

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, 27 February, 1987.

Time — 10:00 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER by Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER, Hon. M. Phillips: Presenting Petitions . . . Reading and Receiving Petitions . . . Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees . . .

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Urban Affairs.

HON. G. DOER: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the report strengthening local government in Winnipeg, proposals for changes to The City of Winnipeg Act.

MADAM SPEAKER: Notices of Motion . . . Introduction of Bills . . .

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MADAM SPEAKER: Before we reach Oral Questions, may I draw the attention of honourable members to the gallery where we have 20 students of Grades 8 and 9 from the D.R. Hamilton School. The students are under the direction of Mr. Orest Dykun and the school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Minister for Northern Affairs.

On behalf of all the members, we welcome you to the Legislature this morning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Throne Speech '86 - hydro agreements

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. G. FILMON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Last February 14, the Premier announced three new hydro-electric sales agreements had been reached to sell \$4.3 billion in firm power to U.S. utilities. This arrangement was confirmed in last year's Throne Speech, and I'll quote from the Throne Speech. It said: "The planned and orderly development of our natural resources has resulted in three more export agreements with six utilities operating in the United States." Those sales do not appear to have materialized and they are not referred to in this year's Throne Speech.

My question to the Premier is: are these arrangements now abandoned?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable First Minister.

HON. H. PAWLEY: Madam Speaker, certainly the arrangements are not abandoned. There is continuing

work proceeding in respect to those discussions and negotiations that are under way.

MR. G. FILMON: Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that last year's Throne Speech said, "has resulted" - the ". . . orderly development of our natural resources has resulted in three more export agreements with six utilities operating in the United States." - can we believe a Throne Speech when it presents anything to this House?

HON. H. PAWLEY: Madam Speaker, we're very, very anxious - as I know all Manitobans are - to ensure that the Hydro agreements are consummated and are put into place that will ensure the sale of hydro and renewable energy from the Province of Manitoba in order to accrue benefits to Manitobans as a whole.

This government, despite concerns that have been expressed in some quarters, and opposition that has also been expressed in some quarters of the Province of Manitoba, remains committed; and my Minister of Energy responsible for Hydro, and his officials, have been working tirelessly in order to ensure that those agreements are finalized from legal and every other respect. I believe, Madam Speaker, that we have reason to be quite positive insofar as the final realization of those agreements.

MR. G. FILMON: Madam Speaker, we're not talking about whether or not the Premier is positive; we're talking about a Throne Speech commitment that said that the agreements had been arrived at. It was in the Throne Speech; the Throne Speech presented the plan of action for the coming Session and the coming year.

My question to the Premier is: can we believe a Throne Speech, when it's written by this government, and it obviously isn't able to fulfill the promise?

HON. H. PAWLEY: Madam Speaker, insofar as believing this government in a Throne Speech, the people of the Province of Manitoba have demonstrated clearly, on four different occasions since 1969, including as recently as less than a year ago, that they have full confidence in the prudence, in the wisdom, the integrity of this government. I believe there have been some recent indications, Madam Speaker, without going into any detail, that the people of the Province of Manitoba support this government even more so than they did a year ago.

Rural Road Development Fund

MR. G. FILMON: Madam Speaker, last March this NDP Government promised a rural road development fund. Now that fund has not been announced, despite the fact it was promised a year ago; and in fact road building budgets were slashed in last year's Estimates, and in fact LGD's in this province were being told that they no longer would get 50-50 cost-sharing for their road maintenance and building budgets by this administration, just during the past few months.

My question to the Premier is: is this another NDP broken promise?

HON. H. PAWLEY: Madam Speaker, let me just ensure that the Leader of the Opposition is aware that he's not referring to a Conservative Government when he make reference to broken promises. This is a New Democratic Party Government that works earnestly and in a committed way to ensure that commitments are fulfilled.

I believe that our record in that respect has been very substantial, has been very well received by the people of the Province of Manitoba, whether it pertains to the jobs and the creation of jobs, working in order to ensure the maintenance and improvement of critically needed vital services; whether we're referring to agriculture and the rural communities; and also, Madam Speaker, insofar as the road program, I know the Minister of Highways is very anxious to detail for honourable members his Highways budget for the upcoming year.

I think the Leader of the Opposition, rather than being premature - I know the Leader of the Opposition, being a reasonable person, doesn't wish to be premature - he should await the Estimates presentation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. G. FILMON: Madam Speaker, I know full well which government made those promises and which government broke those promises.

Agriculture - Crisis Situation

MR. G. FILMON: Madam Speaker, a further question to the Premier is the Throne Speech acknowledges that agriculture is facing a crisis situation in Manitoba; in fact, it refers to it as the challenge for Manitoba in the future. Yet it offers only a vague promise of initiatives within the competence and jurisdiction of this government.

I want the Premier to tell the people of Manitoba, particularly the farmers who are in great concern: do these initiatives include the removal of all or a portion of the education cost of farmland in Manitoba?

HON. H. PAWLEY: Madam Speaker, I believe the Minister of Finance will be making an announcement possibly today as to the date of the Budget, and the Budget certainly will deal with some of the questions that the Leader of the Opposition properly wants answered, but the Budget is the most appropriate time. I'm sure the Minister of Finance probably even now would like to indicate to the House the date of the upcoming Budget.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Virden.

MR. G. FINDLAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Manitoba family farms are facing a very serious crisis in 1987. Agriculture Canada has already predicted a 21.3 percent decline in net realized income for Manitoba farmers in 1987, whereas Saskatchewan will see a 33 percent increase.

Madam Speaker, I would like the Minister of Agriculture to inform the House of what plans he has to offset this serious drop in net realized income for Manitoba family farms.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. B. URUSKI: Madam Speaker, first of all, I am not prepared to accept the statistics of my honourable friend, but I certainly will want to look at those statistics very closely.

I want to say that it's about time that the Conservative members of this House realized that there was a crisis in agriculture, Madam Speaker. It's the first time in six years that we've heard the members opposite realize that there is a crisis in agriculture.

Madam Speaker, this government . . .

A MEMBER: You weren't even here for the speech yesterday.

HON. B. URUSKI: Madam Speaker, the honourable members don't wish to hear the leadership role that this government has played over the last number of years; a leadership role in fighting the Federal Government interest rate policy, a leadership role fighting the Federal Government. Madam Speaker, they don't like to hear that patenting laws in the Federal Government are going to cost senior citizens millions of dollars, are costing farmers of this country hundreds of millions of dollars.

Madam Speaker, it took a leadership role in bringing about panels to deal with the crisis in agriculture in trying to negotiate settlements; panels which they are now saying aren't working and wanted our stronger legislation to be taken away and put aside and then called for a moratorium on provincial debt, Madam Speaker. Now they come up and say there is a crisis in agriculture, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased that honourable members are now acknowledging that there is a crisis in agriculture.

MADAM SPEAKER: May I remind honourable members that answers to questions should be brief and not provoke debate.

The Honourable Member for Virden.

MR. G. FINDLAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The credit crunch for many farmers, hundreds and hundreds of family farms, comes in April. Is the Minister prepared to allow these farmers to fail and thousands and thousands of acres to be vacant in '87?

HON. B. URUSKI: Madam Speaker, we realize that the credit crunch was here four years ago. We did something about it in the last few years. We brought in the operating loan guarantee . . . (Inaudible) . . . unlike the recommendations of 10 Ministers of Agriculture in this country were made to the Federal Minister of Agriculture and were turned down for a complementary operating loan guarantee program. We have just extended that program for an additional two years.

Madam Speaker, members opposite expect that a province of the size of Manitoba should in fact carry

the burden for the size of agriculture that it is to our economy. Madam Speaker, the moment that grain prices dropped \$30 a tonne, the hundreds of millions of dollars that this province has put into agriculture were wiped away by actions of their cousins in Ottawa, but they have to stand here in this House and defend those decisions, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: May I remind honourable members once again that answers should be brief.
The Honourable Member for Virden.

MR. G. FINDLAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.
Since the Minister will not listen to our pleas from the farmers, will he call the Agriculture Committee into session immediately so the farmers themselves can express their concerns to this Minister, this government, and that Cabinet?

HON. B. URUSKI: Madam Speaker, I am meeting with the farmers and representatives on an ongoing basis. In fact, Madam Speaker, as early as two weeks ago, or three, I was in the member's own constituency and had a public meeting in the community of Angusville.-(Interjection)- Oh, I'm sorry, it was the Member for Roblin-Russell, in his constituency - very close to your area. I'm sure there were farmers from your area at that meeting as well, and we did have a meeting.

Madam Speaker, I will be pleased to have my Estimates be one of the first in front of the House, if members opposite want our Estimates in front of the House, as soon as they're ready.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Churchill Housing Authority - rent increases

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for River Heights.

MRS. S. CARSTAIRS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Housing.

In July of 1986, the Minister sent a letter to the Secretary-Treasurer of the School District of Churchill stating that she didn't anticipate any policy change with regard to the rental of units for nurses and teachers under the Churchill Housing Authority, but that she did anticipate that perhaps there would be rent increases. In September, there were rent increases, and in December, teachers and nurses received eviction notices.

Why did this government go through the charade of raising rents only to evict the tenants within a matter of a very short month?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Housing.

HON. M. HEMPHILL: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to let the member opposite know the reasons that we have served eviction notices to the teachers and the nurses in the Churchill Housing Authority.

When that housing was established, the purpose was to provide housing in Churchill for low-income tenants,

and that was why it was built and that's what it is there for. What we tried to do was try to help out during a time when there was a lot of difficulty because there was no other additional accommodation for the teachers or the nurses. So we said that during that period when there was no other private accommodation available in Churchill - in other words, no private accommodation and no alternative housing for them to have - that we would allow them to use the public housing during that period.

Since that time, there have been some changes. One of the changes is that there is now private sector housing available. We cannot, nor will CMHC allow us, to continue to provide subsidized housing that was designed and built for low-income people and provide it to teachers and nurses who are professional.

Madam Speaker, they now have alternative housing; we served notice to the school board in September that we would be evicting the teachers in order to provide housing for low-income residents.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please.
The Honourable Member for River Heights with a supplementary.

MRS. S. CARSTAIRS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.
Can the Minister explain why then in 1974, when the housing was built, 20 units were built in consultation with the school board so that it would be appropriate housing for teachers and nurses?

HON. M. HEMPHILL: Madam Speaker, I think I just explained that point, that we were doing everything we could at the time.

Madam Speaker, we know that in a remote community, having appropriate accommodation and housing for professionals, for teachers, for nurses, so that they can provide proper education and proper health care is very important. When we found out they were in difficulty, we said that Manitoba Department of Housing would try to help by accommodating and making available housing that was available through no other sources. However, that has changed and there is now private sector housing available. So we are having to indicate that they will have to use the private sector housing and make the housing that is there available for the low-income people who are on the waiting list and who also now, Madam Speaker, have no alternative housing.

SOME HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for River Heights.

MRS. S. CARSTAIRS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.
Would the Minister explain why, if this government is so concerned about the need for low-income housing in Churchill, they provided the loans to build the expensive apartment block for an NDP party supporter?

HON. M. HEMPHILL: When 90 or 95 percent of the housing in a remote community is housing that is owned and provided for by the public sector, you have a very unhealthy situation. We established a policy a couple

of years ago that we wanted private sector housing in our northern and remote communities - and I should hope they would want it too because that's what we're going to need to keep those communities alive. So we established a program, Madam Speaker, called the RentalStart Program and its purpose is to provide funding throughout the province to encourage people to provide private sector housing in areas where they might otherwise not do it. That has been a very successful program. Madam Speaker, it has not only provided housing there up North, but in several other areas, and I might say to the members opposite that there are many Conservatives who have applied for and benefited from this program, too.

Winnipeg Tax Assessment - appeal of

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Charleswood.

MR. J. ERNST: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Reassessment in the City of Winnipeg is a paramount issue in the minds of every Winnipegger owning real property. There is a great deal of confusion and concern, Madam Speaker, over the fact that there is limited ability to appeal that assessment before they know what their 1987 taxes are going to be. It is causing great concern also to the people of Winnipeg.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: can the Minister advise the House if he has been monitoring this assessment process with regard to those appeals?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I will concur with the member the fact there is concern about the reassessment process - and while there should be - when assessments have not been carried out fully for the past 25 years. I will indicate that there has not been any hue and cry from the public to our office about the 21-day period that's allowed for appeal after the Notice of Assessment has been received. The advice that we have been providing is that the current legislation does provide for an appeal to be made within that period. If a person, he or she, has concerns about the assessment could well make that appeal. If, at a later date, the individual no longer has that concern, the appeal need not proceed. However, as insurance, I do believe the 21 days that is being allowed to consider the matter should be sufficient.

MR. J. ERNST: Madam Speaker, has the Minister been involved in the issuing of assessment notices - that is, one community receiving it and having the appeal period expire before another community receives their particular notice - has the Minister been involved in that practice?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: The matter of reassessment and the scheduling of the issuance of the assessment notices is entirely within the responsibility of the City of Winnipeg, and I certainly was not involved in the approval of the issuance of the notices. It's not our responsibility.

MR. J. ERNST: Madam Speaker, then in the cases of the answers given by the Honourable Minister, will he now be bringing in legislation to allow retroactively for appeals to take place, once people have received their 1987 realty tax notice, and then know what kind of impact that reassessment is going to have on their homes, the only real investment many, many people have?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: As the member is aware, the City of Winnipeg has held a number of public meetings at which time they have made every effort to explain the reassessment process and the meaning of the reassessment notices.

As I indicated, there has been no particular demand that I'm aware of to our office to consider having some sort of retroactive legislation which would allow for a longer period in which to appeal. Those property holders in Winnipeg who have concerns should appeal immediately after receiving their notices and if, at a later date, they feel there is no longer a concern, then they can withdraw that appeal.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Charleswood with a final supplementary.

MR. J. ERNST: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Is the Minister prepared to look at the question of this retroactive appeal process, because at every single meeting that has been held in the City of Winnipeg with regard to assessment, that has been the primary question.

The question is: what are my taxes going to be once the impact of reassessment? They need that extra appeal period in order to allow them to understand that impact.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: I would hope that the City of Winnipeg is doing its best to explain the meaning of the reassessment.

I would suggest it is their responsibility to do so, not the Minister of Municipal Affairs or the Minister of Urban Affairs. If we were to wait until the property owners of Winnipeg received their tax notices, then would the member be asking us to establish some further appeal date?

I do believe the current provision is sufficient for Winnipeg property owners to protect their interest by filing, and then, if at a later date no longer seeing a need for the appeal, withdrawing that application.

Federal Budget - impact on Manitoba Budget

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. M. DOLIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance.

In light of the recent "popcorn budget" presented by the Federal Government, I'm wondering if the Minister of Finance could inform the House as to what effect this is having on his planning for the Budget for the Province of Manitoba and perhaps give us further information when this is to be given to the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the member for his question.

I, along with most other Manitobans, was disappointed at what took place with respect to the federal budget. We had hoped that the Federal Government would have . . . (Inaudible) . . . and other provinces in Canada have indicated that there was a need for a relook at support to provinces through such things as equalization and help in the area of health and post-secondary education.

In regard to our own situation, Madam Speaker, in response to the question, I have spent a lot of time consulting with Manitobans throughout the province with respect to how they perceive the needs of Manitobans, how they perceive the expenditures and the budget of the province, and they have indicated very clearly that they are prepared that we continue to maintain special services in the province, such as health, education and social services, and continue to provide the kind of support that's needed for our agricultural community.

I can inform the member and all members that the Budget will be brought down on March 16 at 8:00 p.m.

Delayed tax reforms measures

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Kildonan with a supplementary.

MR. M. DOLIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My supplementary is also to the Minister of Finance. Has there been consultation between the Minister of Finance of the Province of Manitoba and the Federal Government regarding the delayed tax reform measures proposed by the Federal Government?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: There has been the start of discussions with the Federal Government with respect to tax reform. Unfortunately, just prior to the federal Budget, a meeting that was previously arranged was cancelled and we are concerned that they have not made any clear indication that they are going to bring the kind of reform that Canadians want. In fact, one analyzes, as have a number of organizations like the National Council on Welfare, groups that have analyzed federal tax action in the last number of years, you'll find that the opposite has been true, that the reform has been going in the wrong direction at the expense of low-income Canadians, to the benefit of businesses and high-income earners in this country. So I would hope that we can get on with the federal-provincial cooperation and deal with the real needs for income tax reform so that the system is based on fairness and the ability to pay.

MR. M. DOLIN: A final supplementary, Madam Speaker, also to the Minister of Finance. Will the Minister of Finance be informing his federal counterpart of the position of the Province of Manitoba regarding fairness and equity in the tax system as he recently outlined?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: We will continue to keep the Federal Government informed as to the position of

Manitoba with respect to tax reform and the need for fairness based on the ability to pay. We did table and did speak to the issue when the First Ministers and our Premiers spoke on the urgent need for this. We are pleased because this is something that our party here in Manitoba, our government, has been indicating on a number of occasions over the past five years that there is need for comprehensive reform. So we are pleased at least that the Federal Government has acknowledged that need and we would hope they would get on with it and bring in an income tax system that is fair to Canadians.

Falcon Beach School closure

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Springfield.

MR. G. ROCH: My question is to the Minister of Education.

In view of the fact that in yesterday's Throne Speech the government will, and I quote, "continue to support and expand programs which improve access to educational opportunities for all Manitobans, and increase equity in the public school system," will the Minister reconsider his decision to close down the Falcon Beach School and assure this House it will provide the necessary resources so that it remains viably open?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Education.

HON. J. STORIE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think perhaps the member has made some assumptions about the results of a process that has been announced. Discussions have been and are under way in terms of the Falcon Beach School situation; it is quite unique and I expect that over the next several months and perhaps a year, those discussions will lead to a conclusion either to continue with the Falcon Beach School operation or to have the children who are educated in that school receive educational services from some other jurisdiction.

There has been no final decision and I am certain that the member will be able to make his views on that matter known, as will the local residents and the people affected by such action if it were to be taken.

MR. G. ROCH: Madam Speaker, notice was given, the 20 months notice was given on February 23. Is that not an indication that a government intends to close down this school? If not, how is the process being undertaken?

HON. J. STORIE: Madam Speaker, yes, the notice of intention was filed. There is an obligation obviously to the community residents, to the people who are affected to give them an opportunity to understand the current situation, to look at options and to come to some conclusion about the necessity, the advisability, the feasibility of maintaining that particular school. It is a process that is followed by school divisions throughout the province, and in this case is being followed by the Department of Education, this Falcon Beach School is

the only school in Manitoba that's operated directly by the Department of Education. It's a process that I think has worked satisfactorily in many other cases and I am sure will work in this case as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Springfield with a final supplementary.

MR. G. ROCH: Madam Speaker, as the Minister well knows, those residents that live year round there need that school in order to remain in that community. Can the Minister assure those residents that they will have parental input as committees do in normal school divisions when they reduce schools, rather than one single departmental bureaucrat?

HON. J. STORIE: Madam Speaker, as the member has already indicated, information has already been communicated to the parents of students in Falcon Beach School. Obviously they are going to have input.

Budget - increased taxation

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Morris.

MR. C. MANNES: Madam Speaker, in answer to an earlier question, the Minister of Finance indicated he was concerned about cooperation and tax reform, and he also made reference to his pre-budget consultations with the Chambers of Commerce and other groups within the province.

Madam Speaker, the Minister laid before those groups a pre-Budget consultation list, a measure of all taxations that are in existence now and that will be considered in the development of the Budget by the province.

My question to the Minister of Finance: will the forced views of all the people that came to be in attendance at those consultative meetings, will they be taken into account and used as the rationale and the support for the increases in taxations that the Premier has indicated to Manitobans that they can expect once the Budget comes down?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I know not of what the member speaks when he talks about forced views of people that were invited to participate and to make their views known with respect to matters related to the finances of the Province of Manitoba. We have consulted extensively with Manitobans, with representatives of various organizations to get their views on areas related to government expenditures, to government services, to government mechanisms for raising revenue and that's been done on two separate occasions this past fall and winter.

We have and will take into account the views that are expressed to us. The views in some areas are contradictory, some groups want more spending in some areas, others have suggested that there should be reduced spending. But the majority of people that

we have consulted with have indicated to us that they want to have their basic services maintained in the province, the basic services of health, education, social services and support for agriculture and it's our intention to work with those Manitobans to meet those needs.

MR. C. MANNES: Madam Speaker, given that answer, and given the fact that people that were asked to come were provided with a list, in a sense asked to pick their own poison, I would ask the Minister why individuals that were asked to attend these meetings were not given another list on the expenditure side of government where they could have passed judgment as to what areas of government they thought spending could be reduced in, so again that we would be able to work away from yet another pitiful half-billion-dollar deficit? Why were they not given an opportunity to pass judgment on the expenditure side instead of having to pick their poison on increased taxation areas?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: As I indicated, Madam Speaker, there were two rounds of discussion. The first round happened to focus on the very area that the member talked about and there were good suggestions coming forward both in terms of areas that people wanted expansion of programs and areas where people thought that the government should re-look at certain expenditures and certain areas of service. I've had the opportunity of consulting with Manitobans and hearing Manitobans' views, but we haven't heard what the Conservatives opposite would do, what they want done in terms of services in the financial situation in the Province of Manitoba. If we look at that silence and look at what their cousins do in other provinces then maybe we could get some picture of what they would do and what they would advocate for Manitoba.

We have a situation in Saskatchewan, Madam Speaker, where they are talking about 25 percent cuts right across the board. We have a situation in Alberta where they are reducing funding, reducing funding by 3 percent to schools, to universities, to health care facilities in the province. Is that the kind of thing that members opposite are advocating? Because they are not the kind of things that Manitobans want for this province, Madam Speaker.

Federal Gov't Budget - impact on Manitoba Budget

MR. C. MANNES: A final supplementary, Madam Speaker.

The Minister indicated that the Budget was coming down on March 16. Could he inform Manitobans what impact, what effect, that the NDP National Convention, being held just previous to that, had in the decision that this government took to bring forward, down, that Budget on the 16th, instead of a few days earlier when it could have been done?

MADAM SPEAKER: A question about party matters is not within the competence of the government.

MPIC - notices of lawsuits

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Pembina.

MR. D. ORCHARD: This is for the Minister responsible for Autopac.

Is it normal process that Autopac, the auto insurance agency, the Crown corporation, does not give notice in the event of multi-million dollar court actions against an insured Manitoban, do they have no contact whatsoever with that Manitoban to tell him that he is before the courts and subject to a substantial law suit?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister responsible for MPIC.

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to be able to respond to this question which was raised with me last Tuesday. I received about a three-or four-page letter expressing a number of concerns. I have now had a chance to review them and in fact the letter that was provided to me contained a considerable number of errors, including the statement just made. The courts dealt with this matter on, I believe, June 4, 1986, immediately upon becoming aware that the award that was being sought would be in excess of the limits of the existing coverage. The adjuster for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation contacted Carman Agri Services and thereafter their solicitor to apprise them of the situation. That was some two or three days prior to the jury award of some \$3.7 million.

MPIC - Carman Agri Services

MR. D. ORCHARD: Madam Speaker, given the circumstance that his Minister of Labour, for two years, relying on bureaucrats and MTS, bureaucrats that they subsequently fired, telling him that all was well in the Telephone System, will this Minister not screw up his courage and not listen to his bureaucrats and intervene on behalf of Carman Agri Services that were before the courts for five years without Autopac once informing them that they were being sued and will he oblige Autopac, as I have suggested, to cover the total liability and let that business survive?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: There is the Member for Pembina huffing and puffing and aspiring for leadership again - grandstanding. For the member's information . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. Will the Minister please answer the question?

HON. J. BUCKLASCHUK: For the member's information, I do have confidence in the competence of legal counsel for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. I also have had, at my request, a review by independent legal counsel as to the handling of this claim. I have been assured that it has been handled in a proper and competent manner. Therefore the allegations that the Member for Pembina makes are without any basis whatsoever.

MR. D. ORCHARD: Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Premier and I'd like to table him a copy of the letter I sent to his Minister responsible for Autopac so he might be informed.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concern that the Premier expressed to me last night about the lack of

notification by Autopac to Carman Agri and the process through which Carman Agri has been put and the danger to their business. I requested him last night, in light of inactivity by his Minister, his refusal to do anything but listen to his bureaucrats, will the Minister live up to the commitment that I believe he made last night to intervene on behalf of a business in Manitoba to protect that business and its employees from bankruptcy because of the incompetence of MPIC in the way they have handled this whole lawsuit?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable First Minister.

HON. H. PAWLEY: Madam Speaker, during the course of the reception last evening, the Member for Pembina approached me in respect to a particular Autopac problem which is serious, there is no doubt about that, involving one of his constituents. He outlined to me some facts as he understood them to be and I indicated to the honourable member that, if eventually not satisfied, certainly I'd be prepared to examine any and all documentation that he had to ascertain whether or not justice was being served or not.

Provincial Judges - women

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Norbert.

MR. G. MERCIER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a question to the Attorney-General.

Would the Attorney-General advise the House how many women he has appointed as provincial judges since he has been Attorney-General since some time in 1981?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. R. PENNER: There have only been four judicial appointments since I have been Attorney-General, two in Thompson where there no women at the bar with sufficient years of experience to be appointed and two in Dauphin where the appointment was based on the fact that we were appointing persons who were part-time judges to become full-time judges. As it happened, those two part-time judges who were actually serving in the Dauphin area happened to be men. That was the basis primarily upon which they were appointed.

I want to assure the former Attorney-General and the members of this House that the first opportunity we have for full-time appointments, particularly within the City of Winnipeg, our Affirmative Action Program will be carried out in full.

Sterling Lyon - criticism of app't

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Norbert with a very brief supplementary.

MR. G. MERCIER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Given this abysmal record for five-and-a-half years of not appointing one woman to the provincial bench, his pathetic performance and his grandstanding over the appointment of Mr. Justice Sterling Lyon, Madam Speaker, would . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. A supplementary needs no preamble.

MR. G. MERCIER: . . . the Attorney-General withdraw his criticism of the Federal Minister of Justice?

HON. R. PENNER: As the member well knows, my criticism of the Federal Minister of Justice was based primarily on the lack of consultation and it was that to which I took umbrage and indeed there will be legislation introduced in this House to deal with that matter. When, as a provincial jurisdiction, we spend with respect to a federal court complex close to \$20 million; when, as a provincial jurisdiction, we spend annually \$3 million to support the federal courts, the Court of Appeal, the Court of Queen's Bench, we will not brook nor tolerate a situation in which we're not consulted with respect to judicial appointments at that level.

I think that our record with respect to appointments to the provincial bench here have been excellent and all of the appointments that we have made have been greeted enthusiastically.

MADAM SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MADAM SPEAKER: May I draw the attention of honourable members again to the gallery, where we have 11 junior forest wardens visiting from Edmonton, Alberta, under the direction of Mr. Herrick, and they're visiting with the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

We also have 25 students from Grade 9 from the Whitemouth School. The students are under the direction of Mr. Ray Steinhoff. The school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Springfield.

On behalf of all the members, we welcome you to the Legislature this morning.

HOUSE BUSINESS

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Opposition House Leader.

MR. G. MERCIER: Madam Speaker, before Orders of the Day, a question on House Business to the Government Leader.

Could he confirm that this morning, after brief speeches by the Mover and Seconder of the Throne Speech, that legislation will be introduced with respect to the Sunday closing legislation which will allow for amendments to be passed today, to expire on June 30 of this year, and during which time we expect the government will commit itself to introducing other legislation which will then be subject to public representations?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I can confirm that I will be asking for leave of the House to proceed and pass that legislation later in the day.

I also have to indicate it's my understanding that the Mover and Seconder of the Throne Speech Debate will be speaking about a half hour each, so that should allow us time to carry on other business, through leave.

I also have to indicate that the amendments with which we will be proceeding have been developed in consultation with the members opposite, all members opposite, and I'd like to publicly thank them for their cooperation and their helpful suggestions in how to proceed with this matter.

The amendments which will be brought forward today will in fact expire on June 30. In between now and then we will be discussing legislative changes that might be brought forward to this particular bill. Of course, for the amendments to proceed beyond June 30, there will be a requirement for that legislation. So if it's determined that they are necessary beyond June 30, we will have to bring forth legislation - and we have committed to bringing forth that legislation previous to May 15 - Second Reading in this House, so that there will be an opportunity for the public to review the amendments and for them to make representations before the Standing Committee and for all legislators in this House to have an opportunity to speak to the issue.

The amendments that would be brought forward today then would therefore maintain the status quo, strengthen the penalty provision a bit and allow us an opportunity to have the fuller debate on The Retail Business Holiday Closing Act later in the Session, but at the same time reinforce the status quo of the legislation previous to the most recent court hearing.

So I do thank members, all members opposite, and of course members on this side, for their suggestions, their cooperation and their concern on this matter.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Virden.

MR. G. FINDLAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Because the House Leader has indicated that there will be no further opportunity to debate the farm crisis issue today, I move, seconded by the Member for Ste. Rose, that the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, that being a need for the immediate calling of the Agriculture Committee to enable the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier and his Cabinet, to hear directly from the farm community regarding the extent of the financial crisis facing our family farms for 1987.

MADAM SPEAKER: Our Rule No. 27.(2) states that the honourable member has five minutes to state his case for urgency of debate on this matter.

The Honourable Member for Virden.

MR. G. FINDLAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There is a very serious economic crisis out in the farm community today. In question period, the Minister

of Agriculture indicated that he knew there was a serious crisis out there.

He indicated he'd received representation from various members of the farm community; he's heard from us through the last Session and through various representations we've made made through news releases during the last period of four months.

Madam Speaker, I know from my own experience that there are hundreds of farms out there in the state of failing; and the real credit crunch is coming in the next two months as we get close to the seeding season. By the month of April, credit unions, banks and farmers are telling me that there's going to be a serious number of farmers without the ability to plant the crop in 1987. This crunch, Madam Speaker, this credit crunch that they're facing, is causing us a severe degree of stress.

Dr. Jim Walker at Brandon University has indicated that farming is the most stressful occupation now, and it's brought about by inaction of this government in this province to put in place programs that will relieve the financial and emotional stress, and the family problems that are emerging on our family farms. I warn you, Madam Speaker, without some action, suicides are something that a lot of farmers are really seriously concerned about.

Madam Speaker, between now and April, I believe this government must act if it's going to be truly representative of the needs of the farm community of Manitoba.

In the Throne Speech, there was indication that we need new jobs. Madam Speaker, the credit crunch goes beyond the farm gate. It goes to the small businesses in our rural towns, who know what the problem is at the farm level. The economic activity at their doorstep is declining too, and without significant help to the farmers we're going to have a lot of jobs, hundreds and hundreds of jobs lost in small businesses across rural Manitoba. That's the way to save jobs, Madam Speaker, save the farm economy.

The farmers do not want handouts; all they want is a chance to survive in the Manitoba economy. We have put out press releases indicating the problem, and the Minister says we do not know the problem. We've called on the Agriculture Committee before and the farmers out there now want an opportunity to express their desire, their needs and their wishes to this Minister, this Premier and this Cabinet.

Madam Speaker, I call on you to allow us to have the debate today to demonstrate the urgent need for the Agriculture Committee to be called so that the farmers themselves can come before this Minister and then, in front of him, tell him what the problem is. Let the Chambers of Commerce come forward; let the small businessmen come forward; let the organizations that represent farmers come forward, beyond their resolutions at their meetings, let them come forward in person and speak with this Minister.

Madam Speaker, I request that you allow this debate to proceed this afternoon.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Certainly the urgency, as indicated by the member opposite, is not something that has immediately come

to the attention of this side of the House. For Sessions now we have been talking about the crisis in the farming community, the crisis is rural Manitoba, and the actions that are required by a government to deal with with those.

We have brought forward legislation; we have brought forward programming; we have brought forward solutions to that crisis on an ongoing basis. So while this may be a matter that is new to the members opposite, this is not a matter that is new to the members on this side of the House. Our concern has been longstanding and we have acted on that concern.

Perhaps the time that the members would like to spend in debate in this House might be better suited to talking to their cousins in Ottawa about their lack of response to that crisis and about what they fail to do for Manitoba farmers. Notwithstanding their failure to do that, notwithstanding their willingness to take a stand on this position that would identify the weakness of the federal position, their cousins in Ottawa in this particular issue, we do have to discuss, within the context of this motion, whether or not there are other opportunities for the debate because it is not a matter of new-found urgency on the part of members opposite, but it is a matter of whether or not the urgency of debate is such that there are not other opportunities to debate this issue in this House.

The member opposite has indicated that they feel it is required to debate the particular issue at this time. Well, there is a Throne Speech Debate that is available to them. If the members opposite would wish to put forward a speaker today on that Throne Speech Debate, we would be prepared to grant leave for that to happen so that they can make that case, because there is in the Throne Speech an outline of those initiatives that we believe are important to the agricultural community and to the rural economy of Manitoba.

We'd be pleased for the first time in a number of years to hear some solutions from the members opposite as to how that crisis can be dealt with, because we have been working on this for many years now. I can give the commitment that we would be pleased to grant that leave for a speaker, the member opposite, if he wishes, to make that presentation.

I am certain that in the days to come, this matter will be debated not only by members on that side, but by members on this side as to what can be done to deal with a very serious situation. There is no doubt that there is not a serious situation there. But they do have adequate opportunity for the Throne Speech, during the Throne Speech, during the Estimates, and we've already heard them indicate that the Department of Agriculture Estimates will be the first up. We've heard the Minister of Agriculture indicate that he is prepared to have his Estimates first; as a matter of fact, pleased to have his Estimates first up so that we can deal with this particular matter. There will also be an opportunity during the Budget to discuss this issue, I'm certain.

So I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that this motion, while a matter of urgency for some time now, is not a matter of urgency within the context of the opportunities for debate today and we would be prepared to grant leave to have one of their members make that recommendation if they so desire; but we do not feel that it goes beyond that requirement and the requirement to set aside the ordinary business of the House today.

SPEAKER'S RULING

MADAM SPEAKER: There are two conditions that must be satisfied for this matter to proceed. The first condition has been met in that I received proper notice from the honourable member of his intention to bring this motion to the House.

The second condition is that the debate on the matter is urgent and that there is no other reasonable opportunity to raise the matter. The debate on the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne which allows discussion on far-ranging matters is on the Order Paper today and will be discussed today. There is, therefore, immediate and ample opportunity to debate this matter.

I rule that the motion is out of order.
The Honourable Opposition House Leader.

MR. G. MERCIER: With all due respect, Madam Speaker, I must challenge your ruling.

MADAM SPEAKER: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. The question before the House is: shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained? All those in favour, say aye. All those opposed, say nay.

In my opinion the ayes have it.
The Honourable Opposition House Leader.

MR. G. MERCIER: Yeas and nays, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Call in the members.

A STANDING VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

YEAS

Ashton, Baker, Bucklaschuk, Cowan, Desjardins, Doer, Dolin, Evans, Harapiak (The Pas), Harapiak (Swan River), Harper, Hemphill, Kostyra, Lecuyer, Mackling, Maloway, Parasiuk, Pawley, Penner, Plohman, Santos, Schroeder, Scott, Smith (Ellice), Smith (Osborne), Storie, Uruski, Walding, Wasylcyia-Leis.

NAYS

Birt, Blake, Brown, Carstairs, Connery, Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Hammond, Johnston, Manness, McCrae, Mercier, Mitchelson, Nordman, Oleson, Orchard, Pankratz, Rocan, Roch.

MR. CLERK, W. Remnant: Yeas, 29; Nays, 25.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is passed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam, would you please call, for Orders of the Day, consideration of the Speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

MADAM SPEAKER: On the consideration of the Speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

MR. C. BAKER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Elmwood,

THAT an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba as follows:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, in Session assembled, humbly thank you for your gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address us at the opening of the present Session.

MOTION presented.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

MR. C. BAKER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On this occasion, may I, on behalf of my colleagues here in this Chamber, extend our congratulations to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor on his appointment and to wish him every happiness in the fulfillment of His Honour's duties.

I would also like to congratulate many of my friends in the Cabinet in their assumption of new responsibilities, especially my neighbour on the electoral map, the Honourable Member for Rupertsland.

My best wishes and hopes for their continued success in the service of the people of Manitoba go to you all.

I would like to give thanks to the Premier for granting me the honour and the privilege of moving the acceptance of this, the Speech from the Throne, of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Legislature of this Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. I would like to share this honour with my constituents and with my family. It was with the support of my neighbours, my wife and my children that I am present here in this Chamber today.

The other day someone asked me what was special about my constituency; I immediately thought about the diversity in the economy in Lac du Bonnet. Let me assure you, Madam Speaker, we are a very busy community. Agriculture is an industry that we are very proud of. However, there are other products from my constituency that have earned a national reputation. I invite all honourable members to look around this building. The limestone used on these walls and pillars come from Tyndall and the Garson Quarries. The same limestone, Madam Speaker, is also used in the national Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker, C. Santos, in the Chair.)

We have a modest, but efficient, forestry and papermaking industry and there is mining of spodumene, a substance used in the manufacture of see-through cookware.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from stove top to desk top, we have made our presence known. We are more than hewers of wood and drawers of water; we are involved on the leading edge of technology. The research facility

at Pinawa is working on solving one of the most complex and potentially dangerous problems facing Manitoba and the world today - the research and to the safe storage or elimination of nuclear waste. I thought of these things and I had to conclude that my riding is pretty special.

Then I thought about the countryside itself. Now I know some of my fellow members may disagree with me, but in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet is the most beautiful countryside in our fair province. There are numerous parks and recreation facilities in the area that are enjoyed by Manitobans and the thousands of tourists each year. We have lakes and streams for canoeing and sports fishing, trails for hiking and we can boast of the most beautiful summer sunsets around.

But despite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the uniqueness of our economy and our countryside, there is something that truly makes the constituency of Lac du Bonnet special - our people. They are friendly, enthusiastic and talented, and we have all benefited from the dedication of these people and their hospitality is second to none. The spirit and achievements of my constituents were instrumental in awarding the 1988 Manitoba Summer Games to our region. They worked together to achieve great things and they have been both an inspiration and an example for me.

In Manitoba, agriculture is at the crossroads. My constituency is no exception. Farmers who have had good crops in recent years are unable to get a fair return on their time and effort due to low prices. To quote Bill Strack, president of the Manitoba Pool Elevators, all farmers are asking for, he says, is a "fighting chance." What kind of a chance do they have if they can't get a fair price for their product?

The loss of the family farm is a serious thing. Farming is not just an occupation; it is a lifestyle. The farm is not just a workplace; it is your home. It is where you were raised. It is to seek the preservation of these farms that this government has proclaimed The Family Farm Protection Act. Farmers are grateful for any measure that would help them retain their livelihood, but it is not enough to preserve the state of farming as it is. We, as a society, must find a way to restore the vitality to this most important industry.

With the current depression in commodity prices, with the high start-up costs, many young people are not taking up farming as a career, and with these harsh economic times we will see our youngest and most energetic farmers fall by the wayside. If we want to have farm industry in the future, we must put the future back into the industry.

I am proud that this government has introduced Farm Start Program. This measure will be a great benefit to the future farm community, a future that is important to us all.

While prices have dropped, input costs have not. Farmers are paying more and more and getting less and less. In the instance where there has been a price drop in input costs, such as the chemical Roundup, a chemical necessary for farmers in the parkland and dryland regions of this province, and for those involved in zero tillage, the reduction in price is slight compared to the drastic reduction in what a farmer receives for his crop.

Many farmers are finding it economically impossible to use this chemical. It is absolutely essential for

continuous cropping and what the farmers call "chemical summer fallowing" in the dryland region. Chemical summer fallowing allows the farmer to leave thresh on fields to protect the land from the wind and erosion, which aids in the preservation our topsoil.

The Honourable Member for Arthur spoke about the topsoil preservation many times at the last Session, and I sure that he will agree that the measure that preserves the topsoil and thus the continuance of farming in this province is worth looking into. All members should support the government's call for an inquiry into farm chemical prices and hope that the Federal Government will consider this, as well as holding off other measures that will increase input costs such as the bill on plant breeders' rights.

The farming community, as I have indicated, is concerned about the preservation of our environment. Cooperative measures must be taken by all farmers and all levels of government so that all Manitobans can enjoy our heritage for years to come. After all, they don't make land any more.

This government has always been very strong in the area of the protection of the environment. Instead of resting on its laurels, it is going even further to provide even stronger provisions for the future of our ecological system. The proposed environment act will not only provide direction for Manitobans, but it will also firmly establish Manitoba as the leader in this most important area. As a farmer, I know the concern of the environment is not just a fad; we are all stewards of the land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't mind the interruptions that come from the opposite side and I don't mind their support for agriculture because I think it's up to the House, in total, to convince our city cousins that there is a crisis in agriculture and that something has to be done; but I don't think this is going to be accomplished by this kind of rhetoric that's going on.

Last year I approached some of the members opposite and I thought that the first thing they would have brought into this House would have been an emergency debate on agriculture because, as you remember, we started on May 8, and there really wasn't much time to get anything out for the farmers at that time. But this year - this is still the end of February - and certainly, if we will all put our minds to it, we can do the job that the people of Manitoba expect us to do in this Legislature.

The proposed environment act will not only provide direction for Manitobans; it will also firmly establish Manitoba as the leader in this important area. As a farmer, I know that the concern over the environment is not a fad; we are all stewards of this land. The announcement that this government is going to add to the number of parks and wildlife preserves is one that is very timely and is sure to be supported by many fellow citizens. With the growing number of people who enjoy outdoor activities, it is only fitting that this government provide places where they can enjoy the fresh Manitoba air and the beauty of our land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rural area of this province has suffered for a long time from economic and political decisions beyond the ability of us to affect them. As was mentioned in the Throne Speech, there are policies such as massive trade subsidies, which are decided in foreign capitals, which impact on the family farms in rural communities. The loss of prosperity has caused

many local businesses to either shut down or to relocate in larger centres.

Rail line abandonments, the closure of local grain elevators, the relocation of a local bank all can turn a once thriving community into just an intersection of the provincial highways, surrounded by a few dilapidated, abandoned buildings.

What can be done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to stop this cycle of closure, that relocation and abandonment? I have seen the effects of this within my own constituency. For instance, we have just lost our last implement dealer in our riding. Can you imagine a constituency the size of Lac du Bonnet without a single implement dealer? You do not have to imagine it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a reality.

The other day I received a petition from some of the constituents in the Victoria Beach area. There were 111 signatures on this, protesting closure of their local post office, and requesting me to do something about it. Rest assured that I am doing everything in my power to help them. But why is a service so essential to these people being forced to close its doors?

The post office in Victoria Beach is small, but closing it will have a greater negative impact on that community than if the Canada Post Corporation closed down its operations here in Winnipeg. A post office shares a special place in the heart of rural communities, but Canada Post doesn't seem to recognize this. In a recent article in the Manitoba Co-operator it is reported that Canada Post has 188 rural post offices on the chopping block.

Despite all of this, it is not all doom and gloom. In rural Manitoba, the anticipation of successful extension of the joint Canada-Manitoba Special Agricultural Rural Development Agreement gives us hope that more will be done to keep rural communities alive. This government has done much to maintain rural communities in the face of almost overwhelming economic adversities, a period of time when all governments have to hold the line and deal very carefully with limited resources. I am proud that this government feels so strongly about the preservation of our rural lifestyle that it will be bringing new programs and initiatives into the present Session.

I say to this government and to the Premier, thank you from a grateful rural Manitoban.

Throughout the last number of years, our Provincial Government has developed numerous programs to help unemployed people find jobs and provide much needed maintenance work within the various municipalities and towns. The Community Places Program is one such project that I find ideal. Not only do people need to work, they need a place to play, and this program, supported by \$40 million derived from the Manitoba Lotteries' revenue, will provide jobs through capital projects that will create and refurbish recreational sport and community buildings all over Manitoba. I hope that communities in all parts of the province get involved in this innovative and cooperative venture proposed by this government.

The Jobs Fund and Careerstart Programs have been very effective in opening doors for many young people just entering the workplace, and there have been significant results from various employment preparation and job retraining programs created and continued by this government. At a time when many young people

are despairing at finding work in other parts of the country, many of our youth are finding that Manitoba is still the land of opportunity. This is due in part to a Provincial Government that believes in action and not words when it comes to youth employment.

In a province where small business plays a key role in the economy, it is no wonder that given a little help - these innovative government programs - small business has led the way in economic performance and job creation. The fact that the net business formation rate has exceeded the national average for the last five years must be a source of pride and satisfaction for all those concerned with the economic well-being of Manitoba.

The strength of our provincial economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a result of the diversity of our industrial base. The hard-working nature of our people and the willingness of this Provincial Government take a role in fostering the development of new opportunities. All over this country, people are recognizing the superior performance of our economy, and we are attracting skills and dedicated people to this province because they believe, as I believe, that there are opportunities to be explored in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have in our province an excellent health and educational delivery system, but these institutions are being threatened by a reluctance by government at the federal level to provide ways of maintaining the current levels of excellence. There are no areas where the Provincial Government has attempted to cover these shortfalls, but since resources are limited the task is difficult. In these areas, the government appreciates the dedication and innovation of the people directly involved in the delivery of education and health services. It is this spirit of cooperation and dedication that built this province and this same spirit continues in our hospitals and in our schools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity of attending a meeting between the Minister of Education, school board officials, principals, teachers and students in my riding. I was impressed and encouraged by the discussions on our educational system and the spirit of cooperation and consultation that allows this sort of meeting to take place. We live in a system that works well when everybody is involved. This is the nature of democracy, and I am glad that the people of my constituency have an opportunity to share this process.

An additional 26.9 million for public schools will bolster our extensive public educational system - a system founded on the principle that all Manitobans are entitled to quality education regardless of where they live. An extension of further services to rural and northern schools is in keeping with this principle and furthers equality of opportunity for all. A strong public education system develops good skills as well as the ability to learn and to adapt. I am glad to see the province continue and even to strengthen its support in this area.

The province is increasing its support for our post-secondary education institutions as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Ever since the changes in the equalization formula in 1982, the Federal Government has steadily been decreasing its percentage share of educational costs even though the province has been trying to maintain these institutions at proper and effective levels.

Friday, 27 February, 1987

The short-term result is that many students are suffering from increased costs in the form of tuition and incidental fees. Institutions have cut back on new programs and equipment to keep our education process at the current level. The province is doing more than its share. The government and the citizens of Manitoba who want to see our universities and colleges work effectively are willing to support this valued education resource.

We live in a technological age, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Even in farming, there is a need to understand and to use products that are based on chemistry, physics, botany and zoology. Even microcomputers are prevalent on family farms today. In order to keep up with the changes to come, we need these institutions of higher learning, and I congratulate this government for their promise for more funding for the universities and colleges. You must give Manitobans a choice in options for their future.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair.)

The declining support of the Federal Government in this area of health care is a great concern in my constituency. At a time when health care delivery costs are increasing, it seems ironic that support should be decreased. I am thankful that the Provincial Government sees this as a challenge for new innovative thinking and programs that will cover ground left open by the other level of government. I am glad, Madam Speaker, to see policies that will create smaller communities based on care units that would be ideally suited to serve rural communities as well as urban neighbourhoods. The New Careers Program will be of great value in extending the health care service in these areas that are currently underserved, especially in northern and rural areas.

This government has always worked to provide a high standard of health care for all citizens of this province and I am glad to see this tradition carried forward. Although we have come a long way in the delivery of health care services, there is still a long way to go with new and exciting developments in health science happening every day. Thanks to the foresight of this government, Manitobans can be confident of having a first-rate health care system.

Before I sit down, Madam Speaker, I would like to say a few words about a personal concern of mine. This personal concern is not just held by me but by many people that I meet in my daily efforts serving my constituency. When I came to this House last year, I must confess, and I'm sure members on the opposite side felt the same way as I do, I must confess that I was pretty intimidated by this place. It filled me with awe to be here. If you look around you here and remember what it was like when you first took your seat, then I'm sure you can feel a part of what I did. I felt that surely here was a place where people who had been chosen by the most democratic process in the world could meet and discuss as befits the humble dignity of their office.

Madam Speaker, I was not prepared for the open hostility and personal attacks, the heckling, the catcalling that took place in the last Session of the House. Maybe I'm not too familiar with parliamentary procedure, but shouldn't we treat each other with more courtesy? It seems to me, Madam Speaker, that if we

can be civil with each other in the hallway or at various social functions that we attend together, we can at least be as civil here, if not even more so.

To make a point, Madam Speaker, I have attended municipal and agricultural conventions in my time as have many members on both sides of this House. I am proud to say that at all these conventions, delegates always conducted themselves in such a fashion as to allow the differences of opinion to be expressed without having to resort to methods employed by some members in this House. Madam Speaker, we could agree to disagree even if that was the only thing that we could agree on.

As a member of this Assembly, Madam Speaker, I can say that I am proud to be here and proud to be part of this process. I was elected by my fellow citizens who had enough faith in me to believe that I would make a good representative in this Chamber. As the Member for Lac du Bonnet, I am here not only to advocate a particular party but also as a spokesperson for all my constituents regardless of political affiliation, and I have stood up for their interests both in the caucus room and in this House. In the same manner, everyone here represents all the constituents they were elected to serve, and until this House is dissolved, we will remain at that capacity.

It is a common saying on election night to say that the people have spoken after all the returns are in. Well, if the people have spoken, then let them be heard. I suggest to everyone here that the people of Manitoba, through their legitimately elected representatives, should be given the consideration due to them.

This government is bringing out a package of legislation that has been given a great deal of thought in its preparation. Each bill that will be presented has been carefully drafted with the well-being of all Manitobans in mind. I look forward to responsible criticism from members opposite and to reasonable response from this side of the House.

All members present have a vested interest of preventing the same kind of bitter, hostile attacks which occurred during the last Session. If this continues in this Session, then our reputation as a decision-making body is in danger. One look at the House of Commons can show you how people can become disgusted with their childish bickering and such poisonous and hateful talk. In a mudslinging debate, everyone gets dirty.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I understand that good natured, humorous remarks are sometimes necessary to break the tension. There is nothing wrong with that. Maybe it takes a little more brain power to come up with something amusing than spiteful, but surely all honourable members - and you are all honourable members - are not lacking in that particular capacity.

In closing, I would like to thank all the members of this House for giving me the consideration due me as a member of this House in listening to my speech. I can truly say that I look forward to this Session of this House, and I look forward to working with all of you for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I would like to extend my appreciation to you for the difficult, but I think successful job, you did with the last Session. My hope is, for you, a challenging but much less contentious Session ahead. The legislation that will be put before us in the next

few months is worthy of our consideration and discussion. May we all deliberate with thought, care and respect for the good that is within our power to do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Elmwood.

MR. J. MALOWAY: Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by extending my congratulations to the Lieutenant-Governor as the newly appointed representative of Her Majesty the Queen. I rest assured that he will fulfill his new duties and responsibilities effectively and with great dignity, as was demonstrated by his presentation of the Throne Speech yesterday.

Madam Speaker, I have nothing but admiration for the manner in which you have presided over the highest office in this Assembly, and I maintain all confidence that you will continue to excel in the often very difficult task of preserving order in this Chamber.

I wish also to extend my congratulations, especially to the Honourable Member for Rupertsland, but to other colleagues in the government, as well as those who have recently assumed new responsibilities.

The Member for Kildonan also deserves to be congratulated for having accepted the challenging position of Government Whip.

Furthermore, I would like to praise the Member for Lac du Bonnet for an excellent speech he has just delivered, emphasizing the continued commitment of fairness and justness by this government for all Manitobans.

I want to thank the Premier and the Executive Council for the honour of allowing me to second the Speech from the Throne. I would also like to say that all members on this side of the House have every confidence in your leadership and that of your Cabinet colleagues and will provide the excellence in government that Manitobans have come to expect.

Madam Speaker, by re-electing this government, Manitobans demonstrated well their preference for an energetic party of innovation, of integrity and compassion. As well, they share the vision of fairness and justness of the current administration. Indeed, this government has had an enviable record in terms of meeting the goals that is set out in this agenda.

The various themes outlined in the Throne Speech, which are pursued by the government during the current Session, once again affirm that this government has not lost this vision. This government, Madam Speaker, is committed to the principles of fairness and justice, and demands no less of the Federal Government.

In the very recent past, certain regions or provinces of Canada have not been treated fairly by the Federal Government, and it's now incumbent upon it to redress those grievances. Moreover, the Federal Government must ensure that it shares its national resources more equitably. Indeed, the Federal Government has a constitutional obligation to do so and ensure that the economically less advantaged provinces within our confederation are given adequate financial assistance to provide vital health, education and social services for their citizens. Surely it's not too much to ask that all Canadians receive reasonably comparable levels of

public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

Manitobans have consistently indicated that they want to maintain and improve the whole range of essential services like health, education and an array of other social measures to which they've become accustomed and which benefit Canadians as a whole. The burden of paying for these vital services, however, should not be borne by individuals through continual increases in personal income taxes, while corporate income taxes decrease, as has been the case.

Tax reform that, for one, would see lower personal income taxes and higher corporate income taxes is essential to putting equity and fairness back into the tax system. Moreover, Madam Speaker, we can only have a tax system that is more equitable, that loopholes that allow well-heeled members of our society to get away without paying their fair share of taxes are eliminated.

With that in mind, I would point out that we must be somewhat suspicious of a P.C. tax reform program, because until we see what they actually propose, we have no guarantee that it won't be similar to the right-wing changes that were proposed by the Reagan administration in the United States, so tax reform may not be what it appears to be. We'll have to wait and see what the Federal Government comes up with. Essentially, I think that we would be happy if it was based on the principles of fairness and ability to pay.

Just as Manitobans expect fair treatment from the Federal Government, they expect no less from the governments of other provinces in Canada. As of November 1, 1986, the new deregulated environment for monopoly utilities has resulted in unfair and excessive charges to residential homeowners and small businesses, for natural gas, while Americans and large industry are expected to pay less for gas.

Our government, Madam Speaker, intends to seek a solution to this problem that is both equitable and fair. I was very, very pleased this morning to read a couple of articles in the Winnipeg Sun, where our Premier made it fairly clear that one possibility was the replacement of ICG by a government-owned utility. I'm very pleased to hear that.

Another quote: "Our own company would have to be one of the many options that we are considering." I think that attitude bodes well for the future in that area.

Given the success of the cooperative sector in Manitoba, this government intends to encourage the establishment of cooperative endeavours throughout the province with the intention of increasing competition in the retail sale of gasoline. Again, Madam Speaker, this demonstrates our government's commitment to ensuring a fairer pricing system for the consumers of this province.

That crime prevention and support for victims of crime continue to be major priorities for this government demonstrates its commitment to a system of justice that is fair, equitable, accessible, responsive and compassionate. The Justice for Victims of Crime Act was proclaimed at the beginning of this year and our government will continue to fulfill its commitment in this regard by providing funds for the opening of the Crime Prevention Centre later this year.

Given the somewhat fragile nature of our freedoms, Madam Speaker, a truly democratic and caring

Friday, 27 February, 1987

government must be committed to the protection and advancement of human rights. This government's deep concern in this regard is reflected in the new Human Rights Act that will be introduced this Session.

Even during these times of financial restraint and delay in promised federal assistance, Manitoba has created the best day care system in Canada. Reflecting its continued commitment, this government will continue to enhance child care and work with its provincial counterparts and the Federal Government to move towards a national day care system. Too many children, and adults for that matter, Madam Speaker, are vulnerable to abuse and neglect and some suffer from disabilities. This government will take steps to improve the system for protecting and assisting children who have been abused.

Madam Speaker, women's rights continue to be a major concern and their advancement a priority for this government. Many advances have been made towards equality of women and men and this government's commitment is reflected in its continued support and willingness to strengthen policies for advancing the status of women in Manitoba. Legislation will be introduced to establish the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women as a statutory body.

Furthermore, to achieve social and economic equality for women, steps will be taken to advance pay equity in the broader public and private sectors.

The fact that this government will continue to develop, coordinate and administer programs and policies designed to benefit our capital city reflects its strong commitment to ensuring the economic social and environmental vitality and health of the City of Winnipeg.

The renewed Core Area Initiative in the amount of \$100 million - the period 1986 to 1991 will go a long way towards revitalizing the heart of Winnipeg. The resources of the new agreement will be allocated to business development, employment and training, housing, riverbank enhancement and neighbourhood revitalization.

Moreover, this government's contribution through the North Portage Development Corporation in cooperation with the private sector will significantly develop downtown Winnipeg. Even in the face of lessened federal transfer payments, the provincial government will continue to enhance its already significant financial assistance to the City of Winnipeg so that the citizens of Manitoba will continue to be well served.

Together with the Member for Lac du Bonnet, I've emphasized this government's commitment as evidenced by the important initiatives outlined in the Throne Speech which it intends to pursue. It will benefit my constituency and indeed, Madam Speaker, all constituencies represented in this Assembly. I will continue to represent the concerns of my constituents and I am confident that our government's program reflected in the Throne Speech will provide a better province for them to live in.

The bulk of my remarks thus far have dealt with the government's plan of action for this Session. All governments are constrained to a certain extent by forces over which they have little control and there can be no doubt that the Government of Manitoba is similarly constrained. The Federal Government's jurisdiction enables it to legislate in areas that have a significant impact on provincial governments while the

policies of the Provincial Governments on the other hand such as Manitoba have little influence on those of the national government. Similarly, Manitoba's and Canada's economies are significantly affected by influences and forces of an international economy over which there is little singular control. Be this as it may, there are nevertheless several policy areas I wish to explore that I would like to see more attention given to.

Madam Speaker, the present Conservative Government in Ottawa has recently passed legislation allowing a greater integration within the financial services sector. These changes, in essence, provide one-stop shopping in the financial services industry. The major banks, amongst others, have taken full advantage of these changes in federal law and I feel that it's imperative that this government do the same.

On June 11, 1974, the Schreyer Administration passed legislation calling for the establishment of treasury branches. Unfortunately, this legislation was never proclaimed into law and it would be very timely to reconsider this legislation and revise it accordingly to make it more suitable to meet the demands of an environment that has undergone considerable change since the mid 1970's.

In keeping with the tone the government has set with the Speech from the Throne, Madam Speaker, the establishment of government sponsored banking-like institutions would foster competition with the private sector and provide Manitoba consumers with more affordable and equitable financial services.

I don't mean to sound alarmist, but we have reached a near crisis with respect to the cost of liability insurance, Madam Speaker. Many professionals and businesses have been facing skyrocketing costs for liability insurance and some have been unable to get coverage at all. It's really no wonder, Madam Speaker, that support for the Progressive Conservative Party in the provinces dropped from 41 percent to 32 percent as indicated in the poll that was released this past Wednesday.

The reason for this is the Tories' inability to focus on important issues. Take, for example, liability insurance rates for the Child and Family Services of Winnipeg that have soared from \$3,000 to \$32,000 in one year. Day care centres, play ground equipment manufacturers, professionals such as doctors, architects and engineers, trucking companies, hospitals, municipalities and other parties which have been unable to obtain coverage have been faced with paying unreasonably and unaffordably high insurance premiums.

Where were the Tories? Where were the Tories, Madam Speaker, when these rates were jumping 1,000 percent, when limits were being reduced and policies significantly changed by the use of restrictive wording provisions? Instead of protecting these groups in society, many of them, their friends, they were criticizing relatively insignificant increases in Autopac, hydro and telephone rates. This is one reason why their popularity has been dropping like a stone. It's not because of their leader's smile, it's because of their failure to grab an issue like this and lead on it.

By August 18, 1986, 34 states in the United States had enacted laws to help solve a similar crisis in the United States. The state government in Florida took

the most drastic measures by legislating rate rollbacks. Some state governments have instituted limits on the rate of increases allowable while others have limited the amount the court awards. Governments in Canada have been somewhat reluctant to move on this issue with the exception of Ontario, the only province which has so far conducted an inquiry.

The government must find innovative ways of reducing exorbitant insurance costs by putting into place a necessary process with the mandate of recommending suitable alternatives.

Ultimately, all provinces and the Federal Government will have to address this problem. Yet we have total silence from the opposition. Are they afraid of alienating their friends in the re-insurance business?

Just to add a few other facts to the debate at this time, Madam Speaker, the report of the superintendent of insurance for 1986, and this covers the year 1985, indicates that liability insurance premiums in Manitoba, premiums collected, were something like 26 million and losses were only 20 million. What will these figures be for 1986? That will be a very interesting report to look at when in fact it comes out. I think it's going to be kind of fairly drastic.

The companies, the professionals, these people are affected by these rates, but they have a better ability to pass these rate increases on to the public. The doctors simply pass it on through the Medicare system. So, in the end, the public are paying the premiums. Another point, Madam Speaker, the premiums don't stay in Manitoba for liability insurance. By and large, they go outside the province, in fact, outside the country.

Now, I don't want to defend a company such as Gillette of Canada or Richardson's, but I have a little clipping here that I would like to read an excerpt out of. This is the Winnipeg Free Press - great paper, yes. "Liability coverage costs threatening businesses." And we have a man by the name of Mr. Mathers saying that Gillette's - Gillette of Canada or Gillette of the United States - could only find liability insurance for \$75 million in 1985 for which it paid \$1.6 million in premiums. That was up by 700 percent from the \$225,000 it paid during 1984 for 100 million coverage. So not only are they paying 700 percent more in terms of their premiums, but they've got a 25 percent reduction in coverage.

Another company that we're familiar with, and I don't want to seem to be overly concerned about defending them, but James Richardson and Sons, their worldwide liability insurance limits of \$100 million in 1984, to retain those same limits in '85 they would have to pay \$1.7 million more in premiums, and of course what they did was reduce the coverage so they wouldn't have to pay more in terms of cost.

So if big companies like Richardson's and Gillette's and the cities of the country and North America are being affected by this problem, you can imagine what the little business or little professional in a province like Manitoba is having to deal with here. I think that maybe you should look at perhaps trying to do something to help them out.

Also, my last point on this would have to do with the profit picture, and I know the Opposition are very interested in profit pictures so I'm going to address that. In 1985 in the United States, the third quarter results on insurance companies indicated increases for

two of the bigger companies in the 6000 per cent increase range. So that's a little bit more than the 10 per cent Autopac increases and other more minor increases that the Opposition tends to spend their time criticizing.

We should, Madam Speaker, consider the limiting of liability claims in addition to other measures, such as the formation of insurance pools or co-ops. I've outlined a serious problem and in keeping with its commitment I hope this government moves to adopt some measures that would benefit Manitoba by rectifying a situation as both unfair and unjust.

In a similar vein, Madam Speaker, the people of Manitoba need affordable life insurance programs that are designed to meet their needs; the establishment of suitable pension management programs that serve the best needs of pensioners are just as necessary. It was the NDP Government in this province that forged the way with the universal and affordable automobile insurance plan. This government should, either through MPIC or another similarly constituted institution, take the appropriate measures to enable the province to compete head on with existing life insurance and pension management companies. Government-sponsored life insurance and pension management programs would serve a twofold purpose. First, they would guarantee that Manitobans best interests and needs concerning life insurance and pension services would be met instead of those of the financial institutions, and second, the government would use that revenue that would be generated to provide other services and benefits to Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, the Government of New Zealand has had an effective and universal accident coverage program for over 15 years that has been very successful. The establishment of a universal accident program is consistent with the principles and ideals of a social democratic government as a matter which I hope will be seriously considered this Session. During the mid-1970's, the NDP Government did some significant research and published a White Paper on the merits of establishing a universal accident program similar to that of New Zealand. Madam Speaker, this government should now review and update this White Paper, as is necessary, and commit itself to the implementation of a universal, comprehensive and cost-effective accident coverage program with adequate benefits for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, the present Conservative Government in Ottawa continues to follow the dangerous course of deregulation it has set for itself. Dangerous indeed because it puts the interest of a few corporations ahead of the public interest. Regulation in industry, such as airlines, railroads and trucking is something that is absolutely necessary. Government regulation is necessary to establish certain safety requirements and to ensure that certain markets that would otherwise be abandoned are serviced.

In the United States, deregulation in the telephone industry has resulted in job losses, and increased telephone rates for local users, and I might add, poorer service while for high volume users, such as the larger corporations, services have expanded and improved. Deregulation in the airline industry has had some serious consequences. Reduced services of smaller centres, poorer service on existing airlines, some job losses and

very seriously, the cutting of much safety-related costs as aircraft inspection and maintenance. Deregulation of the airline and telephone industries would deal a severe blow to Manitobans who enjoy affordable existing airline service to remote northern communities and some of the lowest telephone rates in Canada, an enviable situation indeed.

Deregulation in the trucking industry would be particularly devastating for Manitoba. With increases in the north-south flows that would inevitably result, the traditional east-west flows the trucking industry has thrived on would be destroyed and the Manitoba market would become open to large American trucking firms that would jeopardize the livelihoods of Manitoba truckers, especially the many independent firms. This government must do all that it can to stop the Federal Government from pursuing the dangerous course of deregulation it has set out for itself in our country.

The intolerable situation, Madam Speaker, in South Africa continues unabated. The South African Government must be publicly condemned for its suppressive and violent policy of apartheid, actions which I'm sure not even the Opposition condones and would wholeheartedly denounce. A form of government which systematically denies rights to the majority of its people is unjust and unfair. We, in this Assembly, must do everything in our power to try to ameliorate, indeed, remedy the situation in South Africa. In fact, I have an article that I would like to read an excerpt from, the Associated Press and writers in Washington, and it provides for some sobering thoughts. The headline is: Pretoria's A-bombs could fall into wrong hands, the study says, and I quote: "South Africa's white minority government may have built as many as a dozen nuclear weapons that could fall into the hands of a radical ruling faction or be used by terrorists, a study released yesterday said." In fact they go on to say that Israel may have enough nuclear weaponry to level every urban centre in the Middle East with a population over 100,000. And further, they warn that Pakistan appears to have the equipment and expertise to build its own nuclear arsenal. So just a couple of sobering thoughts on that.

There are many other countries and regions throughout the world where human rights and freedoms are persistently abrogated. One only needs to consider the plight of people in countries such as Chile, El Salvador and Nicaragua, who must continually fight to maintain their sovereignty and right to self-determination. Given the desperate situation of these countries there's all too frequently the temptation by external forces, be they military or corporate, to intervene in the affairs of these countries and not always in their best interest. In the process, human rights are sacrificed and we should make every effort to speak loudly against those often unwarranted intrusions and to try to eliminate the injustices that are being committed daily.

Madam Speaker, the measures outlined in the Throne Speech collectively constitute a clearly focused plan for this government to achieve its goals of fairness and justice for Manitobans. The measures to which my colleague and I have spoken demonstrate that the NDP Government of Manitoba remains both caring and compassionate even during times of fiscal restraint. This is clearly evident if one considers this government's

commitment to remain innovative and activist in order to foster a comfortable social and economic milieu for the citizens of this province, but at the same time remaining responsible to them. Thanks to the leadership and policies of this government, Manitoba's economic future looks very promising and indeed bright. We must focus all of our energies to ensure that all enjoy in the fruits of prosperity.

Madam Speaker, just as this government will devote its attention to serving the constituents of Manitoba, I will participate to my fullest ability to represent the views of the constituents of Elmwood and ensure that they share in and benefit from the programs of this government.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. G. FILMON: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Lakeside, that debate be adjourned on this motion.

MOTION presented and carried.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, pursuant to . . .

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Pursuant to the discussions which have been ongoing between members of the Opposition and members on this side in our earlier discussion on House business, I would ask that unanimous consent be given to waive Rule No. 35(1) which gives the Throne Speech debate precedence over all other business of the House so that we can proceed with the consideration of Bill No. 7, and that will require unanimous consent of the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Does the Honourable Minister have unanimous consent to waive Rule No. 35(1)? (Agreed)

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Having had that leave granted, Madam Speaker, I would then ask for unanimous consent to proceed with the introduction of Bill No. 7 in the absence of notice required by 51(1) as allowed by Rule 52 of the rules of this House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Does the Honourable Minister have unanimous consent to proceed with the introduction of Bill No. 7 in absence of notice? (Agreed)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HON. A. MACKLING introduced, by leave, Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, then I would like to once again request unanimous consent to allow the bill to be advanced two or more stages in one day, Rule No. 87(3), so that Second Reading of the bill can now take place by unanimous consent of the members of the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Does the Honourable Minister have unanimous consent to waive Rule 87(3)? (Agreed)

SECOND READING

BILL NO. 7 - THE RETAIL BUSINESSES HOLIDAY CLOSING ACT

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Labour.

HON. A. MACKLING presented, by leave, Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act, for Second Reading.

MOTION presented.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Labour.

HON. A. MACKLING: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To begin with, I want to indicate my pleasure at the House having agreed to set aside its normal procedure and allow the introduction and hopefully the unanimous agreement and consent to restoring to this piece of legislation the full intent that it was considered by legislators of the day to have conveyed.

I have looked at the debates, read almost every word of the debates in 1977-78, when this legislation was first introduced in 1977 by the late Russell Paulley, then Minister of Labour, and I noted that there was an overall consensus, I believed, on both sides of the House in respect to the spirit and the principles and intent of the legislation. There were differences of opinion as to some of the wording, some of the intent; but overall, there was agreement to deal with the question of providing for a pause day in the life of Manitobans so that their ordinary routine of work could be interrupted and that families could enjoy a pause day together.

There were very interesting debates about what would be the appropriate day to fix because there were differences of opinion as to whether or not there should be a religious connotation to the designation of that date. It has generally been recognized that Sunday was the most convenient day.

However, there are in this multicultural society, differences of view, but the legislation was framed in order to provide that it wouldn't be subject to a narrow interpretation that it was merely a religious piece of legislation. So that legislation was crafted, and I thought reasonably well, and I think the legislators then thought reasonably well to meet the requirements of the day.

I note that there were concerns about the language of the statute and those concerns obviously have found validity in the interpretation of a judge recently and it's because of the ambiguities that the judge found in his reading of the wording of that statute that the problem confronts government and I think this Legislature ought

to restore to that piece of legislation the intent and meaning that legislators believed it had.

Judge Lismer, in his recent decision, quite properly, I believe, quoted an earlier court decision of a Mr. Justice Lamer and himself and also Chief Justice Dickson in resolving an ambiguity in language in a statute saying: "In my opinion," - this is Justice Lamer speaking - "if the words of an enactment which is relied upon as creating a new offence are ambiguous, the ambiguity must be resolved in favour of the liberty of the subject, but whether or not such ambiguity exists is to be determined after calling innate the rules of construction." He then went on in his decision, Madam Speaker, to find the wording of this statute did provide an ambiguity and therefore ruled in favour of the accused in this case.

So it is clear, Madam Speaker, that the judge of the court has found a problem, a problem that wasn't recognized, obviously, at the time the legislation was crafted in 1977, nor was it recognized the subsequent year, in 1978, when a new administration brought the same legislation back to the House to make some further refinements to it.

The refinement then was to change finally, merely a number in one of the clauses, but the spirit and intent of the bill had been recognized on both sides of the House as desirable to provide for a reasonable regulation of commercial operations in order to provide workers with a pause day.

So, Madam Speaker, what this legislation does is remove the ambiguities that were found by the recent court decision, simplify the wording of the act, refer references to another act where there is ambiguous legislation - the other act I refer to is The Shops' Regulation Act - Madam Speaker, we believe, and I believe that the Opposition and members generally have recognized that people in Manitoba do believe that it is worthwhile and opportune to have a day of rest, at least one in seven, where the normal work habit is interrupted. It is important for social life in the lives of workers and their families to have a break in that work week.

This is labour legislation that recognizes that it is important in our society that people be protected from having to be required to work every day. As a matter of fact, the provisions in the present act certainly make it abundantly clear that the intention of the act was to give workers such an opportunity.

Madam Speaker, I believe that it is in our interest as a society to afford people more leisure time rather than less, that as we become more and more technologically advanced, it should be possible for all of us to enjoy more leisure time rather than less. I believe that this Legislature intends that these ambiguities should be removed quickly and that we should act decisively so that no one should be misled into thinking that we do not have firm intent to ensure the validity of the statutes that we passed and supported.

Madam Speaker, it's for those reasons - and I want to be very brief - that the legislation is before us to effect a remedy to legislation which obviously is considered to be flawed at this time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Opposition House Leader.

MR. G. MERCIER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

First of all, I wish to point out to members of the Legislature and to you that we would rather be discussing a subject that we consider to be of a much more urgent priority, and that relates to our request for the immediate calling of the Agricultural Committee to discuss their financial plight. In our view, Madam Speaker, that is much more urgent and we wish we were discussing that at this particular time.

I want to indicate clearly that if we were doing that, that would not have meant that we would not be dealing with this subject. We would have granted leave to extend the sitting past 12:30 or into the afternoon to live up to our undertaking to deal with this particular subject today.

When I listen to the Minister of Labour, I'm left with the impression that this is a bill to satisfy the union leaders of this province. That's the impression that I get from the Minister of Labour with respect to this bill. This bill is important to them, I think, for that reason, but it's important to us for many other reasons, Madam Speaker. There's no question that it is important that workers have a day of rest, but it is also important to the vast majority of Manitobans that Sunday is not only a holiday, but that it is a holy day; and the legislation does, of course - as we passed it originally - provide for those people who observe another religious holy day other than Sunday, and we uphold that right as we did when we passed that legislation.

I think it is extremely important that we recognize this bill is important for families, whether they be two-parent families or whether they be single-parent families. There is only one day of the week, as it stands now, Madam Speaker, virtually in almost every family, and that is Sunday, when they are able to get together. That is extremely important to our society.

In the case of single-parent families, of which we're all aware - there are so many more of those now - it is wrong, in my view, to have a situation where a single-parent mother, for example, is forced to work on a Sunday when she may only have that one day otherwise, or up until this point in time, to be with her family. It is very important to families, again, whether they are two-parent families or single-parent families.

Madam Speaker, we believe, and have taken the position as a party that existing legislation, as it stood before His Honour Judge Lismer's decision, was good legislation, that it did allow a limited opportunity for retail sales on Sundays for those who are unable to be accommodated otherwise. At the same time, there is a very important principle involved in here and it's a very important principle that should be followed in all legislation dealt with by this Legislature. That is, we must give the public an opportunity to be heard on any legislation that we deal with.

That is why, Madam Speaker, when I first met with the House Leader, I made that point with him, that somehow we have to allow for public representations. This bill, I'm glad to see, which will receive the concurrence of the House, does do that. I submit to members of the House, there will be lengthy public representations on this bill from many interested sectors, from the church, from business and from individuals.

So, Madam Speaker, on that particular point - and one other point that I want to address to the Minister

to consider in the principle of dealing with this bill - when he refers to employees, four employees, there's certainly a question nowadays as to whether that includes independent contractors or security personnel that an owner or operator uses in operating an establishment on Sundays. I think when we deal with this bill later on in this Session, and it's better that the bill will have to come back because I think the government can give some consideration to that aspect, as well there may very well be other aspects that are brought forward or through public representations will be brought forward, but that is another aspect that he should give consideration to in the bill that is brought back to the Legislature later on in May.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, looking at the clock, I understand that it requires unanimous consent to proceed beyond 12:30 previous to 12:30 having been reached, so I would seek unanimous consent for the House to continue on beyond 12:30.

MADAM SPEAKER: Does the Honourable Minister have unanimous consent then? (Agreed)

The Honourable Member for Brandon West.

MR. J. McCRAE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I appreciate the Government House Leader rising and helping to extend the hours of the sitting. For my part, I certainly won't abuse that privilege because I plan to speak only for a moment or two.

I'm pleased also that this Legislature is moving to protect a law that was passed some time ago and to protect the intent of that law and to cause the large operators in this province to respect the intent of our laws in this province. Now they'll have to respect the letter of the law.

With respect to the public input, no one could ever object, Madam Speaker, to public input on a matter as important as this, but I do remind the House that the main intent of this legislation was passed some time ago, and I remind honourable members that not so long ago, about four months ago, at the time of the municipal elections in this province, not all the towns, villages and R.M.'s in this province had plebiscites, but the City of Brandon, the City Council in Brandon, in view of some difficulties associated with our local by-law at that time, did operate a plebiscite to ask the people of Brandon what they thought of Sunday shopping and the answer, overwhelmingly, by a margin of two-to-one, was that the people of Brandon wanted to see Sunday shopping continued to be regulated. Now the Council of the City of Brandon did have difficulty with their by-law. The people of Brandon rely very heavily - since the difficulties associated with the by-law - on the provincial legislation. So it's incumbent on me, as the member representing - I always think I represent the whole city as does the Member for Brandon East. I think we both feel that way. Someone has to speak up today to remind this House that there is considerable support out there for what we're doing today, and anyone who would think that to flaunt the

laws of Manitoba is the way to go, Madam Speaker, are being shown today that that's not going to happen in this province.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Vital.

MR. J. WALDING: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It was only with some reluctance that I gave leave to have this bill proceeded with today. I'm going to say a few words of caution to the House in what we are doing. My concern is not with the bill itself, but it is with the process involved in this particular case.

The parliamentary system a long time ago decided that good legislation was made when the House discussed a matter for three times, and by the time it had discussed the matter three times and agreed three times that the bill was probably a good one and it could be proceeded with.

They also decided a long time ago that in order to advance the cause of good legislation, adequate notice should be given with adequate time between each reading to allow members to consider the bill, to do their research on it, to talk to people and to have hearings, and that it was only after that due process and the rather pedestrian thinking about the bill, that when it came to the House to adopt that particular motion that they would have done so after having given due deliberation to the matter and so proceeded to an end.

I believe that still applies, and that in the interests of good legislation, there should be the proper notice given of each reading, there should be the readings on different occasions according to the rules which are our rules, and I believe the House has adopted those rules, recognizing the intelligence of them and the reason for having them. I can't believe that it makes for good legislation for the House to do things in a hurry without the necessary discussion and thought being given to the item before the House. I would certainly hope that it is not a precedent, and in fact dispensing with the rules is not a precedent, and I certainly hope that the members would not consider that when something ought to be done in somebody's opinion, that we can rush it through in one day and put in effect what is a new law in just one day.

When I see the end of the bill itself which says this bill shall expire on June 30, which makes me feel perhaps a little bit better about what we are doing in this case. The very fact that there is a sunset clause makes it a little more acceptable to me. I believe that it is time for this whole matter to be debated again.

It's 10 years since the Schreyer Government first introduced such a matter and there was considerable debate before that bill came in and in the House when the bill was presented to the members. Things have changed in 10 years, things have moved along. There has been a court decision on an Ontario bill, which I am told is similar to this. I haven't read the ruling but I'm told it's quite complicated and may well have an effect on what our bill says and the proposed new bill which will be coming in, I understand. But it will be a good thing for the House to debate and discuss the matter of a closing day as opposed to a Sunday closing day, but I don't want to debate that. I really rose to

speak of the process by which we are putting this matter through. I am not comfortable with the way that we are doing it. I certainly hope that we will not see it being done again, and I would certainly caution the House that should it be introduced again they may well not have the same unanimous consent that's being given to this bill on this day.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for River Heights.

MRS. S. CARSTAIRS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Honourable Member for St. Vital for his comments because I think they are most appropriate. I did not give unanimous consent until the sunset provision was included in this piece of legislation. But I'm not just concerned about the timing as he is; I'm also concerned about the priorities of this government. Agriculture is not an emergency situation; child abuse is not an emergency situation; but Sunday shopping is an emergency situation. I am, Madam Speaker, much more concerned about the fact that it is now still possible in the Province of Manitoba to gamble away the grocery money on a Sunday, but it is not possible to go and buy the groceries. I don't believe in Sunday shopping and I don't want to see a proliferation of Sunday shopping, but I am much more concerned that we have lost our value system and that we do not understand that gambling and casinos are in fact a tax on the poor, and they are going to affect the very fabric of life in this province.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question before the House is Second . . .

The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

MR. F. JOHNSTON: Madam Speaker, just briefly on the bill and the history of this bill, I would have hoped that the Minister of Labour would have done a little more research in the fact that the Minister of Labour, while the NDP Government was in power, Mr. Paulley passed legislation closing all the stores that have been opened in the past few years, and all there was was the small mama and papa stores on the corners of streets that were allowed to be open by the legislation that Mr. Paulley passed at that time or was passed by the government of the time.

It was the Progressive Conservative Government that came in and took a look at that legislation because what had we done, we closed up independent people and we left the Shell stations and the back stores and everybody else open, but we closed all those independent grocers that were out there. The Progressive Conservative Party examined the Ontario legislation; we found that the square footage didn't work, their process didn't work that well. We put in the legislation, this Progressive Conservative Party saying that you could operate with no more than four employees at one time, which gave the situation that you wouldn't have a large number of people being forced to work on a Sunday. We were the ones that did that so I remind the Minister of Labour and he was here at the time; I'm rather surprised that he didn't know that it was our legislation that made this the best legislation in Canada. People across Canada have said

that Manitoba had the best legislation in Canada. I just make my comment to the Member for River Heights that I am quite sorry about casinos and that type of thing. I certainly think it's disgusting what this government has done as far as casinos are concerned, but we will discuss that later.

The only thing I would say that the Member for River Heights, who uses the excuse, and we believe that there should be hearings also, but the Member for River Heights said - at least she mentioned it today and she said on television last night - that she wouldn't give leave for the bill unless the sunset clause was there. And I think that's good to have hearings; we should all be very concerned, as the Member for St. Vital says, that we don't allow people to be heard. But what she has done is give the big people that want to stay open a time to organize and fight to see that there's Sunday shopping in this province. That's what she has done by not allowing this bill to go through today completely. So, Madam Speaker, I just want to put that on the record.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question before the House is Second Reading of Bill No. 7.

The Honourable Member for Pembina.

MR. D. ORCHARD: Madam Speaker, I would like to make a few brief comments on this bill. You know, we are talking about an issue that past Progressive Conservative Governments addressed in legislation which, through the court process, was found to require this amendment. I haven't changed my position from when we passed that legislation some eight years ago, and I approached this from maybe a different perspective, representing rural Manitoba, because there is no question that SuperValu - and I will name them as one of the competitors - and indeed Safeway, the major chains, would next get their market share from rural shoppers. And I have to tell you, as we tried to tell the Minister of Agriculture today, that rural Manitoba cannot stand to lose one more job, one more business or future investment in the community. I am trying to point that out to the Minister responsible for MPIC in his actions that's going to drive a business potentially out of the marketplace because MPIC doesn't look after their customers.

But, Madam Speaker, I cannot support wide open Sunday shopping because of its impact on my constituency, jobs in my constituency, and the people I am elected to represent and protect in here as much as possible. That's why I would have been comfortable with the original proposition because when I come before hearings, or whatever, my position will likely not be swayed by any argument that's to be made because what I am voting for here today is protection of jobs in the Pembina constituency, in Carman and Morden, in Pilot Mound and Crystal City and Miami and Roland; that's where I want jobs to maintain. And, Madam Speaker, I know you have a soft spot in your heart for jobs in Roland.

Madam Speaker, I simply want to tell you that I am completely shocked, ashamed and disgusted that every man and woman on the NDP side of this House today would vote down the request for an emergency debate. To do what, Madam Speaker? Not to listen to us on

this side of the House who for five years have been trying to drill it into the Minister of Agriculture and his Cabinet colleagues that he's got problems in rural Manitoba in the farm community.

No, we wanted simply, before the Minister of Finance brings down his Budget, to allow the farm community to come before the Agriculture Committee and tell the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the rest of the Cabinet the difficulties in rural Manitoba, because it's obvious to us, and becoming more and more obvious to us, that the Minister of Agriculture is a lightweight who isn't listened to in Cabinet.

And what did we do, Madam Speaker? We voted to have that debate, to have that committee struck. Everyone of those people over there voted to deny the farmers the opportunity to speak about their problems; they voted to deny that opportunity. And here, Madam Speaker, we have got legislation before us controlling what? Controlling the shopping for food items on Sunday while the NDP abandon the people that fill the shelves, the farmer of this province, by denying them a voice before this Legislature to tell his people the problems they have; that's what we did. And I have to ask my honourable friends opposite: where are your priorities? Do you want full food shelves? Do you want farmers, do you want family farms filling those shelves? You're denying the shopping. I agree with that on Sunday, but let's take a look at how the food gets there, and you people refuse to listen to the people that fill the shelves because you denied the opportunity for all rural Manitoba farmers, businessmen and organizations, to come in here and tell you the problem that we've been telling you for six years and you won't listen.

We wanted the farmers to tell you directly and you denied that today, and you will pay the price for that, for having a lightweight Minister of Agriculture whom you won't listen to.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Labour to close debate.

HON. A. MACKLING: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the constructive comments that members on the other side of the House have made in connection with the need to advance this legislation, and I appreciate the spirit of cooperation that has been exhibited in allowing the legislation be dealt with in the manner in which it has been organized.

I want to indicate to the Honourable Member for St. Vital that this is not new legislation; it is restoring the meaning and intent in the letter, as indicated by the Honourable Member for Brandon West, the letter of the law as it was developed in 1977. Certainly the intent is not changed at all.

The Honourable Member for St. Norbert is concerned about an interpretation of some verbiage in the existing act. I recognize that not anything that we craft - obviously it was crafted in 1977 or in 1978 - is letter perfect and there may be need to change other words from time to time, but my view is that with these changes we are making good law.

In respect to the concerns of the Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek, I want to put on the record my concern that this government has indicated that super corporations in this province and elsewhere that they

are not above the law, and no corporation should defy the law and believe that they should be able to manipulate the law and interpret the law in such a manner to defy the will of the people as recorded by this Legislature. And this Legislature, in 1977 and in 1978, indicated its intention in respect to this field of human endeavour. It is certainly this Minister's intention, this government's intention, that the will of the people be maintained.

The Honourable Member for Pembina, quite rightly, has indicated a concern in respect to the effect that Superstore operation seven days a week could have on communities the length and breadth of Manitoba. He's quite right in his concerns in that regard. However, I disagree with him when he suggests that doing what we are doing now, by consent, is somehow indicating our lack of concern for farmers in this province and the plight of agriculture. There will be an opportunity for him to participate, and for his leader to participate in that debate, Madam Speaker. I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Pembina joining us on this side, saying to your federal brethren in Ottawa, it's time for fair play for Manitoba farmers.

Madam Speaker, with those few words I commend the passage of this legislation.

QUESTION put, MOTION carried.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, in order to move the bill through the next stage at Committee of the Whole, I seek again unanimous consent to allow Bill No. 7 to be advanced two or more stages in one day, according to Rule 87(3), so that we then can move into the Committee of the Whole.

MADAM SPEAKER: Does the Honourable Minister have unanimous consent to waive the requirements of Rule 87(3)? (Agreed)

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Retail Business Holiday Closing Act.

MOTION presented and carried and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Retail Business Holiday closing Act, with the Honourable Member for Burrows in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

BILL NO. 7 - THE RETAIL BUSINESSES HOLIDAY CLOSING ACT

MR. CHAIRMAN, C. Santos: Committee of the Whole, please come to order to consider Bill No. 7, An Act to amend the Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act.

Does the Minister have any introductory statement to make?

HON. A. MACKLING: I just wanted to put on the record my appreciation, and I believe the appreciation of all members of the House, of the very able and excellent assistance of Legislative Counsel, Mr. Yost, in respect to making the drafts available so quickly, as requested. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the pleasure of the committee? Shall we go page-by-page, or clause-by-clause, or bill as a whole? We shall take up the bill as a whole.

Is it the will of the committee that I report this bill? (Agreed)

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Committee of the Whole considered Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act, and agreed to report the same without amendment.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Burrows.

MR. C. SANTOS: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inkster, that the Report of the Committee of the Whole be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Yes, Madam Speaker. It is necessary one more time to seek unanimous consent to allow the bill to be advanced two or more stages in one day under Rule 87(3) for Third Reading, so I seek that unanimous consent at this time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Does the Honourable Minister have unanimous consent of the House to waive Rule 87(3)? (Agreed)

THIRD READING

BILL NO. 7 - THE RETAIL BUSINESSES HOLIDAY CLOSING ACT

BILL NO. 7, by leave, was read a third time and passed.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am advised that His Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor is about to arrive to grant Royal Assent to Bill No. 7.

ROYAL ASSENT

DEPUTY SERGEANT-AT-ARMS, Mr. A. Roy MacGillivray: His Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor.

His Honour George Johnson, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the Throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour in the following words:

Friday, 27 February, 1987

MADAM SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour.

The Legislative Assembly, at its present Session, passed a bill, which in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which bill I respectfully request Your Honour's Assent.

Bill No. 7 - An Act to amend The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail.

MR. CLERK, W. Remnant: In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor doth assent to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. B. URUSKI: Madam Speaker, I certainly wouldn't want to disallow any debate on agriculture and, by leave, we are prepared to debate on the Throne Speech.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, order please. I am sorry, I could not hear what the Honourable Minister of Agriculture was saying, but . . . order please. Order please. Does the Honourable Minister of Agriculture have a point of order?

HON. B. URUSKI: Madam Speaker, we are certainly, on this side, prepared to grant leave to continue the debate by leave, the debate on the Throne Speech, to deal with the agricultural issues. If members wish to continue the debate on agriculture, we're prepared to stay here, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: For the Minister's information and the information of the House, the item on the Order Paper for discussion is the Speech from the Throne. The motion earlier today, I ruled out of order. So I'm not quite sure what the Honourable Minister of Agriculture is hoping to debate.

Order please.

The Honourable Opposition House Leader.

MR. G. MERCIER: Madam Speaker, certainly in response to the Minister for Agriculture, we are prepared to have the Committee for Agriculture sit beginning Monday morning, Tuesday morning, to hear representations from farmers in Manitoba on the financial crisis they are facing. If that's what the Minister is proposing, Madam Speaker, we're prepared to do that. We hope the Government House Leader will stand up, Madam Speaker, and call the committee for Tuesday morning to hear the farmers of Manitoba.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. We do not have a motion on the floor for debate. The Honourable Opposition House Leader just made a suggestion about orders of business which certainly could be taken under consideration by the two House leaders, but we don't have a motion in front of the House to debate this afternoon.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

Order please, order please. Order please. I'm having difficulty hearing the advice that members are trying to give to the Chair.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Earlier in the day, the members opposite indicated that they wanted an opportunity to debate the issue. At that time . . .

SOME HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

HON. J. COWAN: I'm sorry. They had requested an emergency debate. At that time, I indicated very clearly that we would be prepared to grant leave for speakers to speak on that issue if they wished to do so today. They told us that was a priority with their caucus. The Member for River Heights has told us that she has priorities. It's strange that none of these priorities were addressed in any length in the question period, but if, in fact, they are priorities of members opposite and we have waived Rule 35(1) giving precedence of the Throne Speech Debate, we are prepared to listen to and debate with members opposite the matter which they brought forward earlier by leave and I think it's only fair that we reinforce the fact that we had offered that leave earlier and we're still prepared to allow that leave to proceed.

HOUSE BUSINESS

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Opposition House Leader on a matter of House Business, I presume, because we have no motions before the House, may I make it very clear at this moment.

MR. G. MERCIER: On a matter of House Business, Madam Speaker.

Will the Government House Leader call the Agricultural Committee for two o'clock this afternoon so that they can plan a series of meetings throughout the Province of Manitoba to hear from the farmers suffering from the severest financial crisis they have ever suffered?

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business.

We are prepared to allow the members opposite to make the case which they said they wanted to make earlier because this was such an emergency, an urgent and priority item with them. We are prepared now to allow leave to have them make that case. If, in fact, the members opposite want to discuss in the normal course of business of this Legislature when committees meet, I'm prepared to sit down and discuss with them at any time when any particular committee meets and we'll make the judgments as we have in the past according to those discussions. But the fact is, earlier there was a request for an emergency debate; it was an urgent matter that had to be dealt with today; the ordinary business of the House had to be set aside. At that time, we said we were prepared to offer leave to allow speakers to make that case and we are still prepared to offer leave, to have speakers make that case.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. I wonder if the Honourable Government House Leader could clarify what his suggestion is. I ruled the matter of urgent

public importance on a debate about whether we would have an agriculture committee meet out of order earlier today. My decision on that matter of urgent public importance was upheld. Is the Honourable Government House Leader suggesting that we go ahead with that motion by leave? Is that the suggestion that he is making, that by leave we go ahead with that discussion?

HON. J. COWAN: No, Madam Speaker. What I am suggesting is that we are prepared, as we were earlier, to arrange the business of this House in a manner so as to allow leave to members opposite to make the case that they felt was so strongly needed just a few hours ago. We are still prepared to cooperate with them so that they can make the case for the calling of the committee if that's what they wish to do, and that debate can proceed in any manner which they would consider to be appropriate. We are trying to be cooperative in this regard so that they can have the opportunity to speak to the issue. I don't think we want to pre-empt that debate by having the committee called without having heard their reasons for that or having an opportunity to debate the issue. But we are certainly prepared to grant leave to allow that issue to be discussed at this particular time.

MR. G. MERCIER: Madam Speaker, for the last time, simply for clarification. The Minister confirmed that he is refusing as Government House Leader to call the Agricultural Committee for two o'clock this afternoon so that they can plan a series of meetings throughout the Province of Manitoba to hear from farmers in financial difficulties.

HON. J. COWAN: I'm saying, Madam Speaker, that, by leave, we are prepared to have a debate on that particular issue. That is what the members opposite wanted earlier. I assume that they sincerely wanted that to happen when they put the motion forward and we're prepared to allow it to happen at this time. If they don't want that to happen at this time, I'm prepared to sit down with the Opposition House Leader at any time and discuss the scheduling of committees that will fit in with the schedules of the members who would have to sit on those committees.

MR. G. MERCIER: Will the Minister call the committee for two o'clock this afternoon so they can plan a series of meetings to hear from farmers? That is our request; there's need for further discussion; will you call the committee for this afternoon at two o'clock?

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please, order please. Order please. Does the Honourable Government House Leader have any more advice to give on this matter - additional?

HON. J. COWAN: We are prepared, as was requested earlier in the day to have the debate proceed on that particular issue in a manner which is acceptable to the House. We are prepared to discuss the issue. We are not prepared to pre-empt the right of any individual of this House to have an opportunity to participate in discussing that issue and that's what we thought was being requested earlier by the Opposition. If I am wrong

in interpreting what the Opposition had requested earlier through their request for an emergency debate, then I have held out the offer that we are prepared at any time as Opposition House Leader and House Leader to discuss when committees might be scheduled in the normal fashion. But it's obvious to me that they don't want to debate at this time, Madam Speaker, but it should be equally obvious that we are prepared to debate it if that is the case.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please, order please. Order please. The Honourable Government House Leader is suggesting that if there is unanimous consent of the House - order please - that we could move into a debate on the motion of the Honourable Member for Virden. The Honourable Opposition House Leader is asking whether the government is willing to set an immediate or a certain date for a specific committee. So I have two issues on the floor. Could we deal with them one at a time.

No. 1, is there unanimous consent to debate at this point the motion from the Honourable Member for Virden? All those in favour, say aye. All those opposed say nay.

Order please, order please. I'm asking if there is unanimous consent.

MR. G. MERCIER: Just for clarification - unanimous consent to debate the matter raised by the Member for Virden or unanimous consent to continue the Throne Speech Debate.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I'm asking if there's unanimous consent to debate the motion put forward earlier by the Honourable Member for Virden.

Order please. I understood that was what the Honourable Government House Leader was suggesting. Am I mistaken?

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, perhaps it was that I was not articulate enough in my suggestion.

MADAM SPEAKER: Perhaps.

HON. J. COWAN: My suggestion was that - and I thought I made it clear earlier in the day and more recently - that we would give leave to hear from the members opposite and to carry on a dialogue or debate in whatever manner necessary on this particular issue, on their request today.

Their request was to call the Standing Committee forward. I assume that if they made that request, they're prepared to defend that request and we're prepared to enter into that debate with them. It does not require the emergency motion; it does not require any emergency debate. By leave, we can order and structure that debate to take place at this particular time in whatever way is acceptable to members of this House. That is what we're suggesting.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. It is my understanding that, by unanimous consent, this House can do most anything - as we have just amply demonstrated this afternoon.

Friday, 27 February, 1987

It's my understanding that the Honourable Government House Leader is suggesting that we go back to the issue that the Honourable Member for Virten brought to us earlier today, which I ruled out of order, and which the House upheld.

However, at this point, the Honourable Government House Leader is suggesting if there's unanimous consent, we can reconsider that and debate that particular motion.

Order please. Would honourable members please help facilitate this issue, because all I'm getting in terms of advice is more confusion.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: If I may, I am not tying our request for unanimous consent to the motion that was previously presented. You have ruled on that motion and, in fact, your ruling has been upheld and we support you unequivocally in that ruling.

What I indicated at that time is we would be prepared to considered leave for the members opposite to speak on that issue and for members on this side to speak of the issue of the calling of the Standing Committee. It does not have to be tied to the emergency resolution; it can be tied to the Throne Speech if members opposite wish to do that; it can be tied to a general debate, a motion which is brought forward immediately, if members wish to do that.

All we're saying is we're prepared to expedite the discussion which they wanted earlier on the agricultural situation in Manitoba. If they prefer to have the two House Leaders sit down and discuss how the Standing Committee might be called in the future, in the normal practice, we're prepared to do that as well, but we very clearly want the record to be clear that we are not attempting to cut off debate on this particular issue. We are attempting to facilitate it and we are seeking unanimous consent and cooperation of members opposite to do that in any way possible.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. I have no motion in that case - if I understand the Honourable Government House Leader clearly - I have no motion before the House, in that case, on which to get unanimous consent.

I rule the Honourable Government House Leader out of order.

We have one outstanding issue which is the Honourable Opposition House Leader's request, which is an order of business; it is not a motion. So at this point I would like the Honourable Government House Leader to take the request of the Honourable Opposition House Leader into consideration, and either they can discuss it on the floor right now and come to some conclusion or they can take it away with them and discuss it over the weekend and announce to the House what the conclusion of their discussion is; but I have nothing on the Order Paper at this point to discuss formally.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. J. COWAN: Madam Speaker, I'm always pleased to be able to enter into discussions with the Opposition House Leader as to how to expedite the business of this House and Standing Committees in the best interests of all Manitobans.

I would be pleased to discuss with him the calling of the Standing Committee of Agriculture at a time in the future to be . . . well, what I hear them saying is, "right now." If they want it right now, I think we have to have the discussion in the House right now.

They tell us they don't want the discussion in the House right now so we are prepared to enter into discussion . . .

SOME HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please. The Honourable Government House Leader, could you finish your remarks?

HON. J. COWAN: It's obvious to me that they don't want that discussion. It also should be obvious to them that we're prepared at any time to enter into a dialogue on when committees should be held, in the normal practice, and the Opposition House Leader and I do that all the time. So I'm prepared to discuss with him, over the course of the day or the next couple of days, when that might happen.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Honourable Opposition House Leader, to conclude the dialogue.

MR. G. MERCIER: Can I?

MADAM SPEAKER: Please.

MR. G. MERCIER: Okay. Madam Speaker, on this matter of Government House Leader, let the record be clear, the government supported your decision not to hold an emergency debate on this topic today.

I specifically asked the Government House Leader to call the committee for two o'clock to plan a series of meeting beginning next week to hear from farmers in this province. That has not been accepted. There's been lots of discussion. Either you're for it or against it, and you're against it.

If the Government House Leader wishes to reverse his position at some point in time, I'd be glad to meet with him at any time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Sturgeon Creek, that the House do now adjourn.

MOTION presented and carried and the House adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday next.