from Calgary certainly are aware of this. Calgary-Fish Creek would be aware of it and Calgary-Currie. Calgary-Egmont, you've attended a couple of education meetings down there. You've watched the people. You've seen the parents speak. Are they confident with what the government is doing with education? I suggest not. When we look at a government that says that in fact we're going to make a provincewide mill rate to ensure that education equity is solved in this problem, and we have no idea exactly how that's going to work, does that instill confidence? No, it doesn't. I think this is the classic indication of failure of a government: when we are now going to take requisitioned moneys from a lesser government, the municipal governments. How are we going to do that? Methods of collection not yet determined. Is that confidence? Don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Let's talk about the gathering of power of this particular government here at the bureaucratic level. Let's talk about education a bit: the appointment of superintendents, Mr. Speaker. When we stop to consider that we've read some rather scathing reports of what this government has done in the way of appointing friends to the NovAtels and the Gainers and the MagCans and the Principal trusts, we realize exactly where we got with that particular exercise. One of the overriding reasons we ended up with such horrendous losses in this province is because in fact it was the result of appointing unqualified people who were friends of government to these very important positions. Now we're looking to appoint more friends as superintendents. If we could follow the example a wee bit — and we know that everybody is scrambling in this province right now in the uncertainty that has been created. We have superintendents that are running around handing out pink slips, transferring capital from operating into the capital funds because in fact they want to be on the right team. It doesn't matter what happens to education; they want to get the appointments. I mean, if we can't see that happening, we're naive. Does it instill confidence in the people of Alberta or the education process? It does not.

Let's have a look again at something that in fact this government has brought about, and I spoke very briefly of it. That was that requisition that they're going to take from municipal governments. Now, maybe we should be used to that, because this government, I would say, lifted \$300 million from the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation a couple of years ago, and we're about to repeat that exercise with the collection of taxes from the municipal levels. Mr. Speaker, it just will not instill confidence. It is not working. The confidence isn't there, and that's why I won't speak for the throne speech and I speak in favour of the amendment.

I think something that's extremely important to me, Mr. Speaker, is the seniors of this province. They built it. I have the utmost respect for them. Most of them endured more hardship



than we will ever see in our lifetime. We have floated about before us the trial balloons and the rumours one more time: privatization of seniors' lodges. Well, most of the people that have recently and still are tasting the privatization of the ALCB are of course very, very worried that we're going to have another one of those particular exercises take place. We have created a whole lot of uncertainty in our seniors. These are people in a lot of cases that really live on the bare minimum as far as their pensions are concerned. They do not have a lot of room for adjustment in their rents, and we are now putting them into a state of uncertainty. Uncertainty means we don't have any confidence. Those people are extremely important. Those people probably have kept this party in power far too long, but they are losing their confidence as well.

9:10

We're talking about fiscal responsibility here. Constantly we hear it, day in and day out, and I believe that we have to look for it. Do a \$50,000 TV fireside chat by the Premier and a \$40,000 one-hour ceremony here so we could all sit down and listen to the throne speech instill confidence in the people of this province? I suspect not, Mr. Speaker. I suspect not.

Now, the next privatization exercises that we are about to undertake here and are under way, Mr. Speaker, are the privatization of our provincial parks. I think this is absolutely, positively one of the poorest shows to the seniors that built this province. We can read articles that when in fact this government was really in dire straits, back in the '30s, they could find money for provincial parks. These are the very jewels of this province. These are in a lot of cases the only opportunity a lot of people have to get near the waters in this province. We're going to turn them over to private enterprise. Again we haven't seen a good privatization model come forth from the sitting government, so we should be concerned here. We should be very concerned. We have not explored how we're going to protect our provincial parks from being handed over to maybe another sweetheart deal like some of those in the Kananaskis area, to friends of the sitting government. We haven't determined how we're going to enter into this contract, hand it over. Who knows? How do we prevent that operator from extracting every dollar he can, leaving the park to fall into a state of disrepair, and walking away? What legal avenue will we have to recover? If it is as we did with the NovAtels and the MagCans, we will have empty pockets, and we will have provincial parks that we have pumped millions and millions of dollars into being destroyed. Does it instill confidence? I suggest not.

When we look at a six-year-old girl that was sexually abused, and abandoned by this government as a result of their very callous approach, does that instill confidence in this government? No, it doesn't, Mr. Speaker. It is a very large blight, the heartlessness that we are dealing with in the social services world today, and it really is a very shameful, shameful expression to the people of this province and doesn't instill confidence.

We're looking at impending changes to the Municipal Government Act. I have consulted some 70 different communities on this particular matter asking them to share their concerns with me, because the changes are forthcoming. Has this government consulted with them? I haven't been able to find one that says they've been asked for input, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't instill confidence. We see the provincial government grabbing money from them and cutting back money from them constantly. You can see that they're into a state of uncertainty as well.

It kind of makes the adage of the party, we care, we listen, somewhat hollow, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we care. We care if in

fact we're John Oldring and we get another six-month contract. So the political hacks are okay, and the patronage systems are okay, and the friends are going to be okay. Do we listen? I've heard several members on the opposite side say that we have nothing to do with New Zealand; it has nothing to do with what happened in New Zealand. Everything that is coming down through this Legislature today clearly is tied to Sir Roger Douglas. So they do listen. They do listen to at least one member. I was quite amused by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock the other day when he stood up in this House in this throne speech debate and indicated that in fact there was nothing to do with New Zealand, not at all, no connection whatsoever. Well, I think everybody sees through that charade.

I was amused by the Member for Lacombe-Stettler today when she indicated: horrors, the Liberals have made a radical change in their thinking; they want to reduce the number of MLAs. Well, let's just have a quick history lesson here, Mr. Speaker, about radical changes. We can follow the demigod Peter Lougheed through this Legislature and his spend, spend, spend. He goes. Along comes another team, Mr. Getty and company. A lot of these members in this House were part of it. The six or seven years of Getty reign really were wracked by what is happening. It seems to me there was a lack of intelligent surrounding or leading. We're not exactly sure. Now, we've all read a book by Sir Roger Douglas, and we've got all the ills of the political world in Alberta solved.

I stand here, and I listen to the side opposite say that we're the doom and the gloom group. Mr. Speaker, let's stop and have a look at that for a minute, because we're not the doom and the gloom. What we have here is the sky is falling party led by none other than Chicken Little. The sky is falling on us. We've got to do something. Now, how can that be when we have a double A credit rating? How can the sky be falling? We've a long ways to go before the sky falls, and the approach to the whole thing is: don't blink. Well, when you're proceeding with your eyes closed, that is no great challenge or accomplishment.

It really is fear mongering that we're dealing with here. We've made some serious attempts at bringing forth positive long-term plans for reduction of expenditures, and we did that today in Bill 201. Well, horrors, this was an untoward Bill that the Liberals have plotted that certainly is going to undermine the Conservative Party. Little did we look at the balance, and many members on the side opposite spoke about Edmonton. Yes, we proceed with courage because we know Edmonton's going to lose some seats. But it was a long-term plan for efficiency. It got voted down. Does that instill confidence in Albertans? I suggest not. I suggest not, Mr. Speaker.

We look at the fact that when we're dealing with our daily duties – and there was a concern coming forth from the side opposite again. Hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, you spoke at length about your very onerous task, about all of those people that you had to deal with, all of those communities you had to deal with, how it took you an hour to get from one end to the other. Well, if we're into one-upmanship, I have the nine councils to deal with in Leduc and I have the five school boards and I have two counties and I have one city. I have four towns, five counting Calmar. We're talking about efficiency. I'm still on track here, Mr. Speaker. Calmar's not even in my constituency. We have three villages, and I have one of the most diverse agricultural districts in all of Alberta. I think I can cover it quite nicely, and I would expand it, because I'm doing that right now anyway. I'm taking the complaints from the Drayton Valley-Calmar constituency. I'm getting calls from as far away as Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. So does that tell me that we're into a vote of confidence here for

this government? I suspect not. We're not even getting close to confidence as far as I'm concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really excited here. Some people really think that when you heckle people, you upset them, but the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat actually brings back great memories to me when he heckles. I was fortunate just this last October to celebrate my 25th wedding anniversary with my wife. Part of that little celebration was a flight over the Grand Canyon. It was just a large cavernous opening in the face of the earth. Now, every time I hear from Cypress-Medicine Hat, it reminds me of that trip, and I'm really pleased he keeps bringing back these very warm feelings to me. I owe him a large gratitude of thanks there.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

MR. SOHAL: A point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, you have a point of order.

MR. SOHAL: Citation 459, relevance and repetition. It has nothing to do with that amendment, sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Relevance has been often on our minds as we listened to various members speak. However, the practice of the House in terms of the Speech from the Throne and indeed the amendment to the Speech from the Throne has been rather wide-ranging, and I don't know that the hon. Member for Leduc has ranged beyond that breadth. [interjections] I don't presume you're arguing with the Chair, so I would invite the member to continue.

#### **9:20 Debate Continued**

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I appreciate it because the hon. Member for Stony Plain reminded me about some lack of confidence as well. He referred to that, and we're talking about confidence, and we're talking about efficiencies, fiscal responsibilities, fiscal good planning and management. We were looking at that. We were looking at reducing costs by reducing the number of MLAs, and I can recall the hon. Member for Stony Plain standing up and saying: political exercise optics. Optics, Mr. Speaker. I thought to myself at that time: optics, political opportunity? Who can forget where this hon. member started? In the NDP camp, I believe. He came over and knocked on the Liberal door and said: "There's a contest. I want to compete."

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. There is one thing that I want to be quite clear on. I do not find . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you want to wait until you're recognized?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Pardon me?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you care to wait until you're recognized?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. government Whip has risen on a point of order, and would he share with us the citation?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Standing Order 23(i), unavowed motives and whatnot. What I want to address here is an absolute falsehood, an absolute falsehood, and I would expect the member to retract that, because although on a very confidential basis there were conversations, at no time did I ever make overtures to join the Liberal Party. The member may if he wishes, the member may if he chooses go into levity in this House with respect to where I've been in the past, whether I started as a Tory and went to the New Democrats and came back here. However, when he brings forth a falsehood, I would like him to either be prepared to substantiate that, because that is getting personal, or else have the dignity to withdraw it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the hon. Member for Leduc may wish to look at this one as well. Hon. members, 494 is: Acceptance of the Word of a Member. Since this is a very personal matter

it has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

So in that sense your point is upheld.

Hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Certainly if I was intruding into personal area and territory, it was not my intention. Obviously, we're dealing with a matter of interpretation. At this particular point, the hon. member is somewhat hurt that I should make that allegation. I accept the hon. member's word that in fact that's not the case, and I accept the fact that he's not a Liberal today.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, I had tried to stay on topic here with efficiencies and the reasons why in fact I was speaking in support of the amendment. I deemed this party that sits opposite here, the falling sky party – I think it's very, very clear that that is the case. That sky is falling party has justified the butchering of our health care system and our education system and has been very callous in the treatment of our social service recipients and our underprivileged citizens under the justification that we're in dire straits. I indicated that I did not think we were, because we're into a triple A rating at this particular point.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to close. I thought we brought a positive initiative to this Assembly this afternoon. Obviously, that wasn't the case. I would like to think that. In fact, I listened to the speeches very clearly. I think the members opposite realize I'm not one to interrupt when they're speaking, because I am listening. I prefer to hear what they say. My response to the throne speech tonight certainly took a little bit of a caustic and perhaps a little bit of an acrimonious turn. That is because I've sat here all day looking for the statesmen and looking for the positives that we're so often accused of not giving. This really becomes a contest of insulting one another constantly. I would ask all members to go back to what we negotiated at the beginning of this legislative sitting. That's some co-operation. Find in your hearts some of the positive aspects that in fact you expect from this side. I think the old adage that there's one thing you cannot give away and that is kindness, because it will return every time – if we all move along

that line, we will have a Legislative Assembly that finally works for the people of Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I hope that none of my statements are inflammatory or offensive. I must say that when I read this document, this throne speech, I have a vision of a different kind of throne. I'm going to go through some of these parts part by part, sentence by sentence, some of the things that caught my eye.

First, I must comment on the Member for Calgary-Egmont, who commented this evening about us making the statement that Catholics are under siege and there's no such thing happening. I remember being at a meeting at Lord Beaverbrook last week where members of our party were at the front and he was at the back skulking around trying to not be noticed. Then I remember another meeting at St. Philip's school, where it was attended by the Member for Calgary-Egmont and actually the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek as well. If they'd had some rope, they might have hung somebody there.

AN HON. MEMBER: A Liberal.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Yeah? Well, I don't think it was a Liberal, not at that meeting.

#### Point of Order Relevance

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, you have a point of order. Would you give us the citation, please?

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Speaker, please. I was at the meeting at St. Phillip's. I mean, let's get down to business and forget the trivial. . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you have a citation?

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. *Beauchesne* 428(a). Maybe the member could keep on the subject and stop the ridiculous satire. Thank you.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Mr. Speaker, I guess I fail to see the point of the citation in relevancy.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Your point, Calgary-West, is well taken. Section 428, hon. member, is a part of the written questions, and I did not see any written question being put forward, as tempting as that might be. I don't find a point of order.

Calgary-West, would you continue?

#### Debate Continued

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Yes. I guess quite simply I just wanted to make the point about Catholics under siege, and I just thought I'd reply to a point made earlier.

Another thing that I keep hearing is that our party keeps talking about doom and gloom, and we should be looking at the bright side of things, and we should be looking at all the good things that are coming out of all these budget cuts and people getting shipped off to British Columbia. Things are just very cheerful. The air is very warm and gives you a good fuzzy feeling.

Anyway, I'd like to move on to specific references in the Speech from the Throne. I'll refer to it as a throne speech, if I

might. One of the quotes in here says, "Since then, we have [had] a lot of healthy discussion and debate about where we are heading as a province." Mr. Speaker, I think that's part of the problem that Albertans are having now. They don't know where we're heading. There is no business plan. I know they're coming; they're coming. So is the Second Coming of Christ. Part of the problem is that we don't know what this government has in mind.

There's talk here about listening to Albertans. Well, the last two weeks I've spent time going to these education gatherings, and there's been no indication to me that this government is listening to Albertans from the questions being asked at those meetings. I think that possibly we need to sit back and say: well, what is it that they're listening to?

9:30

I go on to talking about the part about balancing the budget. This province finds itself in a near insolvent situation. The government talks about: "Well, we've got to cut the deficit. I mean, don't you guys understand that? We've got to cut the deficit." I submit, Mr. Speaker, that it was only until the bonding agencies literally hit the government over the head that they realized that we had a debt problem. It was back in '88-89 when our leader who preaches doom and gloom was saying that you can't spend more than you take in, and the then Treasurer at that time scoffed at his comments and said: well, you don't know what you're talking about. If you don't believe it, have a look at *Hansard*. So finally we realize that we've got a deficit problem. I should back up a second. The fact that the government hadn't realized this was evidenced in the Premier's comments sometime shortly after he was elected leader of his party, when he said: the deficit is manageable; there's no problem. But now we finally do realize that we've got a problem.

So if I reflect on my experience, my prior life, as it was referred to today, when companies get into problems, financial difficulties, to get out of those financial difficulties, they usually have two solutions. They're put into receivership, or they try to work their way out of that problem. That's what we're trying to do. We're trying to work our way out of that problem. Almost invariably working your way out of that problem requires a change of management, because the old management, the management that caused that problem, can't see, is unwilling to let go of the old ways that got them into that problem. We keep saying it, but it just doesn't seem to sink in. We're not in favour of raising taxes either. We think it's a spending problem as well. The issue is: how do you cut the spending? [interjections] I take great delight in the fact, Mr. Speaker, that they've awakened.

Anyway, we move along and we see here – I have a curious question. I'm not sure if this is going to lead to anything. We've got here what's called a hot lead or hot lead investor program, and I'm curious to know what that is. It could have a dual meaning.

One of things that I must compliment this government on – there is a compliment coming, a true compliment, and unfortunately the person that deserves it isn't here – is the section dealing with the energy sector. I think some of the changes outlined in there are good changes, Mr. Speaker. I think consolidating the ERCB and the Public Utilities Board is a good move. I think it's accepted by the industry. I know that it's accepted by the industry. I think there are going to be some problems, but these things don't happen without problems. I would hope that the hon. Energy minister would listen to some of the suggestions that are being made out there, and I know that there are suggestions being made for putting those two boards together.

Consolidating AOSTRA and Alberta Oil Sands Equity and APMC into the Department of Energy also I believe is a good

move. Consolidating many of these agencies is something that our party advocated during the last election. In addition, paying the Crown's royalty share in cash I think is a good move as well. I don't know why we ever had that other system, but once again I think it's a positive step, and I think it's one the industry accepts as well. So that's the complimentary section.

I still fail to see how the government can say: 35,400 jobs. Sticking to that tract makes me suspicious of other statements. I mean, I find that to be distorted, but that's their line, and they're going to stick to it, so I guess we can't change that.

The thing that probably perplexes me the most is the restructuring that this government proposes for education, the appointment of superintendents and the pooling of the funding. The throne speech says here, "change the way education is funded." Once again Albertans are not certain where this government is headed with that strategy. I think Albertans, particularly in Calgary, are speaking out against this move, but I don't hear this government listening. I think it's important to listen, important to explain why they're doing this, where we are going, rather than just forging ahead.

The appointment of superintendents in my mind is a bad move. I don't care whether you have a Liberal government or a Tory government or, heaven forbid, an NDP government. The appointment of superintendents by the government will be subject to political manipulation, patronage, and I think the government should rethink that strategy. Now, I understand that there are attempts to come off of that position, that they're not going to appoint superintendents without school boards' approval and all that sort of stuff. You know, the people that I've spoken to have said: "The old system worked just fine. Why are we changing it? What's the agenda?"

Moving into the section about public servants, the government will endeavour to continue to provide a fair severance program, counseling, and training for employees.

Well, we've had a number of questions in the last several days about that. I ask: what about ALCB? That ALCB is quite quickly turning out to be the NovAtel of privatization.

MR. GERMAIN: They won't lose as much.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Fortunately, yes. We won't lose as many dollars. We're not sure how many dollars we're going to lose, which is a whole other problem.

We have: Safeway is going to have some liquor stores; they're not going to have some liquor stores; now they're not going to have any liquor stores for two years, but they're telling people, "Well, we'll probably be in there in a year." What kind of deal has been cut there? Albertans aren't going to be fooled by that. I think we're going to have to dub this episode the booze blues or something like that.

Then the government says in the throne speech: "The government will work closely with its federal counterpart." Well, from what I've seen, from what I've heard from the federal counterparts, they've done anything but work closely with them. We're off to a poor start in that regard.

"All legislative activity will reflect the view of government as a service, with the focus on Albertans as customers." Well, that's an interesting statement. I always thought the customer was always right, and if the customers say that they don't want appointment of superintendents, they don't want their funds pooled centrally, the government should maybe listen to the customers. I don't think that's going to happen.

9:40

Now, this is an interesting one: access to information and protection of privacy Act. "The new Act will ensure a free flow of government information." Well, I wait for this one with bated breath. I read today in the papers – and I know members opposite don't believe what they read in the papers unless it's opportune – that maybe now this freedom of information Act isn't going to come through.

Then I go a little bit further down into education; once again, back to education. It says: "to reduce the number of school boards," which is, I think, something that we agreed with, "and shift decision-making to schools, communities, and parents." I read that statement, and every time I read it, I think I've read it wrong. We're going to "shift decision-making to schools, communities, and parents," but we'll appoint your superintendents, and the Premier says, well, the trustees probably aren't going to be of any more value. But this statement says we're going to "shift decision-making to schools, communities, and parents." [interjections] Yeah. I would say they're speaking with forked tongues, all right.

Then I go a little bit further down, and this one really makes me chuckle.

School boards will be asked to prepare three-year business plans and will report publicly on salaries and administrative costs. Well, as the Premier said, trustees probably won't have much of a role.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

DR. L. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has called a point of order. Would you care to give us the citation?

DR. L. TAYLOR: Do I stand up or sit down? Because you're standing.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can stand up and I'll sit down.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Standing Order 23(i), *Beauchesne* 484(3), imputing false or unavowed motives. He's accusing us of speaking with a forked tongue. I think certainly that's imputing motives.

I would also cite *Beauchesne* 490, parliamentary terms. "Forked tongue" is not a parliamentary term. It's another word for lying. Standing Order 23, sub judice . . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member is reminded that a point of order is a serious matter, and that we don't really have a hayrack clause in any of the ones where you can throw anything into it. If you're talking about someone saying that you personally have a forked tongue or a specific hon. member is speaking with a forked tongue, that's one matter. If one is just saying in general that some people speak with forked tongues, that's quite another matter and isn't a true point of order.

The hon. member perhaps could help the Chair. Did you refer to a specific individual, Calgary-West, or identify anyone who speaks with a forked tongue?

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Mr. Speaker, I would never do that. I was just repeating a word that had come across from the floor. I thought I was being accused of speaking with a forked tongue. So

I would never do anything like that. Nobody on this side would ever do anything like that.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the Chair has worked on the issue enough, that no such characterization was intended to any specific member. Furthermore, rather liberal assurances have been given that no one from that side would do such a thing, and *Beauchesne* 494 then comes into play, that we must take the word of the member.

Hon. Member for Calgary-West, if you'd care to continue. I'm sorry, Calgary-West. We appear to have Redwater.

Hon. Member for Redwater, are you going to add to this point of order?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I wanted to speak on this. Actually, unless we get a precedent established – the former Speaker from Calgary-Egmont many years ago quite often made a ruling that then became a precedent down the road. I think to accuse someone of speaking in a forked tongue is not unparliamentary. With limited knowledge and reading the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat took it as meaning lying, but it can mean dissembling. It can mean stretching the facts. It can mean being smooth, like our hon. member is at times. It can mean all kinds of things, but it is not unparliamentary to say somebody speaks with a forked tongue.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member, for bringing that to our attention. The Chair indicated this afternoon that a word in itself is not unparliamentary; it's the context that it's given in and perhaps even the tenor of the debate, the demeanour of the individual uttering the word or words, makeup. I didn't get any such feeling from the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

So, Calgary-West, if you would continue.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Nice try. Mr. Speaker, members opposite are in such a foul mood that if someone introduced the 10 commandments, they'd try to cut them down to eight.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

#### Debate Continued

MR. DALLA-LONGA: I'm almost finished. [interjections] Well, on second thought. . . Anyway, I was talking about the school boards being asked to prepare a three-year business plan, and I find that somewhat humorous. I mean, we're going to have a school board that has literally no control over its funding, that has no authority, the chief operating officer of which is appointed by the government and will answer to the government, and the school boards are being asked to prepare a business plan as to what they're going to do, but the government's going to do it all to them. I fail to see the purpose of going through this exercise. I think we're in a business plan binge here.

As I go through the rest of this, I think I'll conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

MR. FRIEDEL: Mr. Speaker, all the rhetoric that we've been listening to during the last hour has rather encouraged me to get up and speak against the amendment, but given the hour, I would like to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River has moved that the debate be now adjourned. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

[At 9:50 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

