

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, February 13, 1990.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation): Could I revert back to tabling of reports, please?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to revert back to presenting reports? (Leave) The Honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the Annual Report 1988-89 for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct Honourable Members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today a delegation from the People's Republic of China. It consists of Mr. Ma Delin, Mr. Wang Wangang, Mr. Chen Youliang, Mr. Li Zhenzhong, Mr. Yang Xiofei, Ms. Zhong Gang, and Dr. Robert Goluch.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

Also with us this afternoon, we have from the Darwin School thirty Grade 9 students. They are under the direction of Tim Watters. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme).

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Faculty of Medicine Accreditation Downgrading

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in 1987 there was one medical speciality in the province's medical school with accreditation problems. Today, no fewer than eight: obstetrics and gynecology, general surgery, cardiology, urology, pediatrics, pediatric respiratory, pathology and endocrinology. All have had their accreditation downgraded from permanent to provisional.

Will the Minister of Health tell this House why these programs for medical specialists are in jeopardy and what he plans to do about it?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, before my honourable friend, the Leader of

the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs), leaves the impression that physicians are not properly trained and not adequately trained and that the Faculty of Medicine is not resourced properly, I simply ask my honourable friend before she attempts to paint the Faculty of Medicine in negative terms with her question today that she ought to consider talking to the dean of the Faculty of Medicine who responded that there were concerns in the accreditation, and they are fully prepared to address those concerns as they always have been during the review by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons.

* (1335)

Medical Profession Recruitment

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Never before has the Faculty of Medicine had to deal with eight specialties in problems. Mr. Speaker, because of shortages in all of these areas, Manitobans are forced to seek services elsewhere. It is because of shortages of experts that the training is deteriorating.

Mr. Speaker, specialists want to be where other specialists gather. Residents want to train where specialists provide a first-class training centre. Can the Minister of Health tell us how he is going to attract new specialists when he has programs in serious problems?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the issue my honourable friend raises in a semblance of ignorance because she has not obviously talked to the dean of Medicine. I accept that. I accept that she would not have wanted to find out the information, that she wants to get out her doom and gloom brush and tar the Faculty of Medicine in an unnecessary way.

Let me deal with the issue of specialists. That is precisely, Mr. Speaker, why we have put on the Table the guaranteed services fund of \$24 million in the current negotiations and contract offer to the MMA for the specific purpose of allowing us to offer more competitive fee-for-service arrangements to certain specialties who are below the national average. That is why we have put that much resource toward that ability to bring income potential up closer to the national average, exactly the course of action we are on.

Faculty of Medicine Program Enhancement

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): What the Health Minister does not understand is that the payment to the physician is only one part of the equation. The other part of the equation is working with other individuals who can teach them, constantly

enhance their learning with regard to a particular specialty. Can the Minister of Health tell us what programs are to be implemented in the Faculty of Medicine which will both enhance the deteriorating programs and create new and better programs?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend's operative word is education. I would suggest with all the respect I can muster to my honourable friend that she phone the Faculty of Medicine, speak to the dean and become educated in what they are doing over there in the administration of the teaching programs in the Faculty of Medicine.

Mr. Speaker, the Faculty of Medicine is autonomous from the Department of Health. If my honourable friend were to care and phone the dean of Medicine, the issue is not level of funding. The issue is within the faculty to resolve. They are fully prepared to do that and in fact are working on it. Let my honourable friend not paint with doom and gloom in her negative brush the Faculty of Medicine in the Province of Manitoba.

* (1340)

Surgical Training

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): The bottom line is that we have a shortage of general surgeons. The shortage of general surgeons is resulting in a reduced ability of hospitals to provide necessary surgical service. We pointed out yesterday a young man having to wait four days for surgery. We are told that is not uncommon, that is ongoing.

Can the Minister tell this House what programs and initiatives his department is initiating in order to ensure that there is appropriate general surgical training so that surgeries can continue to take place, and they do not have to go out of the province for routine surgery?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that the Leader of the Opposition does not know what she is talking about. For routine surgery, no Manitoban leaves this province unless they choose to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the Faculty of Medicine is the governing body which is responsible for training surgeons in the Province of Manitoba, and they will continue to do that as they have in the past. They will even continue to do that should—God forbid—there ever be a Liberal Minister of Health in the Province of Manitoba, who will not interfere with the Faculty of Medicine but will provide them adequate funding as we have done.

On the second point that my honourable friend makes without knowledge, if she understood the purpose behind the guaranteed services fund, which is part of the three-year offer to the MMA, she would understand that there is provision of \$24 million; \$7.5 million the first year; \$8 million the second; \$8.5 million the third to bring closer to national average those underpaid specialists, to enhance recruitment and retention ability of specialist physicians in the Province of Manitoba, a progressive offer to the MMA.

Mrs. Carstairs: But he answered his own question when he said that Manitobans are choosing to leave the province to have just ordinary and regular surgeries performed. Why? Because they have to wait for eternally long periods of time in order to get it done here in the Province of Manitoba.

Funding

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, hospital budgets have been pared to the bone. This Minister would like to have us believe that they have all kinds of dollars that they are just choosing not to spend on surgery. That is simply not the case. Will the Minister advise this House what additional funding he is prepared to guarantee in order that Manitoba will not lose eight specialist areas in this province?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, again the importance of a telephone call from the Leader of the Liberal Party to the dean of the Faculty of Medicine would enable her not to embarrass herself in believing that money solves all the problems, because the dean clearly said it is not a financial issue. But when you are a Liberal and you are in Opposition, you back up the Brink's truck to any problem.

Mr. Speaker, because I maybe was not adequately clear to my honourable friend, the Leader of the Liberal Party, when I said that there was nearly an 8 percent increase in last year's budget to the Health Sciences Centre, let me put it in clearer terms for her. The budget this year at the Health Sciences Centre is over \$17 million greater this year than last year. Now if the Brink's truck driver that leads the Liberal Party does not think that is enough, tell Manitobans how much more and how many taxes you would raise.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Carstairs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but this is from the same Minister who underspent the health care budget by \$27 million, dollars which were budgeted for health care in the Province of Manitoba.

Residency Training

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister. The Winnipeg 2000 study showed us our young people were leaving, among those are young doctors who are leaving to seek residencies elsewhere, and when they go, Mr. Speaker, they rarely return. What is this Minister doing to ensure that residency training in this province, in all of these specialty areas, will guarantee doctors for the future in the Province of Manitoba?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): I am very amused at my honourable friend, the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs). She mentions the lapsed funding. I want to tell you not only did she not, with

health as her major issue, ask a single question in Estimates regarding the lapsed funding, she never even poked her nose into the committee over there. That is how much she cares about Health Estimates and health spending in the Province of Manitoba.

My honourable friend, the Liberal Leader—and I tell her as I have told her critic who knows it. He is not asking these questions because he knows the hospital budgets were fully expended last year to provide almost 8 percent increased funding this year and more than 8 percent last year. The Brink's truck driver leading the Liberal Party says it is not enough. Tell Manitobans what taxes you are going to raise when you are going to throw money at every single problem, even when money is—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1345)

Manitobans with Disabilities Pediatric Services

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, today I want to raise again the issue of services for Manitobans with disabilities. I would like to pose these questions to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson).

I have just attended a press conference at the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities with a number of families who are facing incredible emotional stress and difficulty trying to provide adequate services for their children. They have joined together to call on this Government to say there are no services, pediatric services, for children with disabilities in rural Manitoba.

I point to the families of Josef Mulaire from St. Pierre Jolys, Jaquelyn Cournoyer from Lorette and Adam Gerbrandt, child of Greg and Naomi, of Grunthal, Manitoba, all of whom have said: we want to do our part, but we need some resources and help from the Government of the Day.

I would ask the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) given this critical situation for these families and these children, instead of referring this matter to some distant discussion around budgets for future years, will she deal with this on an emergency basis, sit down with the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, and come up with an immediate plan to help these parents help themselves?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): I thank the Member for that question. I can certainly look into the circumstances of the persons she has mentioned, and I will ask the department to do that.

I should remind the Member, however, that the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities does provide services in many areas of Manitoba with funds provided by this department and the Health Department and United Way. Those funds were increased this year.

Her question about meeting with that organization, I have done so in the past and I would be happy to do so in the future.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, these examples of these three families are only examples of over 100 children in rural and northern Manitoba who are without adequate service. They are receiving incomplete service, in some cases no service, best said. I would ask the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) if she has received a copy of letters from these and other parents, particularly one from Anita Mulaire, who says it is a strange and terrible journey, panic rising across great oceans of tears brimming with dread and distress as one mourns the loss of the perfect child and comes face to face with the reality.

Will the Minister agree to address these sentiments, these concerns, these real needs of Manitobans and come forward with a plan immediately to provide some additional services for children with disabilities in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put. The Honourable Minister of Family Services.

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, I am concerned about these people, and no, I have not received those letters as yet. I imagine they are recently written and will be coming to me shortly.

I indicated to the Member when she asked these questions last week that we certainly will be looking at all these matters when we are preparing our budgets for next year. All these matters that have been brought to my attention will be discussed and evaluated when we make our decisions with regard to what monies we make available or are able to make available for next year.

Program Funding Increase

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): The trouble is, Mr. Speaker, these children cannot wait. If you have a disability, you need the support now. You need the therapy now in order to have the hope of leading a healthy productive life in the future.

I would ask the Minister, does she not agree that an increase of funding to an organization like the SMD at below the cost of inflation over several years running, if indeed that is not a cut and that therefore this organization in order just to keep up with the cost of living is going to have to cut back some services? Is she prepared to step in before that time and ensure an increase in funding so that this valuable organization, the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, is not forced to cut back any valuable services?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the Member in her first question that I would certainly look at these individual cases that she has mentioned. The Member should be aware and should not be saying that there have been cutbacks because there have not been cutbacks.

Consistently over the years from 1985 until 1989-90, which is the current year we are in, there have been increases to that particular agency. There has been a recent increase by the Department of Health of \$94,000 to their wheelchair program, which is also added to this, a very valuable service provided by that agency, and they are also funded by United Way.

* (1350)

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Mentally Handicapped Employment Program Funding

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Minister relates to her answer yesterday pertaining to a service for individuals with mental handicaps, and that was the cutback by this Government of all money to Premier Personnel, an employment placement agency for people with mental handicaps. I would ask the Minister, since she said that this is totally a federal initiative, federally funded, how she can say that when nearly 75 people served by that agency and of these at least 50 are or have been on the caseloads of her own department, how can she refer individuals from her own responsibility to this and then put all the responsibility on the federal Government?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, it is a federally funded program through the jobs strategy. I had indicated to the Member yesterday that last year we gave them funding but it was emergency funding and that I am meeting with them shortly to discuss their funding needs for next year.

Manitobans with Disabilities Deficit Budget

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): My question is for the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson). Today the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities took their concerns to the public with a press conference. Three rural families who have children with disabilities spoke of major barriers to speech, physio, and occupational therapy.

The Minister of Family Services says the society received a 3.5 percent increase in their budget. This is wrong information. The society only received an increase in their salaries. The real increase to their budget is 2.8 percent and with inflation it is even less.

What does the Minister of Family Services suggest to the society? Should they run a deficit budget or should they suspend services to clients?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): The department funds the various programs run by the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities. Their board decides how they will spend those funds. They are a responsible organization. I am sure they are trying to work within their budget.

Service Reductions

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): I have a supplementary question to the same Minister. If this society is to run within their budget, that means they will have to suspend some services. Can the Minister indicate to us, and therefore to the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, which services should they suspend in order to stay within their budget?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): I indicated before that they are run by a board who

will make the management decisions of how they spend their funds. We fund them for specific programs. We have increased that funding. They are a responsible organization, and they will live within their budget if at all possible.

Manitobans with Disabilities Funding Increase

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): I have a final supplementary to the same Minister. The Minister told the society that they would be looking at all these issues when they prepared the budget for last year. Now she is saying they will be looking at all these issues when they prepare the budget for next year. Given that this year's budget does not reflect an understanding of the issues by this Minister, can the Minister tell us, why should the society believe what the Minister says today?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): The society got an increase in funding. They did not get a decrease. They did not get the increase they asked for. I do not know of any organization that did. We have to live within our means.

I am not asking the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities to do anything more than I am asking of other agencies and my own department.

LynnGold Resources Inc. UIC Benefits

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond). We now see how Tory co-operation really works. One day this Government gives the workers of Lynn Lake \$1,200 each, a mere fraction of what they are owed in severance pay, and the next day the federal Government takes away half of it. While the workers get a pittance, the two sides are pointing fingers at each other. Mr. Speaker, this is truly enlightening for Members on how not to govern.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Labour is: given that the federal Government's action was indeed predictable at the time that these payments were made, why did this Minister announce with great fanfare that the workers in Lynn Lake would get \$1,200 each when she knew full well that they would not get that or anywhere near that?

* (1355)

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, we made available the \$1,200 to the workers in Lynn Lake to make sure that they would have the money before Christmas. We weighed that. We are as appalled as anyone that the federal Government is taking that money from the workers. We have been in touch with the Honourable Barbara McDougall's office and we are being in touch with them again today to see if we can get that decision reversed.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I am having a bit of problem. I know the third Party is a bit uptight about having propped up this Government for a year and a half and they are—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Severance Pay

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. James has the floor.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, the very interesting twist about this decision is that by seeing this severance pays wages, which the federal Government has said they are doing, it actually supports the argument of this caucus that this Government can and should be going after the directors of that corporation for the severance pay which they negotiated but did not pay.

Will this Minister get aggressive about collecting this severance pay and get on the side of the working miners instead of passively going to bankruptcy meetings?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, we have already served orders on the directors for severance pay. I am sorry if the Member was not aware of it, but that has already been done. December 12 we went after the vacation wages, and then further to that we went after the directors for a further \$2,568,155 and that has been done.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, in fact this Minister promised to pay up to \$3,000 for each worker to the law firm, Wolch Pinx Tapper Scurfield, to research the issue of whether or not there is a claim for severance pay; however, is the Minister aware that she herself can initiate, follow through and collect on a claim against the corporate directors? Why has she cut the workers loose on this issue? Why is she not taking the initiative herself and follow—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Minister of Labour.

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have done, and the orders have been issued. We cannot do anything further than that.— (interjection)— We have not.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson. Order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the Liberals asking questions involving working people. I hope they will change their position on final offer selection. If they really—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson is quite aware that his postamble has absolutely nothing to do with his question that he is going to pose. Is it? Does it? I accept the Honourable Member's apology. The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: One half of the coalition on final offer selection questions, not the other half. So I will ask the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

* (1400)

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and his colleagues repeatedly show disdain for the Rules of this House, but today he is showing abuse. I suggest he be called to order for that.

Mr. Speaker: On the same point of order, the Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: On the point of order, I indicated that I recognized that the Rules say that one can only ask questions of the Government Members. I apologized for breaching it. I have a question for the Minister on final offer selection.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader, I would like to remind Honourable Members that time is extremely scarce. We have numerous Members attempting to gather on the floor and pose their questions.

Bill No. 31 Withdrawal

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson kindly put his question please.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour who is also the Minister responsible for Status of Women.

Today an organization, the Coalition Opposed to the Repeal of Final Offer Selection, once again called on the Government to withdraw Bill 31, withdraw its attempt to remove one of the most progressive items of labour legislation in this country. What I would like to ask the Minister of Labour is, will she now listen to the two largest labour federations representing the working people of this province and the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women, speaking for the many women who are concerned about this Government's actions, and now withdraw Bill 31, a very progressive piece of legislation, final offer selection,

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which is being withdrawn by Bill 31, with the clock being rolled back?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, no, I will not be withdrawing that piece of legislation.

Bill No. 31 Withdrawal

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, the Minister does not want to listen to the working people and the women of Manitoba. My next question is to the Premier, and it relates to the fact that the Minister responsible for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst) has an ad—I have a copy of it from November 1989, which I would like to table in the Legislature—in the Western Commerce and Industry magazine, if I could table a copy of this. In the ad it refers to the fact that Manitoba consistently has—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Is there a question here? Is there a question?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Kindly put your question now, please.

Mr. Ashton: I am asking the First Minister, why is the Minister responsible for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst) saying, what we have been saying in the New Democratic Party, that we do have one of the best records on labour legislation because of things such as final offer selection? Why will he not listen to his own Minister responsible for ITT (Mr. Ernst) and withdraw his Bill 31 which would take away final offer selection in this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, unlike the New Democrats, we always believe things can get better. We are going to be improving the labour climate in this province, the labour relations climate, as was indicated and recommended in the Winnipeg 2000 Report. One of the things that we must work on is to create a more balanced climate for labour relations in this province, and that is the whole essence of the repeal of final offer selection. Bill 31, the progressive legislation which he earlier referred to, will accomplish that purpose.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is how can any one be expected to believe the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) when last year we had the lowest number of strikes, the lowest number of work stoppages in 17 years, one of the best records in Canada because of such things—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member has put his question. The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, again I repeat that in the interests of improving job creation and investment in

this province, it is absolutely imperative that we create a better climate for labour relations. I tell him in addition that what he does not say is that the average length of time for work stoppage was very much increased last year under final offer selection, and that is a key issue. Under the first year of final offer selection, it was much higher than it had been in the past, and that is a key issue in this whole area.

Remand Centre Suicide Investigation

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), yesterday in this House I raised the tragic death of Shawn McElroy last Saturday morning at the Remand Centre here in Winnipeg with the Minister, and I indicated that my information was that he was known to have been disturbed. Today we learn that his fiancée alleges she told guards at the Remand Centre that he was in fact suicidal. It would indeed be of great concern, I suggest, to all Members if guards had in fact known specifically of suicidal threats, and yet this man had succeeded in killing himself while in the custody of officials of the Government. Has the Minister spoken with the victim's fiancée, and has he spoken with the guards involved, and can he give Members some guidance today on the veracity of these allegations?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with staff of the Department of Justice, Corrections Division, with respect to this matter and was advised that the matter is the subject of a police investigation and an internal investigation. I was advised that this inmate was considered suicidal on admission and was receiving counselling.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the results of that investigation.

Construction Start

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): For the same Minister, I asked the Minister yesterday to come up with his third statement on when the Remand Centre might begin construction and he was non-committal. Later yesterday he was quoted as saying that he could not guarantee that construction would begin in 1990.

Why exactly, Mr. Speaker, can this Minister not get his act together and get construction underway on the new Remand Centre given that he has known since June of last year that the plans had to be revised, and in May of last year he said construction would begin in 1989?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Perhaps the Honourable Member can point out where I am quoted as saying that there were no guarantees or indeed that there were guarantees. Perhaps the Honourable Member can point me to the report that he is talking about.

I did say that no one is more aware of the problems associated with the conditions at the Remand Centre

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than the Members of this Government, and no one is working harder to ensure that the Remand Centre gets the construction of a new Remand Centre under way. No one is working harder on that than me and the Honourable Members on this side of the House.

Mr. Edwards: Working hard is one thing. I guess confidence is another. It has been a year and a half since the Minister promised construction would begin.

Drinking and Driving Sentence Lengths

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Finally for the Minister, is the Minister aware that people convicted of a second offence of drinking and driving and sentenced to 14 days in Headingley jail are routinely, at this time, being released after serving as few as four days because of the massive overcrowding problems at Headingley jail, and how does this policy square with his get-tough stand on drinking and driving?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has asked two questions in a second supplementary, and so I will answer both questions.

The first question dealt with competence and I cannot help but comment on competence every time the issue is raised, especially when it is raised by Members of the Liberal Party. If we were to count on the competence of the Liberal Party, I suppose we would be building a Remand Centre on which bids came in \$5 million too high. Maybe the Honourable Member would suggest that we throw \$5 million here, \$10 million there, \$11 million somewhere else to the extent of \$700 million in the space of just a few weeks.

I hope Honourable Members and the people of the Province of Manitoba understand just where the Liberal Party is coming from, led as they are by the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) whose profligate suggestions are well-known to everyone, and the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) who takes every opportunity he can to raise questions of increased spending for this, that, or the other in this House. I am happy to deal with the question of competence at every turn.

With regard to the question relating to 14-day sentences being reduced, 14-day sentences for second offences of impaired driving, those are matters that I would be happy to review with corrections officials to find out just what is the situation. I am always careful about questions raised by the Honourable Member where facts are put on the record because they have been, his questions and those of the Leader of the Opposition have been, proved to be wrong so many times. I am not suggesting that he is wrong this time, but I am—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Manufacturing Industry Employment Decline

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): In the absence of the Minister of Industry, I would like to address this to the Minister of Finance. The labour force survey which was released last week showed that the total employment level has fallen in Manitoba in January compared to January of 1989. It also showed, Mr. Speaker, that the number of persons employed in manufacturing has declined by 8.1 percent January over January.

I ask the Minister, why is the manufacturing industry in Manitoba shrinking in terms of jobs? Why do we have 5,000 fewer people working in manufacturing now in Manitoba compared to last year?

* (1410)

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I fully expected there be a question on housing starts today from the Member opposite. I take it there is some good news in that area and that is why the Member has chosen not to focus on housing starts today. I see they are up 130 percent January over January, so I would think that all Members of this Legislature would be applauding that type of information.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what numbers will point out of course is it depends from what base you have come. I can indicate that unemployment rates in the Province of Manitoba were down January '90 over January 1989 to 7.5 percent, down from 8.4, a major improvement as a result of many of the improvements, many of the announcements we have announced in two budgets.

Mr. Speaker, the Member can look over a very short time frame, or he can look at one week versus another week, but in realism one has to look over a longer period of time, and it is well apparent that indeed the situation of economic growth is improving in this province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, 8,000 people left the labour force, and if they had not, the rate would have been 8.9 percent unemployment—8.9.

Task Force

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): My supplementary question, official data also show that in January we experienced serious declines in retail trade, 3.3 percent drop, involving 3,000 fewer jobs in Manitoba in the retail trade compared to last year. Obviously, the policies

of this Government are not working. Will the Minister now be prepared to set up a task force to examine why we are losing jobs, particularly in manufacturing and the retail trade industry?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what source the Member is looking at, but I know within manufacturing shipments that we were up 9 percent. We were the second highest in Canada over the last period of measurement. The building permits increased. Of course, that was announced today at 130 percent. Retail sales rose 2 percent and increased 5 percent in the first nine months, equivalent to Canada's—Canada rose 5 percent, pardon me, in the first nine months of last year. We were equivalent to that increase. Also, within the area of private and public capital investment, up 14 percent compared to Canada at 11 percent.

So, Mr. Speaker, for every figure that the Member wants to throw over here, I can throw back three at him showing this province is doing better than the national average.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I am disappointed that the Minister is not prepared to sit down with business and labour and others in our community to resolve this matter and to examine what we might be doing better.

CareerStart'90 Statistics

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a final question for the Minister of Family Services, Mr. Speaker. She issued a news release last week announcing Careerstart'90. This is a summer job program. She did not make any reference to the number of jobs involved or the amount of money involved. Will she tell the House approximately how many jobs are involved this coming summer, how many dollars will be spent, and is this more or less than the previous year?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): As the Member knows, having been the Minister, that has to be announced as a prebudget announcement so the people can apply for the jobs and get them started. I cannot give the Member that figure at this moment, but we have authority to proceed with that program for this coming year.

Mathias Colomb Band Environment Minister Intervention

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): We again have the spectre of northern Native bands being ignored by this Conservative Government and the Conservative Government in Ottawa. Both Environment Minister Lucien Bouchard and Transport Minister Benoit Bouchard have been giving the Mathias Colomb Band and the Barren Lands Band the runaround, claiming that Island Falls is not in their jurisdiction.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, will this Environment Minister at last take up the case of these bands, help them deal through the proper channels with Ottawa, and not let the federal Government continue this shunting around as we have seen in recent letters to those bands?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out previously in the Legislature, the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey) and myself met with the affected communities and bands regarding Island Falls and agreed to help facilitate setting up a meeting with the Saskatchewan Minister of Environment to deal with the issue that they were raising. Ultimately, at the request of the Native people, that meeting was cancelled. We are still hopeful that that meeting will take place.

As for the federal aspects of the water rights within that river, it is my understanding that there is still ample opportunity for application of the Navigable Waters Act if changes to the water regime in that river do occur.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

HOUSE BUSINESS

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I wonder if there might be a disposition on the part of Honourable Members to waive Private Members' hour today so that we can accommodate the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) in his discussion of Bill No. 31.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to waive Private Members' hour today? No leave? There is no leave granted.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Ashton: I wonder if we could have some co-operation. It is very difficult. I could just barely make out what the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) was saying. If it is in regard to Private Members' hour, we do have Bills we wish to deal with today, so we would not want to see it waived.

Mr. Speaker: There is no leave granted.

* (1420)

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): May I have leave to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Flin Flon have leave to make a non-political statement? (Leave)

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Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate a number of Manitobans who have exhibited extreme athletic ability and done themselves proud over the last week in the very difficult sport of curling. People in this Chamber will know that Mr. Duane Edwards from Deloraine is the new provincial champion. I would like to congratulate Mr. Edwards and his team, but I would also like to recognize the many other competitors in the provincial playdown, in particular my friends and colleagues, former curlers from Flin Flon, who did themselves extremely proud in the championships.

Mr. Speaker, the Members of the Barry Lofgren rink, Terry Lofgren, Al Shirran and Wayne Scott are personal friends and associates of many years and, I think, as was described on the television coverage of the playdown, exhibited a great deal of poise and sportsmanship. I would like to congratulate all of the competitors in that fine old sport of curling, but particularly those from Flin Flon. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson) have leave to make a non-political statement? (Leave) The Honourable Member for Radisson.

Mr. Allan Patterson (Radisson): I think it should be put on the record, I would just like to make a correction that the Member for Flin Flon stated in his speech. He made some reference to curling being a difficult game. It is a very simple game. All one has to do is get the weight and hit the broom.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, can I have leave to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for The Pas have leave to make a non-political statement? (Leave) The Honourable Member for The Pas.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Speaker, last week several Members of the House rose and spoke about the Festival du Voyageur. Over the weekend I had an opportunity to take part in the Festival du Voyageur. It is a very enjoyable event.

This week we begin the Trappers Festival on Wednesday. I would invite all Members of the Legislature to come to The Pas and take part. I had an opportunity to grow my beard to take part in some of the festivities that take place.

I would invite all Members to come to northern Manitoba and take part in some of the unique activities that the people of northern Manitoba are going to be taking place in. I am sure they will be impressed with the hospitality of the northern people of northern

Manitoba. Even the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connelly) would be welcome if he came up to northern Manitoba to The Pas. I invite all Members to come up to The Pas and take part in the Trappers Festival this weekend.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you call the Bills in the following order: Bills 31, 35, 19, 84, 70, 47 to 52 inclusive, 57, 59 and 60.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

BILL NO. 31—THE LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), Bill No. 31, The Labour Relations Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Churchill. The Honourable Member for Churchill.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, when I was making my remarks, I discussed the fact that while we are standing in this Chamber to call upon the combined forces of the Liberals and Conservatives not to proceed with the Bill that would repeal final offer selection, there are many others outside of this Chamber who are day by day adding their voice to that call for a reasoned approach to labour relations in the Province of Manitoba.

Just earlier today, as was indicated by the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), there was a press conference by the coalition opposed to the repeal of final offer selection, which added even more names to the lists of those who have spoken out against this right-wing attack by the Liberals and the Conservatives on the rights of working people and their friends in this province. That coalition had this to say about final offer selection. They said final offer selection is a tool to bring employers and their workers together in an atmosphere of good faith bargaining to reach a mutually acceptable collective agreement.

I am going to reference some of the case histories today to indicate how that tool has actually been used in Manitoba, and how final offer selection has resulted in the bringing together of employers and employees under some very difficult circumstances so that they could in fact reach a mutually acceptable collective agreement. The coalition also discredited, as it has been discredited before, the phony facts of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), the Liberals and the Conservatives with respect to the impact of final offer selection on the labour relations climate in this province.

They say, of the 72 applications for final offer selection made since proclamation, 58 have been finalized by the board. Of those, 49, or 85 percent, resulted in negotiated collective agreements without the assistance of a selector. In other words, we avoided strikes and

lockouts in a vast majority of the cases where final offer selection was used because it did have the effect of bringing the parties together and forcing them to negotiate under an element of risk that, as serious as it is, is not as devastating to the strike or the lockout if in fact the final offer selector has to make a decision. The coalition opposed to the repeal of final offer selection said in its press release that the vast majority of organized labour community is in agreement on this issue. There should be no repeal of the legislation. Now listen to what they say, Mr. Speaker. The vast majority of organized labour is in agreement on this issue. There should be no repeal of the legislation.

So let not the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) stand in his place and pretend that he speaks for labour or that he even knows anything about what is happening in the organized labour in this province or the labour relations field in this province, because he knows not of what he speaks. He has no idea of the importance of this Bill to working people in the plants, in the shops, in the factories and in the mines and mills. When he suggests that organized labour does not want final offer selection in this province, he is wrong when it comes to the vast majority.

When he suggests that the majority of labour, which he has implied in his speech, want the repeal of this Bill, he is entirely wrong. I think he will find that there are fewer and fewer people who would like to see the repeal of final offer selection as time goes on, including some of his own colleagues. He is going to have to fight a battle with the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and a battle with the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) and a battle with the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus).- (interjection)- Well, maybe the Member for St. Norbert and the Member for St. James will find themselves on the same side of this issue if not on the same side of all issues.

I do not know, but I want to read into the record the organizations that appeared at the coalition conference this morning, and I want to highlight a number of them. First, the Manitoba Federation of Labour; that is not to be unexpected, but it is to be noted, it must be recognized and it must be dealt with, reckoned with, that the Manitoba Federation of Labour does have within its membership over 80,000, probably closer to 85,000, working men and women in this province as members of affiliated trade unions, and they have come out against the repeal of final offer selection.

They speak on behalf of those members. They speak on the basis of resolutions that have been passed at their conventions in a democratic process. Also at that coalition today were the Canadian Federation of Labour. We have heard some chuckling on the other side from time to time about perhaps not all labour was on side with respect to final offer selection, but today we had a very clear signal from the second largest labour organization in the province, the Canadian Federation of Labour, that they do not want to see the repeal of final offer selection, that they believe final offer selection is working, that they do not believe the Member for Portage (Mr. Connery) or the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) when they stand

in this place and put on the record the phony excuses and phony facts in their attempt to discredit final offer selection.

* (1430)

Also at that meeting was the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women, a group which I think shares a large agenda for improvement in society with working men and women, but is not a part of the institutionalized labour movement in this province. They have indicated very clearly that they, too, believe that the process of final offer selection is working and benefits men and particularly women in this province. They have added their voice to that of the Manitoba Women's Agenda which is made up of 36 women's organizations from across the province to call upon the Liberals and the Conservatives not to continue on with this foolishness that is going to ultimately result in strikes and lockouts where they need not be and will have the effect of reducing, if not eliminating, the ability of many working women to have collective agreements negotiated in a fair environment which will result in improved working conditions for some of those who are the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, also we have heard, not as part of the coalition today, but we have heard from the Manitoba Women's Agenda, we have heard from the Manitoba Medical Association, and the others at the coalition meeting today—and I will read them into the record—were the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Retail Wholesale and Department Store Employees Union, Carpenters Union, Local 343, International Union of Operating Engineers, Manitoba Food and Commercial Workers Union, Manitoba and Winnipeg Building and Construction Trade Council, Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport and General Workers, Manitoba Government Employees Association, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Amalgamated Transit Union, Canadian Automobile Workers.

(Mr. William Chornopyski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Those are those who just today have added their voice or reiterated their support for final offer selection, and there are many more that will continue to do so. They continue to do so on the basis of a number of common themes, and I would like to address those themes briefly.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour supports final offer selection because they believe it provides an option or an alternative to a strike or lockout in circumstances where that strike or lockout may not be necessary to reach an agreement, but one or more of the parties are on a path that will lead them invariably to that sort of conflict which could be avoided. Final offer selection gives them an opportunity to step back, to take a look at the issues, and to see if what are at the present time in their set of negotiations irreconcilable conflicts cannot be resolved in another fashion.

That is how it works in most instances. As the Manitoba Federation of Labour indicated in their press release today and others, very few instances end up with a decision of the selector. More often than not

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what happens is the risk of final offer selection drives the parties closer together, makes them become more reasonable and makes them negotiate in good faith, so the Manitoba Federation is supporting it for that reason.

It is a way to ensure that collective bargaining unfolds in as civilized and reasonable a manner as possible, knowing that from time to time strikes and lockouts will be required and not being fearful of having to fight the good fight. When that happens, they do believe that there should be other options available before having to resort to those strikes and lockouts.

The Manitoba Women's Agenda has indicated their support on the basis of that, and I quote, many women work in the service sector and need alternatives to solving disputes with their employers. They know that they are vulnerable in many of those industries because of the power of the employees, and they say that quite frankly. They say, whereas most of the service sector employers would hire strikebreakers to replace striking employees, allowing those employers to continue business operations without incentive to bargain fairly and settle dispute, they acknowledge that as a problem.

They then say that final offer selection is a solution. They say that it is a solution because it is proven to facilitate settlements as a bargaining tool by allowing employers and unions to reach an agreement that causes the least strain on both parties and the public. They also, in their Resolution No. 7 on Economic Development just recently, call on the Government to withdraw the Bill repealing final offer selection.

The Manitoba Medical Association has been much more critical of the Government with respect to their decision to repeal final offer selection. I can assure you that criticism is directed at the Liberals, notwithstanding the fact that one of the Members of the Liberal Caucus is probably a member of the Manitoba Medical Association - (interjection) - and he is. I want to tell him as I did last night that his own organization has said that because of the repeal, the MMA believes that the Government and the Liberals, who have a hand in this, are going to increase confrontation and strikes in general.

They say in their letter of February 1, 1989, to Mr. Connery that it is obvious that the Government is prepared to live with employer-employee confrontation and strikes in general, but they would far prefer to see final offer selection in place as a practical alternative to settle impasses. A practical alternative to settle impasses, that is what they would like. They are even more insightful in some of their comments, because they say, and I quote from a letter, it is evident that the Government has chosen to adopt a narrow view of collective bargaining outcomes and that the Government has not fully considered the wider public interest respecting the maintenance of health care services.

Well, it is part of the Government's agenda. Why is it part of the Government's agenda? Well, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) told us the other day. It is part of the Government's agenda because they made an election promise to big business that they

would proceed with this legislation. The Liberals as far as I know did not make that same election promise to big business. They are not as bound by the election promise to support the Bill and the repeal of final offer selection, so they must be participating and supporting the repeal on the basis of their philosophy that it is better to have strikes and lockouts, even though big business invariably has a more powerful hand and will win more than they lose in those instances at the expense of working people, than it is to have final offer selection in place.

Even the MMA in another letter on December 9, 1988, four months previous to the letter I just read out said, we can only conclude the Government has not aptly considered what is in the greater public interest.

Well, we even have the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce recommending final offer selection under certain circumstances. I last night indicated that the final offer arbitration process under the National Transportation Act is very similar to the final offer selection we have today in the Province of Manitoba as legislated under The Labour Relations Act. I also indicated that the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce had asked for final offer selection to be used in a certain incident. I could not provide all the details because I did not have the document in front of me.

I now have the document, and it says, it starts out, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce therefore recommends—and it is with respect to VIA and trying to continue on with the operation of VIA. Point 7 out of eight points I have on this page is that for the purpose of negotiation between VIA Rail Canada Incorporated and Canadian National Railways or Canadian Pacific Railways, VIA Rail be considered a shipper with full access to the final offer arbitration process as detailed in the new National Transportation Act—with full access to final offer. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce thinks it is good enough in that instance, and yet I think we are going to hear them say that they do not think it is good enough for working people. One has to question why that is.

* (1440)

I spoke yesterday about the impact that the legislation has actually had in Manitoba. I had staff call a number of parties that were involved in final offer selection where the selector had made a decision. There are only five cases. We have been able to get a hold of parties representing three of the cases.

Last night I read just labour's response. I talked to rank and file and to a staff rep who had been involved directly with the final offer selector's decision in their own case. I did not have any management responses at that time. I said yesterday that if I did get some management responses I would read them in the record as well, even if they did not substantiate everything I was suggesting, even if they substantiated other arguments. I want to be fair and read it into the record in the same way in which I read it into the record yesterday.

I asked a number of questions. This is again someone from management who is directly involved in

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implementing a contract that has been arrived at as a result of final offer selection and a decision of a selector. I asked him, do you feel that the final offer selection decision was a winner take all. That is one of the arguments. He did not say yes or no, again staff did this, I should not say I had read to him. Staff said that counsel was not in favour of final offer selection. The employer was not in favour of final offer selection, and they were disappointed in the decision. They were disappointed in the decision, but they did not say that they thought that it was a winner-take-all situation.

Again, one of the primary arguments of the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) and the Government that it is a winner-take-all situation is not substantiated by the actual experience here in Manitoba. I had the question asked if the decision was not in their favour, ask them if they felt they got nothing they were asking for throughout the negotiations. In other words, if they felt that they had got nothing they were asking for throughout the negotiations because of the decision of the final offer selector, one could say then, indeed it was a winner take all. What they said was the decision was in the union favour, but they had settled some issues before and some of those issues were in their favour, so the process was not a winner-take-all process because it had forced them to negotiate some of the issues before the selector actually had to make a decision.

One of the things that the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) and the Conservatives have said is that final offer selection creates animosity in the workplace. We asked the question, has final offer selection decision resulted in ongoing animosity between management and labour or are the parties working together to make the contract work? The answer was no, they are not resulting in ongoing animosity. That is from someone who did not win the decision. In the future would you be prepared to use final offer selection process to avoid a strike or lockout? No, they still do not want to use it in the future. That is understandable.

We have, in some cases, parties saying they would want to use it, in most cases them saying they would want to, in some cases, not. The Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) supported maybe by the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus), certainly supported by the Conservatives, has indicated that he feels there is less commitment to an agreement that has been arrived at under final offer selection. Again we asked management who did not have the decision go in their favour, do you feel less commitment to your agreement because it was arrived at under final offer selection? They said no, they do not feel less commitment.

Then the Member for St. James would have us believe that union is less accountable or responsible to its membership because it applied for final offer selection. We asked the question, do you believe the union is less accountable or responsible to its membership because final offer selection was used as a way to reach an agreement? They said that the union has the lever of decision, therefore they had been not less accountable. Do you think the union is weaker because final offer selection was used in the negotiations? That is what the Member for St. James says would happen.

That is what the Member for Portage, the Minister of Labour says would happen. Management said, no, they do not think the union is weaker because they used final offer selection.

Do you think final offer selection creates a more peaceful or less peaceful labour relations climate in your workplace? That was an argument that was put forward. It was an argument that was discounted yesterday by the two comments I read into the record as a result of three different experiences. From management's perspective, they believe that it has created a less peaceful environment. While they believe it is less peaceful, the union that was involved in this very same issue, in this very same decision, believes it is more peaceful, and the other parties that we have asked believe it is more peaceful.

I do not want to take anything away from this person's own personal feelings on it. How about in Manitoba generally? He says that their council had animosity toward final offer selection, they do not like it. I assume he believes as well that it will create less peaceful situations.

We have heard the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) say that the problem with final offer selection, as well as the Liberals say the same, is that the people involved in final offer selection do not feel as if they have participated in developing the contract and the argument of course is that they will have less commitment to it.

We ask the question, even although final offer selection was used to reach a final agreement in your own situation, do you feel that you have participated in developing the contract? Now, remember this is someone who had the decision go against them, it is a management representative, and they said, yes, they feel they have participated in developing the contract. The Liberals and the Conservatives again, together, are wrong, according to every bit of information we have, all the research that we have seen, and the actual circumstances as they have unfolded in Manitoba.

Do you think that final offer selection creates unrest in the workplace? Remember the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), in his speech saying that he knew final offer selection created unrest in the workplace, disruption in the workplace. Everyone we have talked to has said no. Here is a person who has lost a decision, with respect to final offer selection, does not like final offer selection, yet they cannot even agree with the Member for St. James. They are not aware of any unrest in the workplace that has been created as a result of final offer selection.

Then we asked them, do you feel it creates disruption in the workplace, because again the Member for St. James said it creates disruption in the workplace. Again, someone who lost a decision, does not like it, they said no disruption whatsoever. It did not create any disruption in their workplace.

How many times do you have to be proven wrong, and I say this to the Liberals and to the Conservatives, to finally come to the conclusion that what you are basing your whole reason for withdrawing final offer

selection, for the repeal of final offer selection, is based on wrong assumptions, wrong fact, wrong information, and a wrong approach, and that it is not going to lead us toward a better labour relations climate or better negotiations in the Province of Manitoba. It is going to lead us in the opposite direction.

We asked this person, as we asked the others, if they had been involved in a strike or a lockout at the present workplace or another one. Yes, they had, it lasted a week, six employees were involved, it was 15 years ago, cannot recall who won or lost the dispute. Did it create ongoing animosity? He could not recall whether it did or not. In similar circumstances today, would you prefer the use of the strike or lockout or final offer selection as a way of reaching agreement where negotiations are failing to do so? This person quite honestly said they would not prefer either one of them. They would prefer neither. They would obviously want to see the negotiations lead to the conclusion of an agreement, and I do not believe that is an unfair assessment from his perspective.

We asked, would the fact that Manitoba has final offer selection legislation have any effect on your decision to start a business in Manitoba, expand a business in Manitoba, or move a business out of Manitoba? He said it would be a factor to consider at least. He did not say it was a major factor. He did not say it would shape the decision. It would be one of the factors to consider.

We have always said that it probably is one of the factors to consider, but also one of the factors to consider is the general labour relations climate. We even have the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst) touting the consistently good labour relations climate in Manitoba as a reason for employers to locate in the province. Part of the reason for that is because of the labour legislation we have.

* (1450)

It is under an advertisement that came out of Western Commerce and industry, November 1989, called the Manitoba Advantage with Mr. Ernst's name on it, and it says why should people relocate to Manitoba. It says the reliable and productive work force plus consistently good labour-management relations have given Manitoba one of North America's best labour reputations.

That is what we heard last night with respect to how, every time that we want to talk about a change in labour relations, the Conservatives say we have the best in the country, why change it, and yet every time we do see a change coming forward, they say how much that change is going to create destruction and disruption and deterioration in the economy and why we should not change, yet five, 10, 15 years later when we go to change the labour legislation again, we hear the same arguments, no, do not change it, even though they were opposed to the earlier changes because they thought it would destroy the province, do not change it now, because we have the best labour relations climate in the country.

I had this person ask, do you think that final offer selection reduces the threat of strikes and lockouts in

Manitoba? Did not know, an honest answer, probably could not say.

Do you think that unions or management have purposely struck or locked out their employees and then extended the length of time they are on strike or involved in a lockout so they can apply for final offer selection? Well, in their instance there was no strike, they went to final offer selection first, so he could not answer that question.

Has the use of final offer selection in your own instance left a bad taste in your mouth? He said in the council's view, yes, it did, in the former council's view, he could not speak for the new council. He said it had left a bad taste in their mouths, so it did not create ongoing animosity but it certainly disappointed them.

Would you use final offer selection again in the future if you needed to do so to avoid a strike or a lockout where the major principal questions are not at stake? Yes, it is the law and they would have no choice, he says.

Do you consider final offer selection to be an unwarranted intrusion into labour relations affairs of Manitobans? He said, yes, the council thought that it was an unwarranted intrusion. When asked what general comments he would like to make either in favour of or against legislative final offer selection as it exists in Manitoba, he said parties should be allowed to settle disputes themselves, and he said I am from the old school, that is what I believe.

As you can see, while yesterday labour had a much more positive view of final offer selection, today management does not substantiate nearly one-quarter of the concerns that the Liberals and the Conservatives put on the record about final offer selection from their perspective, but they have a less favoured view of it. That brings me back to the issue of whose side are you on. It is apparent that the bosses, it is apparent that big business, it is apparent that those in management do not like final offer selection to the extent that labour does. If you speak out against final offer selection you are speaking out in favour of the bosses in the big corporations, and if you speak out against final offer selection you are doing that. If you speak out in favour of final offer selection you are speaking out in the interests of labour generally.

I want to speak a bit about final offer selection where it did not go to the point where a decision from the selector was required, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the instances that I have outlined just recently were where a decision was made. That is in fact only the case in a very small minority of the instances where final offer selection is used as a tool, and it is more often used as a tool to bring the parties together than to get a decision from the selector. I want to read you through just a couple of case histories where final offer selection was used as a tool that resulted in bringing the parties together rather than used as a means of actually getting the selector to decide on one package or the other.

There was the case of Fisons-Western Corporation with a number of plants in eastern Manitoba whose

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contract expired on May 31, 1988. The employer actually first applied for final offer selection on the first window, which was April 12, 1988.

The workers rejected final offer selection in that instance, and that under cuts the argument that we have heard from those who pretend to be friends of labour when they say that the ability of the employer to apply for final offer selection is going to make the employees give up the right to strike, because they will agree to the final offer selection because the employer wants them to, and they will have lost their opportunity to strike as a result of that.

In this case the employer wanted them to. I know of other cases where the employer applied for final offer selection, and it was not accepted by the majority of the workers, and it was a democratic decision. So that certainly is not an argument that has held any validity in Manitoba's experience.

So the contract expired, the employer applied final offer selection and then the contract expired. They actually went into a strike on June 1, 1988, the day after the contract expired. The employer scaled down the operation, but without much success I am told. Then the employer threatened closure of the operation of up to one year in order to bring the people back to the table. The union applied for final offer selection a second window on August 2, 1988, the strike terminated on August 30, 1988. The parties were brought back together and they began to bargain seriously and a collective agreement was concluded September 1988 without the selector being required to decide on one or the other of the packages which were brought before him or her.

So what it forced, with respect to the labour relations and the negotiating climate in that particular instance, was the parties could come together to bargain seriously to stop their strike, to stop trying to beat each other into economic submission and to bargain in good faith, and they did reach an agreement without the selector being required to intervene directly.

We have another one that dealt with East-West Packers, Best Brand Meats and Jack Forgan Meats, their contract expired June 30, 1988, a month after the previous contract. There was a strike on September 19, following the employers' demand for wage concessions. The union applied for final offer selection in the second window on November 25, 1988, and the employers returned to bargaining immediately, and the strike terminated December 5, 1988, and the settlement did not require a decision by the selector.

So just the fact, there were other factors as well, but it was certainly a factor that precipitated the bringing of the parties back to the table, the application for final offer selection was enough to get the parties to bargain seriously.

There is another case, Premier West Peat Moss, which holds some plants in southeastern Manitoba. Their contract expiry date was September 26, 1989. The union applied for final offer selection in the first window August 25, 1989, after a couple of bargaining meetings. The employer contested the application before the Labour

Board. The board ruled in the union's favour, and at that time the employer began to bargain seriously and a collective agreement was concluded December 1989 without the direct involvement of the selector.

So in all those instances, and there are many more like that than there are where the selector was actually involved, the application for final offer selection had the effect of pulling the parties together to force them to bargain seriously and allowed them an opportunity to reach their own agreement without having to have the final offer selector actually make a decision.

There is another profile I would like to present, and that is with respect to Farm King. As I am told, Farm King had a series of negotiations with the United Steelworkers of America over a number of years, and in the round of bargaining, just prior to the one in which they used final offer selection, the members of Steelworkers, the workers there, members of the bargaining unit, had overwhelmingly rejected an employer offer. Then the employer backed up a semitrailer to the doors of the plant and ordered all the employees to stop production and said he was moving his operation to Morden because of the contract rejection.

* (1500)

Now we talk about an imbalance, an unfairness, an inequity. The workers saying they do not want the agreement. The employer does not have to go to the workers and take a vote and see if they want to close down the operation. The employer does not have to go anywhere to take a vote to see if they want to close down an operation. All they do is back the truck up to the back door, open the doors and say we are moving out because you will not bow down to the wishes of your bosses and the employer.

Now you want to talk about leaving a bad taste in the mouths of workers. What happened as a result of that, it worked, I have to tell you. It worked then as it works so many other times and that is why the Manitoba Women's Agenda has said they need final offer selection as a way of balancing out the problem, because employers have all sorts of ways of bringing economic disadvantage down upon the heads of their employees. They have all sorts of ways of using their brute economic force and power to meet their employees' submission.

I do not think that there are many more graphic demonstrations on how that is done than this particular instance. The employees quite understandably would be getting concerned. There was a matter now of how it is getting a contract with some modest improvements or even no improvements, a status quo, a stamp pad contract. It was a matter of saving the jobs. So they voted again. The steelworkers' union put the vote to them once again, and they lost the vote by one vote, one vote because of that brute economic force exhibited by the employer who did not have to worry about democracy or majority votes or getting approval. Just back the truck up, one vote and they had to accept the contract. They did accept the contract and they lived with it.

In the next round though, they said we are going to even this out a bit. The steelworkers applied for final

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offer selection on March 23, 1989. A vote of the workers was held on April 15, 1989, and the result was, yes, to use FOS and a selector was appointed. On June 12, 1989, the board was informed that an agreement had been reached between the parties prior to the selector's decision. The agreement had been reached without the necessity of threatening to close down the operation, move it to another city and throw all the employees out of work. It was reached without having to resort to a walkout or a strike. It was reached on the basis of the pressure that was brought to bear because of final offer selection.

These case histories are just a few case histories of the way in which final offer selection in this province has helped to avoid strikes and lockouts and has not always resulted in total avoidance of them, has helped to stop strikes and lockouts where they were in progress and indicates why it is that progressive people, who want to see fair negotiations and equitable negotiations such as the Manitoba Women's Agenda, the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women and the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the Canadian Federation of Labour, the Manitoba and the Winnipeg Building Trades Council, many other unions, many other progressive groups and individuals, they want to see the Government and the Liberals stop their foolish pursuit of this repeal of the rights of working people and benefits that enable them to create fair and more equitable workplaces.

Within the next period of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to be in a committee on this Bill. Yesterday in my comments I spoke about how every time we brought forward labour legislation as a New Democratic Party Government, whether it is 1972 or 1982 or 1984 or 1986, the employers along with the Conservatives, yelled and screamed about the black cloud that was going to descend over the province, about the fact that this labour relations change was going to create disruption in the workplace, that it was going to result in economic ruin.

Then the next time we came into committee they said, wait a second. Even with those changes and notwithstanding the fact that we said everything was going to turn into a disaster because of the previous changes, we believe we now have the best of the labour relations climate in the country.

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) challenged me a couple of years ago to put on the record some of the things that have been said by the Conservatives, and I did that last night. They have had to withdraw all. They have had to backtrack on all. To the Liberals, please do not yourself in that same position of being so hypocritical that you fight every progressive change in labour relations and then the next time around come in glowing terms and try to tell everybody how great our labour relations climate is and why there is no need for any change.

I will put on the record tonight some of the things the employers said back in '84, and this is from a newspaper article of December 27, 1984. It is with respect to first contract legislation which, by the way, the Government is not attempting to withdraw, even though they fought very hard when it was introduced

and told us about all the dire consequences of it being proceeded with in the province. The headline is: Manitoba Government eases rules for unions over employer protest. Controversial new labour legislation will take effect in new year in Manitoba despite continued cries of protest from the business community.

Going on, I am taking excerpts from the article now. It was described as a dark cloud over Manitoba in full-page newspaper advertisements by Winnipeg and Manitoba Chambers of Commerce and other employer organizations. The Act is dangerous, unfair and will cause great harm to the economy and the people of our province, the employers said.

David Newman and Stewart Martin, labour law specialists who often represent employers in court battles with unions, restated their objections at a conference of businessmen early in December. The two Winnipeg lawyers continue to predict dire consequences for investment in Manitoba, as a result of changes to labour legislation.

Well, those two Winnipeg lawyers, at that time Mr. Newman and Mr. Martin, at least one of them I imagine, will appear before the committee to say exactly the same thing over again, to say that final offer selection, in this instance not first contract legislation, will cause great harm to the economy, that it is dangerous, that it is unfair, and that it is going to result in all sorts of catastrophic events unfolding in the Manitoba economy.

Some people listened to him in 1984, and the Government listened to him in 1984 because the Government—I am sorry, the now Government, the Opposition, the Conservative Opposition, listened to him in 1984—because they parroted those comments in this House.

Yet they have the audacity, if not the hypocrisy, to put forward an advertisement in the Western Commerce and Industry that talks about consistently good labour-management relations have given Manitoba one of North America's best labour reputations. That is November 1989, that is almost five years after the complaints, the criticism and the battle that they waged against first contract legislation. They said then that it was going to destroy our economy, and now they are saying exactly the opposite and are using the consistently good labour relations that we have to attempt to attract businesses to this community, businesses to this province, and businesses to this area.

Now let them not be so hypocritical so as to, on one occasion, suggest that we are going to bring about ruin because of the particular piece of labour legislation, and then when they are in Government not attempt to repeal that legislation and at the same time say that because of it we have one of the best labour relations climates in the country. That is a trap they want you to fall into. By the way, the Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the Member for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger), the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), they want you on side on this so that they will not be alone when they have to stand up in the future and apologize for having been so wrong in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have spoken at some length on this particular Bill. I want you to know that I am

prepared to carry on at some great length further. I thought perhaps that having to speak five or six hours yesterday, whatever the case might be, would be a bit of a test that might stall the debate a bit. However, I found it quite easy to make it through the day, and I feel as though I could go another week or two if the circumstances allowed for it. What I want to do is share some of the information I have available now, but also hold back some of that information for debate on other amendments that may happen with respect to this Bill, or debate on third reading, or discussion in the committee.

This Bill will go to committee in the future, and I can tell you that there will be scores of people at that time who will come forward to attempt to educate and convince Members of this Legislature as to their point of view. There will be some who will be in favour of the repeal of final offer selection, and I can tell you they will be more than likely not big representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and big business. If you want to continue to align yourself with them, then you know the consequences of doing so. There are not only electoral consequences, but I believe that when you align yourself against the interests of working people, there are principal consequences.

You diminish yourself whenever you diminish the rights of working people. When you take away from the ability of working people to create fairer and more equitable workplaces, you take away the possibility for your own workplace in the future or the workplaces of your children or the workplaces of your family or your friends to be safer and healthier. I think when you damage those individuals you damage yourselves as well.

* (1510)

The people who come to that committee who will want to speak I believe will come mainly from the representatives of working people and organizations. They will come forward to try to convince you that they need this legislation to continue to help them build stronger and better and fairer workplaces. I want us to have that opportunity to listen to those people and so I am prepared to save the bulk of my comments, the majority of what I have to say, until the next time I have an opportunity to speak.

I have not yet gone even one quarter of the way through the large bulk of evidence which exists which supports final offer selection. There will be other decisions that will have to be made. We are prepared to try to find a way to resolve this issue so that everybody can take home a piece of what they want, a win-win set of negotiations. We have always been prepared to do that.

We are consistently disappointed by the inability or the unwillingness of the Government House Leader to negotiate, and I think that is a bit of incompetence as well as unwillingness, probably more incompetence than unwillingness, because even when he does want to negotiate he does not do it well. We are prepared to help him work through those problems that he has.

I also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, feel very badly that the Liberals and the Conservatives together disallowed the

opportunity for the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) to speak. I think that was a travesty. I think that when the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) talked about speedy passage he was hiding the true agenda of ramming and railroading this Bill through the House, because the Liberals do not want to hear the facts on this. They do not want to understand how to make this province a better place for working people if in fact they believe it treads on the toes of their friends in the big business community. They try to jam the Bill through the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to give the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) hopefully another chance to speak, and we are going to give other Members of this House another chance to speak. We are doing that not only because they have a right to speak but to show the Liberals and the Conservatives both that you are not going to railroad your agenda, hidden or otherwise, through this Legislature without every individual who wants the opportunity to speak on it being able to speak. We will not allow that to happen. There are ways that we can stop that from happening. We will use whatever ways are necessary to ensure that the parliamentary tradition of Manitoba MLAs being to speak on issues is not subverted by the Liberals or the Conservatives in their haste to take away the rights of working men and women in this province.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, I am also going to move a motion in a moment that will allow an opportunity for either Liberals or Conservatives to stand to their feet again to try to address some of the criticisms we have made of their comments, to try to address what we have put on the record because we are willing to listen, if they are, and to acknowledge that they may have concerns and attempt to address those and debate those in the appropriate form.

We will continue to do so. With that in mind, I do not know who is more pleased of the fact that my comments are about to come to an end myself or those who have had to listen to them, but the fact is that the speech is not ending with this motion. We are just moving to a different stage of the debate and I look forward to participating even more fully in further stages of the debate as we determine whether or not the Liberals and the Conservatives together have the combined political will and the force to take away such fundamental rights of working people in this province.

I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the Labour Critic of the New Democratic Party, that Bill 31, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, be now read for a second time, be amended as follows by deleting all the words after "that" and by substituting the following: "Bill 31 be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

The French translation is available as well, Mr. Speaker.

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INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Prior to dealing with the motion of the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), I would like to draw Honourable Members' attention to the gallery where we have eight students from Red Sucker Lake, and they are from Grades 9 and 10. They are accompanied by their teachers, Ms. Morine and Mr. Harper.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

BILL NO. 31—THE LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (Cont'd)

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), seconded by the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following: "Bill No. 31 be not now read a second time, but that it be read a second time from this day, six months hence."

Is the House ready for the question? The Honourable Member for Rupertsland.

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): Mr. Speaker, first of all I am very pleased that some of my constituents are in the Chamber to listen to me. I might add that it is not very often that Members from the community, from Red Sucker Lake, would come into the Chamber and listen to the debate and the procedures of the House. It is a rare occasion that many people do come in and listen to the debates and the ongoings of the House. I am very pleased that some of the students are in the Chamber to listen to the debate and see first-hand the ongoings of the House.

I am also very disappointed and very outraged at the actions of the Liberals and the Government Members in denying me the right to speak on this Bill. The reason I say that is we, as Members who represent the northern constituency, sometimes have to be away from the House. It is usually the practice and traditions of this House to allow Members to be away in their constituency to meet with the Members.

I am very angry at the Members for denying me the right to speak on Bill 31 when the opportunity was there. I realize I had adjourned debate on this Bill. The fact of the matter is, the House usually has traditions to allow for a Member's name to stand until the next day, but I was denied that right. I want to express to the Members here and also let my Members know that I did not have that opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have recognized the Honourable Member for Rupertsland on the amendment of the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan). I would ask that the Honourable Member would keep his remarks relevant to said question. The Honourable Member for Rupertsland.

Mr. Harper: Mr. Speaker, I recognize your advice on this matter, but I wanted to speak on Bill 31 and I am

going to put some records on the subject of this very important Bill.

Certainly the Bill has had a tremendous impact in terms of labour relations here in Manitoba. Certainly the section that is being repealed, the amendment is to remove the final offer selector being not involved any longer in the future. Certainly this Bill is being lifted at the advice of many people. The women's groups of Manitoba have indicated that they support this Bill and they do not want the Government to remove or to repeal this Bill. We have other organizations supporting final offer selection.

I might look at some of the history behind it and also some of the information as to what has happened on the Bill. This is information I have in front of me as of January 1990. To date we have had 72 applications received. Under this final offer selection procedure, five selector decisions have been filed.

It is not usually either for the union or for the employer proposal, but I find here that the selectors who had been identified, who had been selected, have indicated support on a proposal from the union, three. Of the employer proposals that were selected, they had two selections for the employer.

There are some other final offer selection decisions that are pending at this time. I believe that number is seven. The other ones have been dismissed. I believe four have been dismissed.

* (1520)

I had mentioned earlier that there had been 72 applications received for final offer selection procedure. Of those 72 applications, 49 parties have reached agreement prior to selector appointment or decision or have been withdrawn.

I believe that the statistics in terms of parties reaching prior to the selector making a decision is very high and it indicates that this piece of legislation is working. Certainly many of the people who have been represented are workers who do not have very much income or their wages are very low; they are at the bottom of the scale of the income category. Certainly these people are using that process to achieve an agreement with their employers.

It was said prior to my speaking, as my colleague for Churchill had mentioned, that this piece of legislation is to bring people together to bargain in good faith and to bring people together so that the labour relations between the employer and the workers are working. We as a Government try to see that the business and labour relations here in Manitoba are working quite well. I might mention the fact that the Member had mentioned about an advertisement by the Industry, Trade and Technology Minister (Mr. Ernst) that the labour climate in Manitoba has been very good. That is indicative of the legislation that we had passed earlier. To say that it is not working at this time I believe is premature.

I believe the Bill has a sunset clause, five years, at which time it would be reviewed or repealed if it is not working. It seems at this time to be working quite well. It should be given that opportunity.

Many of the labour organizations, many of the women's groups, doctors and others have indicated to the Government they do not want this Bill repealed. They want the Government to drop its plans to repeal this piece of legislation. I might add that in terms of the strikes and lockouts that have been happening which has been very minimal, I believe we have lost less days and there have been less strikes in the history of Manitoba for some time.

One of the things I want to talk about is when negotiations are going on between labour and the employers, usually if there is a frustration, that is when the selector would come in and hopefully would resolve, either would take the employer's proposal or else the employees' proposal. Certainly we have had many cases filed. I was advised just coming into this House that the Unicity Taxi workers have requested the FOS to be followed through, and hopefully they do have to go through that process as in the cases that have been mentioned here, that most of the people reach an agreement prior to the selector being appointed during that process.

What it does is it brings people together. It brings the employer, the union or the workers together to start working together on the solution that is favourable to both, not just to only either or for/against either one. What it does is that it forces the employer to look closely at what the proposals of the employees, the workers are. Also the workers would also be forced to look at what the problems of the employers are, and they are able to come to a reasonable solution as to the agreement that they will reach.

I believe it has worked well, and certainly, despite the numbers that I mentioned, the parties reached agreement prior to that process. But in terms of the actual process, FOS being implemented, it has worked well. According to the information that I read, usually after negotiations have been done and all the bitter fight they have gone through, usually there is a usual sort of after the fact bitter feeling with all tensions that have been going on. But with the final offer selection being implemented, usually that is not the case. People are able to sit down and rationalize out as to the reasons why they have come to an agreement or settled an issue.

So I believe the final offer selection provides a unique opportunity, provides the bringing in of the two parties together to resolve the issues that they are dealing with. I know that the workers are in favour of this final offer selection. We are here not necessarily to support the big business, because when I look at the Government introducing this Bill and as to the reasoning why they have introduced this Bill, certainly their platform in the election was to bring in legislation to repeal this piece of legislation.

As their mandate, as they have been elected to the office of Government, I would certainly see that they had announced they would do that, and I would expect them to take action to implement their platform, but you wonder why they are doing that. Why are they bringing in such legislation? Is it to help their big business friends? I know that they have offered to their campaign. I also know that the Liberals also support

the Bill in terms of repealing it. I know they have received corporate donations also, and we just want to know where these two Parties are coming from. I know they are in coalition to bring this piece of legislation down or to repeal it, and not to help the workers.

We feel that the Labour Relations Amendment Act, the way we are going about it, is not the right procedure. I believe we should give the opportunity for the Bill, I mean the Act itself, to remain in place until, I believe we had said, five years. Certainly the Labour Relations Act would allow for us to go into that stage of experimentation in terms of labour relations here in Manitoba. So far, information that we received is that it is working quite well. We know that there have been less strikes and less lockouts, or less strike days lost as a result of the labour relations.

Today, we hear in the House that we have lost more days, but I believe we have information contrary to that, where the climate of labour relations here in Manitoba is working well as indicative of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology (Mr. Ernst) admitting that the labour relations here in Manitoba are good and that business in Manitoba should be encouraged with the labour climate that exists here in Manitoba.

I had mentioned earlier as to the reason why the Government is bringing this piece of legislation down. I had indicated that as part of their platform they were going to repeal this legislation. I believe this is a mistake. As you know we have received information in support of the legislation. They do not want to support the final offer selection. I did say that when I look at The Labour Relations Amendment Act in terms of bringing forward, in which sometimes where there is no movement or any kind of movement within negotiations, and if this happens, if final offer selection is repealed, there is no alternative except maybe to continue striking or a company locks out the employees. There is no mechanism in which to deal constructively with the strike or the lockout. So I believe that FOS is a unique tool in which to bring in the negotiators to bargain in good faith.

As an employee you want to make sure that your voice is heard, that your concerns are heard. It might be in regard to wages. It might be in regard to job security or some other benefits. Certainly we also recognize that the employer has to be involved and certainly this legislation has been described as a tool in which to bring the two sides together to resolve some of the outstanding issues. If final offer selection is repealed, I believe we would be entering into a labour relations climate that will be a sort of confrontational climate. I do not believe that many of the employers or employees want to be involved in that situation. As it is right now, keeping it in will certainly bring the two sides together.

I often, from my own personal experience in terms of negotiating, not necessarily as an employer or employee situation but rather dealing with Governments, find that if there is a way of resolving an issue in the long run it would benefit Manitobans, it would benefit the Canadians and it would benefit the aboriginal people.

Certainly, if some sort of mechanism were in place for our concerns to be heard I think it would go a long

way. It is an idea I have always carried through that hopefully Governments would be reasonable to address many of the inequities, many of the unemployment opportunities in the communities, because when we bargain as aboriginal people we do not bargain with any kind of clout or with any kind of position. We are always bargaining from good faith and also from good will but not necessarily with any kind of bargaining power, either money or material wealth. We do not have that opportunity.

When I look at this piece of legislation, this FOS, and if something could be done to resolve many of the outstanding issues, I think in the long run it would benefit the aboriginal people. As I mentioned before, we do not seem to have any bargaining power. I think we gave up all our bargaining power when we negotiated the biggest real estate transaction that ever took place in this country, when we gave up our land. As negotiators we felt that we were dealing in good faith and bargaining in good faith.

* (1530)

Certainly this is what the Bill is all about, able to bring people together to bargain in good faith and also to live up to the promises that were made with the aboriginal people. Up to this point we have not received very much for the things that we have bargained away and also the benefits that we had in the treaties. We are still looking forward to that.

For many, many years, as aboriginal people, we were denied the right to vote. So in a sense our rights were denied in the same way my rights were denied here as a person to speak. Being used to losing rights as an aboriginal person I knew at some point I would get up and speak again. Certainly, I appreciate the fact that I am given the opportunity to speak on this Bill. Certainly I want to talk about many of the issues, as aboriginal people, but tie it into the Bill.

As I mentioned before, I wish there was a way that we could achieve many of the negotiations that we have entered into with the Governments. As this is not necessarily under which this particular negotiation could be entered into but rather we rely on the political will of the Government in order to resolve many of the issues outstanding of aboriginal people. We cannot afford to strike because we do not have the money, or people can deny us from proceeding on negotiations, because like I said before we do not have the bargaining tools or bargaining power and we are operating at the bottom of the bargaining position.

An Honourable Member: He could use final offer selection.

Mr. Harper: Certainly, like I mentioned before, my colleague from Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says, he could use final offer selection, but then again we want to be sure that our voices are heard and our concerns are relayed to the people who we are negotiating with.

One of the outstanding issues here in Manitoba that we have negotiated with the Manitoba chiefs, with the provincial Government and the federal Government, of

course, is the outstanding treaty land entitlement. We, as a Government—as a matter of fact I signed the treaty land entitlement and sent it off to Ottawa. Then the federal Government, I believe it was Mr. McKnight who was the Minister at that time, refused to deal with that.

How do you deal with somebody that does not want to bargain with you? There are no laws, no regulations, directing how these negotiations should be conducted. It is up to the Government, being their own boss in a sense, how to deal with that particular issue.

There are no mechanisms in place to force the Government to deal with you, the federal Government. I believe the Government tried to. Both the chiefs and the Manitoba Government had bargained in good faith and hopefully would have been followed up, but unfortunately that is not the case at all.

When I mentioned if some sort of mechanism would have been in place when negotiations started, in regard to many of the issues that Native people face, we might be far ahead of the game as a result of a similar piece of legislation being put in place.

Certainly, when we tried to negotiate with other Leaders across the country at the Constitutional Conference on Self-Government, we did not achieve anything. What we achieved was recognition that aboriginal people were here and aboriginal people had existed here, and as a result of many of the constitutional conferences, achieving to recognize self-Government was not there. I believe we will achieve that at some point.

As I mentioned, if the—I do not have the figures in terms of the number of days. I know I have the figures somewhere here in terms of the days lost, and I believe within the last 17 years this is one of the least number of days lost due to strikes or lockouts.

I believe Bill 31 has proven itself. Maybe, when we review the legislation in six months again we will see that the climate of the labour relations here in Manitoba is working out well and The Labour Relations Act itself should be left in place. I know that my colleagues have spoken in favour of this Bill and we were not saying this from our caucus ourselves, but were given information, given advice from people who support the Bill.

I know my seat mate, the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) had indicated that there is a resolution that was passed from the Manitoba Women's Action Committee. I believe she had mentioned that to keep this legislation in place and the Manitoba doctors certainly want to keep the negotiations going, at least keep the bargaining with the Government ongoing and want to achieve that, so there are a number of organizations, women's groups, workers organizations, labour organizations, that want the Bill to remain in place, the legislation to remain in place.

As we had indicated in this House we will continue to speak on this Bill although the Members denied me the right to speak on this Bill. I know that the Members would want to hear what my constituents have to say. Certainly I would not deny anybody of that right, but

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it is unfortunate that both Liberals and the Conservatives denied a Member of this House from speaking.

Certainly with this motion that is before us to review it in six months, I believe that the labour groups would want to keep this going. I am sure that if we give it a chance and give it the legislative mandate this piece of legislation was given a sunset clause for five years. I believe that is reasonable and if it is not working, we can maybe look at it again. Maybe new ideas will come up, unique ideas will come up as to how to resolve the labour relations here in Manitoba.

I know it is increasingly very important to keep our labour relations climate here in Manitoba—I believe it has been very good, and also to keep it ongoing the way it is, especially in light of the economic situation that we are in. The dollar does not seem to go as far as it used to go before. We are being taxed heavily and people are digging into their pockets more.

People will be scrutinizing many of the things that are happening in other parts of Canada and other parts of provinces as to how labour relations exist there and also how businesses are doing in the province. So it is very important that we keep the labour relations climate here in Manitoba favourable to workers and also to the business people.

* (1540)

The legislation itself has brought in the workers, and as I mentioned before, the workers together and also the employers together. Because of the economic situation we are in I think there are going to be other demands being made by employers, and the labour organizations have to know what is happening. Certainly with this piece of legislation coming in or repealing this legislation I think it will keep the labour relations climate—once it is repealed I believe will present Manitoba with a more aggressive, more controversial, more antagonistic style of relations here in Manitoba.

Certainly, the Bill as is, just moving the six-month hoist on it will provide another additional six months for this piece of legislation to work. I think the Government will see that in their wisdom hopefully will recognize to keep this intact. I hope that the Government will listen to the ordinary people, the workers to keep this Bill in place. Certainly, my advice to the Government is to listen to the people. Many of the people are coming forward and representing their organizations, saying that they want the Government to recognize to keep this Bill in place.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I believe I have put a few things on record and certainly feel that the Government should be listening to the people. I am glad that I was at least recognized in the House to speak again. I hope that Members who do not have the luxury of hopping in a car and being able to drive back would not be denied the right to speak, because when we have a unique constituency, difficult travel areas, it is impossible to be in two places. I hope that in the future, Members, Conservatives, Liberals would not deny anybody the right to speak because I could not be here. I wanted to be here too, but there was

a commitment I made a long time ago. The right to speak on this Bill 31, I felt could have been done through the House by agreement or by leave or by courtesy. I feel that I have that right to speak on this Bill, and I would want to say that hopefully it would not happen again.

On Bill 31, I would just recommend to the Government that they keep this Bill in and not repeal it. They are going to hear from many other organizations that are supporting this Bill. Keep the labour relations here in Manitoba, the climate as it is now, very good, and also with the statistical information that we receive, it is going on.

I hope that with the five-year sunset clause that they would give it that time for the legislation to work and in five years we can review it, whether it has worked or not. I am sure that once when they review it that they will find it has worked very well. I speak in favour of the FOS, and I hope it receives the support of the Government and also the Members of the Liberal Caucus to support FOS and the way it is going.

With that, I thank Members for listening and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this Bill.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): It is indeed an honour again to rise on the final offer selection proposal to hoist Bill 31 for six months.

I believe that as we begin this debate, we should remember the words we have stated in this Chamber before from John F. Kennedy who said, and I think it is wise to remember today, sometime ago in dealing with labour relations and collective bargaining, he said, let us begin anew, remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, that sincerity is always subject to proof, let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the item before us again today in this Chamber dealing with the proposed final offer selection and the repeal proposed in Bill 31, is worthy of a longer period of time to see indeed whether the accusations and allegations made by various opponents of this legislation is indeed correct, or whether the allegations or statements made by Members that have felt that the five-year experiment is a worthy one, are indeed correct.

Really this motion of hoisting the Bill, perhaps is a way for the Liberals to take a good look at this proposal in terms of giving it another six months. They have heard their Member quote the numbers of statistics out of 1988. It very much sounded like the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), in terms of the numbers and quotations that were used. They had to go a long way to stretch those numbers to try to make their point because the days lost per strike, which is the usual indicator of labour relations conflict in any particular jurisdiction whether it is countries or provinces, was lower in 1988 than it was in 1987. It was dramatically lower in 1989, in fact it is the lowest since numbers have been recorded and distributed in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

When you are looking at comparisons of Canada's strike record to other countries, what is the industrial

labour management criteria that is compared between the countries? It is not the average length of a strike. If you have one strike of two employees that goes two years, that gives you 600 days as an average length of a strike. That is the logic being used by the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), the Labour Critic for the Liberal Party. If you had one strike of two people that went two years, you would say all labour relations is failing. It is failing because it is an average, strikes now under FOS are 600 days. What utter and total dishonesty, in terms of this debate.

I sincerely believe this because quite frankly when you talk to employers, when you talk to management, when you talk to owners, when you look at the ILO in Geneva, Switzerland, in terms of the United Nations, the one and only criteria for conflict, how many strikes there were, how many people took part in those strikes, how many lockouts there were, how many people took part in those lockouts, and how many aggregate days lost per strike or lockout were there in a particular jurisdiction. That, Mr. Speaker, is the criteria for labour relations conflict, not this Mickey Mouse argument being used by the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), that is so elementary that it is beyond belief that it can be believed. That is why I say, look at the bottom line, please.

We were told by the Liberals, the Conservatives, and ourselves that we should keep an open mind on this issue. We have been told in previous discussions in this Chamber also to keep an open mind and listen to the public.

Look at the Meech Lake issue. We all came to the Meech Lake debate with different opinions about how we should resolve it. We all came to the Meech Lake deliberations on different opinions about what should be resolved. We came to the Meech Lake debate on various concerns about the proposed document and how best to deal with it. We listened collectively to Manitobans and we went to the committee hearings with an open mind, none of us closed our mind to any proposals. We did not close our mind to the Liberal document that was tabled in the House. I had some concerns about some parts of it. They did not close their mind to some of my statements, they just watched how fast we were moving on the Meech Lake proposal.

We did not close our mind or were we critical of the decision of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to poll on Meech Lake, nor were we critical with the job the Premier did when he presented the Manitoba position in an effective way at the First Ministers' Conference, because I was a little worried about federal-provincial issues, but on the Meech Lake Accord we worked together. We worked together in a very democratic way, a very open way. We had open minds. We looked at the data. We looked at the arguments. We rejected some arguments. We accepted some arguments. We kept an open mind and I think came up with a uniquely made-in-Manitoba solution to the Meech Lake proposal.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

* (1550)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is wrong with all of us looking at the data objectively—2,000 days lost for

strike in '89. That is the numbers. Nobody can dispute that. Take a look at how that fits with the rest of the country, dramatically lower, 4 percent of the average of the rest of the country. Take a look at where it was in previous years in Manitoba, dramatically lower in '89, not dramatically lower in '88, it was lower in '88 than '87, but it was not dramatically lower.

Let us look at those numbers. What is wrong with having an open mind? Yes, we said certain things in 1987 when it was passed. Yes, we said certain things in 1988 when the election was on. I said certain things in '88 when the election was on that right now is irrelevant, because since 1988 and today there have been a lot of things that have happened in our world, a lot of things that have happened in our country and a lot of things that have happened in our province. If we sit there in cement and say we said this in 1988 and therefore we are going to do this in 1990, we become irrelevant in my opinion, because we do not have the capacity, flexibility and creativity to listen to each other, to listen to the public, to look at the facts and make a uniquely Manitoban kind of solution to this problem.

The Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) is here. I am glad because I have talked a couple of years ago to social workers and people in the helping professions who have told me and I believe them, and I have met with hundreds, believe me, not just a couple of social workers over the years who could never go on strike because it would mean denying the people they were working on with caseloads, et cetera, a tremendous denial of services.

The strike was first created initially 120 years ago in an industrial society to—the strike was originally set 120 years ago to deal with the profit motive. It was collateral and profit and it worked quite effectively, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has worked well in certain parts of the public sector as well.

But there are groups of people right now in society who are not part of the industrial society or part of the public sector. There are groups now in the private sector, that are in the communications sector, the information sector. Should we not be looking at new and creative ways to deal with resolving disputes? I have talked to social workers working with disabled people. They say, how could I go on strike? Yes, I am getting a raw deal perhaps, but how can I deny my services to the disabled? How can I do that?—because I am not going to lose. It is the disabled person that is going to lose. It is the mentally handicapped person that is going to lose. It is the person on child and family services that is going to lose.

A lot of these people—look across the country, they withdraw their services and who loses not only the person who has to take that action but also the person who receives services from social workers. I mention that as one case, one example, why we have to look at new and different ways of resolving disputes moving in to the 1990s.

I mean, the Berlin Wall is coming down and things are changing in different countries every day. We are sitting here just thinking that the old methods of 120

years ago are tried and true and should be the only methods we use.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are changing. We are going from an industrial society to an information society. We are dramatically changing in our society. The type of work that people will be doing and the way in which it is organized and how it is organized is dramatically different than it was five years ago or even two years ago. Sometimes sitting in this Chamber and going back and forth in our 10-second clips we may lose track of how dramatically society is changing and the organization of work is changing.

So I would ask that both Parties, eventually when we get this Bill to committee, listen to people at committee stage. We will hear the people pro and con I am sure, but listen to the people doing work. Listen to the people that are in a post-free-trade environment. They are in a highly changing information society, a highly changing communication society. The amount of people working part time or flex time or part time with different family responsibilities is changing dramatically. There are Members in this Chamber that have changed dramatically in the way the work is organized and we have to be creative.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if somebody can come up with a better way to be creative we have an open mind. We came up with one idea. It is not perfect, nobody ever said it was. It is not there forever. It is there for a few years. Is it causing chaos in the streets?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Doer: Why do we have to have this big reason to repeal it?

An Honourable Member: Campaign promise to big business.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have gone through that, and I agree with the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), but I want to address this on its merit, on the proposal on its merit in a changing information society; a changing technological society; a communication society; a society that is dramatically changing from an industrial society.

When 97 percent of Canadian workers worked in the agricultural sector we had certain ways of doing business, because that was the way work was organized. That has changed. I think we are down to about 18 percent—the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay)—maybe even lower in terms of how many people work in agriculture, directly or indirectly, under 20 percent—

An Honourable Member: Eighteen percent indirectly.

Mr. Doer: Yes, indirectly. If we looked at directly it is down to about 6 or 7 percent or maybe 3 or 4, and I think those are the numbers.

We have changed since those times. We have done different things and we have proposed different methods. Every time there has been a proposed change there have been all these predictions of doom and

gloom when we have made changes. You can go right back to the time we started bringing in the first mines Act and the first child labour laws. There was tremendous prediction of the miners going broke and problems in society. All those predictions did not come true.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember there was a labour relations Act passed in this Chamber years ago, about four or five years ago, and there was a prediction that it would cause chaos. In fact, some people put out ads in newspapers about the black clouds over Manitoba. If you talked to any of those labour-management practitioners, the expeditors or arbitrationists saved companies money. The ability to go to one arbitrator has saved businesses money. The ability to have a quick and just process has saved workplaces money. They will tell you that privately.

* (1600)

That is not why they are not coming back to the Government I would think and proposing there be changes in that, but I remember the newspaper ads. I was not in Government. I was a citizen. I was watching these things. Those things did not happen. When you talk privately to a lot of people that thought there was going to be all kinds of problems—and you know, we are saving money. It is quicker. It makes more sense. It is fairer.

Quick justice at the workplace is very important. Having these three-member arbitration boards that cost the employers and the unions a lot of money, dragged on forever, I mean it is bad enough in court cases now to get two lawyers together and that is just the prosecution and the defence lawyer, but in arbitration you had three lawyers and it took forever to get them together to decide whether somebody should be fired or not, or disciplined or not. Expedited arbitration saved a lot time and effort, and I will bet you the Chamber of Commerce does not want to change that because they are saving money, but they had those ads out and I understand it.

So a couple of years later we try something new again. We try final offer selection as an option. Is it perfect? No. It is proposed. It comes into law. There is a little bit of a fight, there is the usual—although at committee there was very few owners of business at committees, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There was one owner of a business, and the rest were hired guns and lawyers from both sides and the unions. There was really very few people that had hands-on ownership of business.

It is interesting because when this was first proposed in a White Paper a couple of years ago, in the early '80s, I remember the then president of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Wright, said, it is a worthwhile experiment. I remember it was on the front page of the newspaper. He said, you know, why not try it? Canada has got one of the worst labour management days lost in the world, that is the criteria he used, days lost, because that is the bottom line. Why not try it? I guess he got into a little trouble with his colleagues because they tightened up and hardened up their position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I think he was right. Why not try it? What is there to lose to experiment?

I could understand I would think that if the Government had today, the days lost per strike had gone from 70,000 or 87,000, I believe—I am just going by memory—in '87, if they had gone up to 100,000 in '88 and 100,000 again in '89, I think the Government would be totally justified and asking the very serious questions, this may not be working. The Liberals would have great justification in voting with the Government to repeal this Act, but if you look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has gone down marginally the first year and it has gone down dramatically the second year.

I am surprised the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) is not supporting FOS, because as the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) pointed out yesterday, what method is now the Chamber of Commerce, and some of the transportation employers, suggesting may be an alternative to the insanity of lockouts and strikes in the grain-handling industry. What are they suggesting? Are they suggesting we go to lockouts and strikes still? No. Guess what they are suggesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does the Minister of Agriculture know? He says, I think we should try final—the industry is saying, let us try final offer selection, and you know what? It may make a lot of sense.

Right now you have 12 employers in the Port of Vancouver, 12 unions and 12 transportation unions. Any variable of one and 36 can close the whole transportation system down. I do not blame farmers for being mad when that happens. Usually it has been lockouts, but I cannot blame a farmer for being furious when one out of 36 parties can close down the whole system and one employer. It is both ways. You look at the last number of times the grain industry has been down, it has been because of one lockout. Nonetheless, the bottom line is the farmer cannot get their wheat to the port to get their payments.

We had a similar situation where you had this kind of person who blinks, the brinksmanship, blink-first kind of collective bargaining, used to be in the brewing industry. If one union was going to go on strike, they locked out the whole industry. I do not know about you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the odd time in July and August, I like to have a cold beer, besides the fact, it uses agricultural products.

An Honourable Member: Ah, not you, Gary.

Mr. Doer: Ah, yes, and I am sure the Member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) has a few himself. It also uses agricultural products. In 1987 there were all kinds of strikes going on in the beer industry, moving up to the 1988 set of collective bargaining in Manitoba. So what happened? One of the unions called a strike vote, then the employer was going to lock out all the employees, then the union said let us go to final offer selection. They sat down in 12 hours and got a settlement, 12 hours. Ask the union leaders, ask the employers, ask both sides. They got a settlement without even having to use it, and you know what?

An Honourable Member: Because they were drinking beer while they were settling it.

Mr. Doer: Well, it was a hot summer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This Government was one of the benefactors

of this final offer selection, because we know that beer provides revenue to the Government, we know that beer provides some relief to those of us in the summer, we know that beer consumes a number of agricultural products, and it employs a lot of people in this province. You know what happened? Was there chaos in the beer industry? The settlements were lower than at some of the strike plants across the country. No, it is true, I am serious. All the rhetoric aside, I am very serious. It was settled. You know, in 1988 it was used a few times, five times I believe. In 1989 it was not even used, I do not believe. It was just used as a tool to get a settlement.

The last time I looked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wage settlements in Manitoba, were they above the national average? Were they below the national average? Were they inflationary? Were there rights given away in final offer selection that were chaotic? Were there rights taken away from workers that were chaotic? Where is the evidence? This average days lost per strike is just an amateur's number, because as I say, it is like saying you cannot drown in a five-foot average swimming pool. Well, if you have 12 feet at one end and you are six foot tall, you could.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) looks at the bottom line. Look at the ILO reports, look at what they use to measure conflict in an industrial society, and I can assure the Member that it is days lost per strike.

We have other groups now in society that are looking at keeping this law for the period of time. The Women's Agenda who are trying to deal with issues facing women in the workplace, I know where they are coming from, because you can see some tangible examples.

I remember three or four years ago at the University of Manitoba—and the Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans) is here—the University of Manitoba professors had final offer selection in their collective agreement, and they got 3.5 percent or something around inflation. The support staff, as part of AESSES, which originally opposed final offer selection, called a strike vote, could not get the strike vote. A lot of them quite frankly had a tremendous amount of family obligations and they got zero percent. So the group that got the right to strike and the group that had the lowest pay, the group that was the most vulnerable, got a zero percent settlement. The group that was the highest paid, the most kind of levers at their disposal, used final offer selection—I think Loxley presented the case—and I think the employer and Faculty Association were about half a percent apart in their two proposals and settlement was well within inflation.

* (1610)

Two or three years later, what happens? The group that opposed final offer selection, primarily women, could not get a settlement this last year. They filed for final offer selection and they got a settlement, I think again within inflation, inside inflation, but it was not zero percent. That is a classic example of a male dominated high paid group that used final offer selection to get a decent settlement and the primarily women in a lower paid group that got zero with the right to

strike and got a decent settlement with the final offer selection. That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, groups like AESES have changed their mind. They have changed their mind because it is working.

The construction unions, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another group that the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) still uses as one of his justifications to say he is speaking for the labour movement, I think he is running around with a false list. He has the AF of L CIO on the list. I do not know how many lists he has presented to his Liberal Caucus to keep them outside.

The building trade unions also were opposed to this. Then they had the situation where they had to use final offer selection. It was the municipality of Springfield bargaining with a building trades union in the community of Springfield. It was the first time it went to final offer selection. Again the settlement was within inflation. Again no rights were taken away, either way. The municipality said, hey, this is great, we have never used this before but it works. We did not need a strike this summer. We needed our streets to be repaired, our garbage to be picked up, we needed our services to be provided. They used final offer selection and again the offer between the two parties was about a half a percent apart and the thing was resolved without a strike. Maybe this will not continue on in the next number of years. I think it will because if you look at the second year of it it has had dramatic, positive effects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to go into a very rough collective bargaining year. I do not know whether anybody has analyzed it over there. I do not know whether anybody is taking a look at it. I do not know whether anybody over there is even looking at the settlements in their own public sectors. I can bring out some dillies for you, but it is not my place to do it. I do not know whether they are co-ordinating things, but I doubt if they are. I do not know whether those settlements are even going to the Cabinet table. I do not know whether they are going to Treasury Board, because they have some interesting clauses, particularly when you look at the proposed inflation in 1991 with the GST. We have a number of collective bargaining agreements up in 1990. It is in a post-free-trade environment which obviously will have winners and losers. It does not matter what side of the debate you are on in free trade, but it will have some winners and losers.

Secondly, there are going to be major negotiations going on in a number of key health care sectors already where you have a confrontation going on, hopefully not, but certainly there has been some billboards and other communication that were at a bit of an impasse with doctors, and there is going to be a number of other groups in the health care sector field that potentially will be in a serious situation.

There is also the Inco workers in a changing nickel market. Mr. Deputy Speaker, next fall, we have a drastically changing nickel market, the surpluses are changing. How much money is being mined and Falconbridge is changing. A lot of levers are being applied to a situation, a commodity in a situation that is very, very important to Manitoba. The revenue is

important for us for taxation. The jobs are important to us. The wages are important to us, and that is a very important industry. That is another set of major negotiations that are coming up in 1990. They are all coming up at a time when everybody wants to make up Michael Wilson's GST which every Member of this House agrees is inflationary and wrong-headed in terms of the economy of this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, would it not make a lot of sense to have another way of blowing off the steam, another option available to us to deal with those real economic problems in our economy in 1990-91 as we have had this year? Why get rid of it this year? Higher interest rates, higher unemployment potentially, although the unemployment rates went down last month as the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) quite correctly pointed out. The labour force went down as well.

We do not have a very, very smooth ride in 1990-91, so why take away another way of resolving this? Why not see how this thing works another year when we are dealing with a pretty tough labour relations climate? There is nothing more difficult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you are in Government and a group of employers and unions are fighting and in conflict, and as a Government you want to see stability, you want to see harmony, you want to see settlements. You do not want to see picket lines, lost wages, lost profits, lost taxes, lost productivity. Nobody wants to see that. It does not make any sense at all for anybody and that is why it is so important to have other methods of resolving these disputes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you tell me how much time I have left?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member has approximately 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Give me the one minute, please. Give me the one minute hook if you would, please.- (interjection)- Oh, now, now. As the Member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) said and the Premier of the province which I respect last week, this is a democratic process. We may not always like what we do in democracies, but it is the best system we have. I actually respected the words from the Premier in that regard last week in terms of the democracy.

That is why we are going to hope that everybody cleans the wax out of their ears when this thing goes to committee, because part of a democratic process, which I respect in the words from the Premier, is taking stock, listening, looking at numbers, looking at figures, listening to people. I say this to the Liberal Party, you have your Labour Critic who represents primarily management, pretty revved up. He is marching you right into a corner.

You know it is not bad to leave your options open a bit. A lot of times we did not like something that the Government was going to do or our instincts told us we may not like it. Do you know what? We kept our powder dry a bit because we wanted to hear the people of Manitoba. The people of Manitoba have a lot of good ideas. They have a lot of good advice.

Why do we want to go into committees, set in our cement, and set in a mold from two years ago which may be irrelevant in 1990? Why do you not go into the committee with an open mind? Why do you not go into the committee with an idea that democracy is alive and well in Manitoba? Why do we not go into the committee the same way we went into the committee on Meech Lake where we are going to listen to people, we are going to take their advice, we are going to maybe come up with a made-in-Manitoba solution again?

We think a creative way is FOS, but maybe there is a better idea in committee. I do not know. Maybe something will take us from 2,000 days lost for a strike down to 1,000. Maybe it will even go down to zero, maybe. I do not know. We have an open mind here on this side of the House. We are creative. We try to come up with creative ways. We are moving into the 1990s; we cannot go back to the 60s.

One is tempted to talk about Jean Chretien when one talks about going back to the '60s, but I am trying to lower the rhetoric with my friends on either side. I am trying to say, listen to people.— (interjection)— Well, because I really believe this thing is worthy of experimenting. I believe it is worthy of keeping it for five years. I believe that society is changing, I really do. I really believe that changing societies require changing ways of dealing with things.

* (1620)

Experimentation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has brought tremendous innovation to our province, and tremendous creativity, because one of the things I know about the people of Manitoba—and it does not matter whether you are a Conservative or a Liberal or a New Democrat or a member of the Reform Party—one of our greatest strengths is the ability of people in this province to cooperate for a common good.

This is a very, very healthy province when you look at the attitude of people in terms of their ability to cooperate and work together. Whether it is in the voluntary sector, whether it is in the community clubs that we are all part of, whether it is in our rural and northern communities or whether it is in the City of Winnipeg we have a tremendous energy and environment to build upon.

Yes, we are not as close to the markets as Toronto and Montreal. Yes, we do not get nearly as much as we should get from our federal Government. Yes, the golden triangle continues to dictate financial policies in this country, but we have the strength of people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The other strength of our people is a tradition in this Legislature. The tradition in this Legislature is to listen to the people of this province when they come before a committee and present their ideas and their advice in terms of the legislation before us.

I ask the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), does he have an open mind of the committee when it comes forward with the people of Manitoba or does he have a closed mind? I ask the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), does he have a closed mind on this? Is

he going into committee set in cement? Do they have a strategy that has been delivered to them by the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) that they will not move from? Have they forgotten what they have said to all of us about listening to the people of Manitoba on other issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I ask the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), I ask the Member for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger), do you have a closed mind or are you going to go to those committees in an open mind?

An Honourable Member: Open.

Mr. Doer: Open mind. If the members of the public therefore say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that maybe we should take stock and keep this thing around for a few more years will you listen to that? Are you prepared to listen to that? Are you prepared to listen to the people when they present their advice? That is all we are asking in this debate. We want everybody to go in with an open mind.

Sometimes we go into our caucuses, we formulate positions, we thump our desks in our caucuses—we cannot do it in the Chamber anymore now. We have all been programmed now that does not look good on television. We come in here and we clap. It is like leaving—

An Honourable Member: It is a shame, is it not?

Mr. Doer: It is a shame. I actually like the old way. Yes, that is right. I like the old way, but I too was told that I have to clap, cannot thump.

An Honourable Member: You are the boss, you do not have to—

Mr. Doer: Oh, no, we did this a couple of years ago—

An Honourable Member: That was when Michael Balagus was the boss.

Mr. Doer: Well, that is right, and he did a good job, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Actually it started with Brian Mulroney, and now I know when the country started to go downhill.

You know even the old Liberals, the one redeeming factor they had is they used to thump their desks, too. When Brian Mulroney came in with Allen Gregg and all those other hot shots in Dalton Camp they changed from thumping to clapping, and we all, like trained seals, followed along.

Anyway, we come into this Chamber with our unequivocal statements, but we always listen in committee. Our Party always tries to listen in committee. We sometimes take positions in our caucus that are not correct when it comes to the advice we receive from the people of Manitoba. We sometimes get advice at committee that says to us we should amend something; we should change something; we should reconsider our position; that maybe our initial instincts were incorrect. We sometimes get research and material that tells us that we did not have all the numbers and all the facts, and so we take stock.

Our caucus never says we are going to vote this way or that way on any Bill, in terms of its final deliberations, before we hear the people of Manitoba at those committee stages. We may sometimes give a guarantee to the Government that we will deal with a certain Bill by a certain date, but we never say we will vote yes or no, because that would be inconsistent with the traditions of this Chamber and the traditions of this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hope that the Government and the Liberals will vote with us for the six-month hoist, because that will allow us to get another sober second thought on this Bill, will allow all of us to take stock for another six months. It will allow a very difficult labour relations year, moving into the GST, an inflationary kind of tax that the federal Government is bound and determined to bring in. Hopefully we can change the Prime Minister's mind tomorrow in Brandon, but it will allow a very difficult year for workers and employers and families and communities to move into that very difficult and inflationary tax in a free trade environment, which already has its winners and losers.

That is why 14 organizations today—and I do not know which members the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) is going to quote as supporting him in terms of all the labour unions he was quoting out in the hallways here the other day. I would like to see his numbers. I would like to see his press release. I would like to see what he has got behind him. I am going to call the Member for St. James' bluff. Produce your press release with the people. I saw the AFL-CIO. It is located in Washington, D.C. Produce the locals, produce the numbers, because we have support not only from 14 major organizations, but also from different affiliations and different groups, building trades, Federation of Labour, the MFL, various other organizations, but also there is the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women. They recognize as we do that women located primarily in the service sector, the information sector, the financial sector need different ways of resolving disputes.

The old tried and true ways may have worked for a number of years, but we must also look at other creative ways to resolve our conflict in a changing world. This world is changing so much on a daily and weekly basis. I am worried that this Chamber is losing its flexibility, losing its open-mindedness, losing its creativity, losing its spirit of people co-operating together, losing its made-in-Manitoba kind of attitude toward resolving our disputes. We do not have to do what they do in Ontario. We do not have to do what they are doing in Quebec. We can do what we want to do in Manitoba because we are ahead of the rest of the country.

We in the New Democratic Party believe that final offer selection is ahead of the country in terms of a changing economy, and we would urge Members of this Chamber to vote for a sober second thought on this Bill, vote for the hoist. If you do not vote for the hoist, certainly listen to the people of Manitoba. Keep an open mind just as we did on Meech Lake. Do not deny the public their right and their say in this very, very important debate. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): I am pleased to stand and participate on Bill No. 31, which deals with the repealing of final offer selection. It is unfortunate that we have to be dealing with an issue of this sort when there is so much information available that shows that it is a process that is working in Manitoba. It is working to keep some of the best labour relations records that exist in Canada. It is keeping those labour relation figures intact.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

As a Member of the constituency of The Pas I thought I was going to have an opportunity to see final offer selection used recently, because there was a labour dispute between the Wescana workers in the hotel in The Pas. The workers were locked out for a seven-week period. I guess when you talk about negotiations and labour relations, you wonder if that is a fair process.

* (1630)

Many people raised the fact that the final offer selection process favours the unions because of the fact that they can vote if the employer asks for a vote, or if the employees ask for a vote. They have final say, but I guess the employees cannot lock out the employer. I do not think that is a fair process either. When you look at both sides of it, it equalizes the opportunity to negotiate.

I was glad to see that the negotiations in the Wescana Hotel had been concluded so people who now go to The Pas for the Trapper's Festival will have an opportunity to stay at that hotel. It is a hospitable place to stay and I would not like to see the people driving all the way to Swan River or Flin Flon or Cranberry Portage, where the people had to previously, because of the fact that most people who are familiar with labour relations in the Province of Manitoba would choose not to stay at the Wescana Hotel while the employees were locked out.

I think that is a process that is acceptable to most people when there is a labour dispute on, that they will not cross those picket lines. I was pleased that most of the employees that are involved with the Crown corporations and with the Province of Manitoba respected that old tradition and did not stay at the Wescana Hotel while the employees were locked out during their labour dispute.

Mr. Speaker, as a railroader and a person who is on leave of absence from the railway, and maybe some day if the right conditions come about that I will have the opportunity to go back to the railway, I was particularly interested in the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce coming forward and bringing forward a recommendation that final offer selection should be used as a process to deal with disputes in the transportation industry.

It is interesting that the Chambers of Commerce were the ones that were telling this Government that they had to repeal the final offer selection and I think that is one of the biggest commitments they made during the last election and that is why the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is so dead set on bringing this legislation in to repeal

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final offer selection because of the commitment he made to the Chamber of Commerce and now the Chamber of Commerce themselves, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce would come forward and speak in support of this legislation.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): I would just ask, there is some difficulty I believe, in the Chamber this afternoon, there has been the last number of days in terms of side conversation. I would just ask if you would ask that Members of the House hold side conversations outside the Chamber so that the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) can continue his speech.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), we would just request that Honourable Members carrying on private conversations could do so elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for The Pas has the floor.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to continue my comments and deal with the subject of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce suggesting that the final offer selection be used as a process to break labour disputes when it involves the transportation industry.

I think that the Government should be open to that suggestion because the final offer selection has been used throughout history. I think if you go back to the early 1800s it was used in—or late 1800s and early 1900s, it was hailed as a unique bargaining tool and it was brought forward, first used in 1915 to solve some of the disputes involved in the coal industry. Way back then there were some people who felt that it was a reasonable way of resolving labour disputes, and they felt that it reduced hard feelings. I think it did not result in a win-loss situation. In most cases it resulted in a win-win situation.

I am just reading some of the letters that the Minister of Labour sent back to the Manitoba Medical Association. He says the reason they were repealing it is because of the fact that one side were winners and one side were losers and it was causing too much hard feelings in the labour relations field. If you would take the time to look at the legislation, that is not so. It causes much more responsible bargaining.

I guess I have had some experience in bargaining. As a member of the school trustees, I was chairman of negotiations for several years. I was involved in negotiations with not only the teachers, but also with CUPE dealing with bus drivers and other support staff. I felt that if we had had a tool of this sort, it would have made for much more responsible bargaining. I know that in that period of time we would have been

happy to have a labour relations tool to help us resolve the disputes that came about at that time. I think by and large we had fairly good negotiations throughout the history in The Pas area.

I know that one of the people that I negotiated way back then with was the former Minister of Finance. He was the staff representative for CUPE. We had negotiations in The Pas and I guess we both at that time felt that the other person was very unreasonable. I think when you come right down to it we settled a very good agreement which helped keep good labour relations alive and well in The Pas area.

When I get back to the discussions on VIA Rail and Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce recommending that the final offer selection process be used there, you wonder why they would at one time be saying that final offer selection should be repealed in Manitoba when it is working well. Maybe someday the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will get up and tell us why the Chambers of Commerce right across Manitoba are so insistent on him repealing the final offer selection process, why they would change their stand on it and make a recommendation that the final offer selection process can be used in the field of transportation?

I understand that the transportation industry is extremely important. It affects the lives of many people, especially when you deal with isolated areas like we have in northern Manitoba when you are dealing with land transportation and there is no highway access to those. A labour relations strike would affect those people to a very great degree.

I have been an employee of the railway when there was a strike in northern Manitoba. It does not last for a very long period of time, because the Government always comes back and forces you to go back to work. We accept that because we realize how important that industry be working again. We are providing a very important service. We would go back and provide the service to the people who live in those isolated areas.

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce makes sense when they say that final offer selection should be used as a tool to break labour transportation disputes. I would hope that they would reconsider their stand and give the Premier a call and tell him, look, we are having second thoughts about the final offer selection process. If it is good enough for the transportation industry, surely we should allow it to go on as it has been operating in the Province of Manitoba. I hope that call will be coming to the Premier very shortly and we will have the Premier changing his mind on the final offer selection process.

When you start dealing with the Transportation Agency of Canada, I think that there are many issues that can affect strike. When you are dealing not only with the VIA Rail portion of it you are also dealing with the movement of grain and goods. I think a prolonged strike would be very difficult for the country to accept. I think that in some instances, when I see what is happening with the transportation industry in Canada, I would hope we would have a second look at what is happening in the transportation field.

You can travel down No. 1 Highway West to Portage la Prairie and you can see where the trucks have already

established ruts in the highway because of the increased weights on trucks have been allowed. I am not saying that is wrong, but I think the subsidies for transportation are being shifted from the federal Government to the provincial Government.

* (1640)

There is a cutback on the number of trains that are travelling down the rails and a cutback on the goods that are being moved by rail. They are being moved to truck transportation. I think the province should be looking at this very seriously because it is affecting our road system. The roads are deteriorating to quite a degree.

If you look at the No. 1 Highway West from Winnipeg here you get a good example. When there is a rainfall there are puddles of water that will make your car weave all over the road, because of the fact that there is water buildup on the highway, Mr. Speaker.

So I think we should be looking at the whole transportation industry. Bill 31—final offer selection can play a very important role in the National Transportation Act, final offer selection can be used as a tool to stop disputes in the transportation industry, then surely it is good enough for other labour disputes in the Province of Manitoba.—(interjection)—

Well, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, very clearly, once used it for the transportation, so why should it not be good enough for the rest of the people who are involved in negotiations so they can use it as well.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day there was a group that met, which issued a statement dealing with final offer selection. The Manitoba Federation of Labour had a press conference and dealt with some of the information that is available to anybody who would take the time to read the figures that are available on the impact of final offer selection and the length of strikes and lockouts in Manitoba.

Earlier in the week that the press conference was being held, our Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) put some information on the record during a radio broadcast on a Winnipeg radio, which said that it had increased the length of strikes in Manitoba. I guess she said it had increased the average length of strikes and lockouts to 77 days. Our Leader has put on the record why the length of strikes had been interpreted that way, because of the fact there was a lengthy strike with a few employers, so therefore the figures were not correct.

So I think if the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) —(interjection)— Mr. Speaker, very clearly the facts are available for anyone who has any interest in honesty about this particular piece of legislation. If they would look at those figures that are available then very clearly they would come to the same conclusion that most of the people in Manitoba who are thinking people have come to, that the legislation is working and we should not be repealing it, we should be waiting until the five-year sunset clause expires and then have a good opportunity to look at the results they have had.

I think that over and over again Members of our caucus have raised the figures that have been put forward, that over 70 companies have asked for final offer selection in the Province of Manitoba. Of those 70 applications that have come forward, only five of those went to the final selector. I know that of the five that went to the final selector, two of them went in favour of the employer and three went in favour of the employee. So I think that from there you can get an indication that the legislation is working and therefore we should continue to let it work.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) has received her marching orders from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province and told her that you have to come—well, via the Chamber of Commerce, because the Chamber of Commerce has told the Premier very clearly that this had to be repealed, otherwise there was going to be some reckoning during the last election. So the Premier is committed to bringing forward a repeal and I think that the Minister of Labour—it is a good thing he changed the Minister of Labour, because the previous Minister of Labour who was in there who was dealing with final offer selection was antagonizing all of the people in Manitoba. I know there would have been a real war and people would have been gathering in this Legislature long before now to repeal that Minister of Labour. So the Premier put in a more reasonable person, but unfortunately she is following his directions and coming forward with statistics that would support her arguments that they should be repealing the legislation.

During that press conference there was information tabled which showed very clearly that over the years between 1979 and 1988 there were between 20 and 43 days lost in work stoppages caused by strikes and lockouts. Only in the years '82 and '88 were there an unusually higher number of days lost, between 55.7 and 57.3, not 77 as the Minister of Labour had used in her figures on the radio station that she was on talking about this piece of legislation.

In the first three-quarters of 1988, Mr. Speaker, the average work stoppage lasted for 45.6 days. In the same period of 1989, that was the latest period of time that there were statistics available that come from her own department, the Department of Labour, the average fell to 6.3 days. If you look at the entire reported period since final offer selection was proclaimed, in January of 1988, by the then Minister of Labour, the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), the average work stoppage lasted 39.3 days. That is a better figure than what there was between the pre-FOS days lost range.

I know that the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) is wrong when she uses the figure that the final offer selection has made the work stoppages longer. Instead it is shorter, and that comes from figures that come from her own department. I am wondering if she has taken the time to ask her department for figures and why she would not be using the correct figures when she gets on the radio station talking about final offer selection. I think it is unfortunate because it adds to the number of people who become concerned about what direction this Government is taking.

I think that when you look closely at the final offer selection process that in a majority of cases the

collective agreement is reached before the selector's decision is released. I mentioned before that there were over 70 cases, that only five of them had to be dealt with by the final selector. It is ironic that whenever we are talking about bringing in some progressive legislation, as the final offer selection is, that the Conservative Members always talk about the doom and gloom in the province because the labour relations in this country are going to be deteriorating. It has not been any different with this, when we are talking about the final offer selection now. They come and speak about labour relations and how it is deteriorating under the final offer selection process that we have in place.

At the same time the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst) boasts about the attractive labour climate in Manitoba. I guess when he is trying to put out some promotional material for the Province of Manitoba to entice corporations to come and set up shop here, then in his brochures he puts out some very positive information on how the labour relations climate in Manitoba is very stable. We agree with him but it is unfortunate that there would not be some consistency built into their arguments. If it is not working then the labour relations process would be a farce and labour relations in Manitoba would be down. Yet the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism puts out in his own brochure, in his promotional material, he says a reliable and productive work force.

I would think even the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), who did his best to make labour relations in Manitoba deteriorate—probably during his period of time they did deteriorate—(interjection)—I guess he has had a lot of experience with work forces.

An Honourable Member: Amaranth, Sandy Bay, Long Plains, all of those places, great workers.

Mr. Harapiak: He has been a master at capitalizing on getting workers to work below the minimum wage. I am sure that he is going to—

An Honourable Member: They are all piece workers.

Mr. Harapiak: They put them on piece work, and they do not have much of an opportunity to—as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, in the promotional material put forward by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst), he says that a reliable and productive work force plus consistently good labour management relations have given Manitoba one of North America's best labour reputations. That is the present Minister of Trade and Tourism in his brochures when he was bragging about how stable a work force we have in the Province of Manitoba.

* (1650)

During the same time that they are arguing that this final offer selection process is not working, it sounds like they are very inconsistent. I would hope that they would make up their mind. Either we have good labour relations in Manitoba, which some of our progressive legislation has helped develop, or else we do not have good labour relations in Manitoba, and therefore we

should not be trying to promote it when he is trying to entice industry to locate in the Province of Manitoba.

I would hope that he would talk to the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) and try and convince her, yes, Manitoba has good labour relations in the Province of Manitoba, and she should withdraw that repeal of the final offer selection. I think they should be moving in that direction.

I think that the direction is coming from the Chamber of Commerce. The direction within this Chamber on the Conservative Government has to come from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) because the Premier is the one that has made the commitment to the Chamber of Commerce that he would repeal it. I would hope that he would take off his philosophical blinders, look at it very objectively, see that it is working and not be so intent on bringing in that repeal.

Mr. Speaker, that brings about a very interesting point. What about the Liberals? Where do the Liberals stand? Where does my MLA, the Member for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger), stand in this? I would hope that my MLA would come to the hearings and have an open mind. The Member for Niakwa should remember that there are many union people living in his constituency. There are lots of railroaders living in the constituency of Niakwa. They are all very pleased that the final offer selection process is working and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce is recommending that final offer process should be used for resolving transportation disputes. I hope that the Member for Niakwa would look at that, come forward to the committees whenever we do get to committee and have an open mind when the presentations are made. I am sure that my MLA, the Member for Niakwa, when the time comes will be there, and he will have an open mind to—(interjection)—have I phoned my MLA? I am speaking to him directly. I am asking him to have an open mind and try and listen to the people who are coming forward.

It is interesting to hear the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) speak on this final offer selection process. I think that he is getting much the same as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is getting, marching orders from the Chamber of Commerce. I think the Member for St. James is getting his marching orders from a lawyer by the name of David Newman, who is very clearly giving him direction as to what they should be doing. I notice that a former Member from this House, Mr. Sid Green, was in here the other day counselling him as well. I know from his past experience that if he was not giving him city directions, that it would have been in support of the final offer selection process.—(interjection)—That is a connection that we cannot overlook either. The Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) has a father-in-law who is also a good friend of David Newman and Sid Green.

There are a lot of connections in there. I think that his instructions are not very labour oriented. The Member for St. James is certainly getting a management viewpoint on this final offer selection. I would hope that he would have new direction given to him, so they can change their mind. Maybe he is not even making the decision. I think that decision was made when final offer selection was first brought in to this Legislature.

The Leader of the Liberal Party at that time spoke against it, said it was draconian, was too much in favour of labour and therefore it could not help labour relations in Manitoba. She spoke against it. Once she had spoken on it, there was not much that the Member for St. James could do except support her. I think that is some of the dilemma that the Member for St. James is in. Even if he wanted to support the legislation, the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) has given direction, and that is the way they are going to be going in this next little while.

I wanted to raise a few examples of where the application for final offer selection has worked. One of the areas that I know quite well, there is a former Member of this House, chief executive officer of Farm King Allied. They were involved in bargaining over the last year. The information we have is that in the last round of negotiations the feelings got pretty high in the negotiations that took place.

There was a round of negotiations and the United Steelworkers of America voted overwhelmingly to reject the employer's offer. The owner of Farm King Allied backed up his semitrailer to the doors and ordered all employees to stop production. He was moving his operation to Morden because of the labour rejection.

At that time there was another vote called for. The steelworkers accepted by one vote, so there has been pretty difficult relations in that operation. In the next round of negotiations, United Steelworkers of America applied for final offer selection on April 23, 1989. A vote of the workers was held on April 15 of 1989. The result was that they voted yes in favour of using the final offer selector, and a selector was appointed. On June 12 of '89 the board was informed that an agreement had been reached between the parties prior to the selector's decision. Once again, the final offer selection process worked in that.

I think there are several other examples of where the final offer selection process could work. There is—Mr. Speaker, my time is coming to a close—(interjection)—I very clearly want to put on the record that I think the final offer selection process has been working in Manitoba.

It is unfortunate that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has the marching orders, from the Chambers of Commerce in Manitoba, that it must be repealed and he has given direction to his Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond)—the previous Minister of Labour was not doing a good job of resolving this so he turfed him out and that was one of the good moves that the Premier made in this Legislature, moved him—(interjection)—he was making a mess of labour relations in Manitoba so he turfed him out and now we have another Minister of Labour who is following his directions very closely and continuing to repeal that final offer selection.

I would hope that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province would look at some of the information that is on there, what effect it has had on negotiations in Manitoba. It has reduced the length of strikes in this province, it has worked to improve the labour relations in this province and we do have some of the most positive labour relations anywhere in Canada. I would

hope that the Premier would look at that very objectively and see what is actually happening and—

* (1700)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member for The Pas will have seven minutes remaining.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

BILL NO. 4—THE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Member of Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), Bill No. 4, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route, standing in the name of the Honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey).

Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave. Agreed. The Honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I rise to speak on Bill No. 4, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2).

When we are dealing with licence plates, we are dealing with a very important issue when it comes to traffic regulation. I think we have to be very serious when we discuss the visibility of licence plates on vehicles of all kinds in Manitoba.

Because of the importance of this particular issue, I would like to read into the record some of the things that it says in The Highway Traffic Act. Number 6, Clause 1—they deal first of all with the number of plates required. It deals whether you are going to have to clean one or two plates. It says, except in the case of a motor vehicle that is being towed by another motor vehicle, every motor vehicle that is required to be registered under this Act and every trailer that is required to be registered under this Act while on a highway shall have attached thereto and exposed thereon one or more number of plates for the current registration year as herein required, furnished by the Registrar or the Taxicab Board and of a design, type, and a material prescribed by the Registrar and in the case of a motor vehicle being towed as aforesaid, a compliance shall be made with Section 8.

Mr. Speaker, the number of plates and who should have them and who is going to give them out are very clear in the legislation. The number of plates on motor vehicles—now this is dealing with how many there should be on each motor vehicle. 6(2) Every number plate shall be placed in such a conspicuous position on the outside of the vehicle as to make it distinctly visible and shall be illuminated as required by Subclause 35(1)(a). Hi, Harry. I do not have your shoes. The Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) is looking for his shoe. I do

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not know why they would be off in the first place, but the Member for The Pas—oh I think he did find them, so he is okay now. He can go home. We wondered what was wafting through the House for awhile. Now I know.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

Under 6(2)(a) every tractor—I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Member for The Pas did not have any holes in his socks. I did not see any. I looked hard and I did not notice any and surprisingly enough both socks matched, so I am quite pleased.

An Honourable Member: Are you speaking on dirty licence plates or dirty shoes?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Yes, actually two specific breaches of our Rules. I do not believe the last comments of the Member were in reference to the Bill. But I actually do have another point, which is that when we debate Bills on second reading we deal with the principle, not specific sections of the Bill. That is something that Members may have lost in the Member for Portage's (Mr. Connery) comments about shoes and socks. But comments on specific sections should not be made on second reading. Second reading debate should be circling on the principle of the Bill and I would ask if you would perhaps remind the Member of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I too noticed the transgression on the part of the Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Connery), and I was waiting before raising the question just to see if the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) had caught on. Finally, after some delay, the Honourable Member did catch on and rose to his feet as he normally does to try to keep us all on our best behaviour in this House.

But you know, I join with the Member for Thompson in very gently castigating—you have to be careful about that word—the Honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Connery) because we should not want to detract from the importance of the debate on this important Bill standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) by getting into a clause-by-clause study, because no doubt in the fullness of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the time may indeed come when we will have that opportunity to study this Bill clause by clause. But until that time we all have to observe the Rules and that includes every single Member, including the Honourable Member for Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs. So I hope that Honourable Member

will heed the advice given today by the Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank all Honourable Members for their advice, and I would ask the Honourable Minister to stick to the relevance of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Minister has the floor.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do apologize to the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) for making reference to him, I guess being not properly attired in the House. I am told that there is a clothing rule for the House that we must have suits, ties. I would presume that we are supposed to have shoes on, but I have never seen that. Is that part of the dress code, that we are supposed to have shoes on?

An Honourable Member: Pierre Trudeau used to wear sandals.

Mr. Connery: But Mr. Trudeau used to wear sandals. I am glad now that the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) is properly attired, he has got his shoes back on.

I am not going to deal clause by clause with the Bill as presented by the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), but I do think it is important to put on the record some of the areas that we have to look at because it is very important that we know where these licence plates are located on vehicles and the number of licence plates. That is very important that we know the location of these plates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they talk about tractors, other than farm tractors. Every truck tractor, which is a semi-trailer tractor that pulls a 40-45 foot trailer, it says, on the front thereof shall carry one plate. So every semi-trailer has to carry a plate on the front of that vehicle. I am very aware of that. We have two semi-trailers of our own and so we are aware of the fact that you have to have a plate on the front of that truck.

It says also, that every other motor vehicle, and every trailer, other than a semi-trailer, shall carry one number plate on the back thereof to which the validation sticker required under subsection is affixed. So the validation sticker has to be affixed on the plate.

It says then that every semi-trailer, which is that which is pulled by the tractor, shall carry one plate on the back with the year of issue indicated thereon. Every number plate affixed to the rear of a motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle, a moped, mobility vehicle, truck, or public service vehicle, shall be so placed that no part of it is higher—and this is very significant, the height of these plates, which have to be clean—than 770 millimetres from the ground level or, depending on the bumper, lower than the lower edge of the bumper. So these clean licence plates have to be affixed properly and every vehicle has to have the correct number.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they talk about validation stickers, and the Member does mention validation

stickers in his Bill. In addition to the number of plates required to be attached to trailers and motor vehicles, there shall be affixed thereto, in each registration year or portion thereof for which new number plates are not issued, a validation sticker showing a distinctive number and the registration year for which it is issued and which shall be affixed in a manner prescribed in the regulations. These all will show in the legislation where they are supposed to be clean.

* (1710)

They are very specific in the case of a semi-trailer truck. In the case of a semi-trailer truck the number of plates shall be carried as provided on the truck-tractor portion thereof. In the case of a semi-trailer, those 45 foot trailers that are pulled by those tractors, shall have one on their rear. It also states, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that every number plate furnished by the registrar is, and shall remain, the property of the Crown and shall be returned to the registrar when required by him.

So really what we are obligated to do is to keep the Crown property clean and I have no objection to that. I think that anything that belongs to the Crown should be kept in a proper order and so it is required that this be done.

They talk about stolen or lost licence plates and it says where a number plate issued for a vehicle is lost or stolen the registered owner of the vehicle may forward to the registrar the registration card respecting that vehicle, the remaining plate if the plate was issued as a set, and the prescribed fee for a new number plate and, upon furnishing such proof of loss as the registrar may require, the registrar shall issue a new number plate to the registered owner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate, and they speak here of the number of licence plates issued, it was the previous Government that eliminated the front licence plate on vehicles. They did eliminate that. They said for some cost savings -(interjection)- Well, you know, as comments are made, I find that, and especially in the case of police, a vehicle approaching them with a front licence plate can be identified very easily, but a vehicle that does not have one—and you see a lot of goofy stuff now in place of where those licence plates used to be, they are not there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much time did I lose in the inappropriate interjection of the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), just so I do not lose out on my time?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member lost approximately two minutes.

Mr. Connery: Two minutes—so that would take me to about 17 after, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, you are correct.

Mr. Connery: Till about 17 after. Well, I just wanted to make sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I did not miss out on any of my—

An Honourable Member: Use the time wisely and well.

Mr. Connery: Well, that is why I wanted to know, because if I did not, then at the end, my summation might get missed and I did not want to miss out on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Minister has approximately four minutes remaining, to be exact.

Mr. Connery: I think that would suffice, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the use of other numbers that are prohibited, and also it says, in the current legislation, that no number other than that upon the number plate furnished by the registrar shall be exposed on any part of a vehicle or trailer in such a position as to likely be confused with the number plate.

So they are very clear that you have to know that is the licence plate. When we get down to the nitty-gritty of the ludicrous Bill of the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake)—and I say that it is ludicrous, because outside of adding to what is already in legislation 6(8), and it says visibility of licence plates, he has added the words “letters and validation sticker,” which today, if under the law, if your validation sticker is dirty, can be prosecuted already. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the law today states in Section 6(8) of The Highway Traffic Act—I will read it because this is very important that we know that all you are trying to do is duplicate existing legislation.

The number plates shall be kept free from dirt, and shall be so affixed and maintained that the number thereon may at all times be plainly visible and clearly legible and that the view thereof shall not be obscured or obstructed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill is what is in the legislation today. But what is so very interesting is that I know, when we were in Opposition, our House Leader and our Leader, the Leader of the Opposition, used to ensure that we brought forward appropriate resolutions and legislation or Bills. The Leader of the Opposition has sanctioned this Bill. The lawyers that are in their caucus have obviously sanctioned this Bill. All the Members of the Liberal Party, including their House Leader, the Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), has sanctioned a Bill stating we shall do what is already in the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how ludicrous. This is a Party that is waiting to govern. They do not even know what is in the legislation, so they thought they would rewrite the same legislation. Well, if that is what they are going to do if they form Government, is to take the legislative books that are currently there today and just copy them and add a word here or there—sure they can introduce a lot of legislation, but it is going to be meaningless, which is what we have seen coming from the Liberal Opposition over there.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I agree to the contents of the Bill that are proposed, it is already in legislation under The Highway Traffic Act. For those that did not hear just a minute ago, it is Section 6, Clause 8. It says, Visibility of number plates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it really is kind of a waste of this Legislature's time to be debating legislation that

is already currently in place. The fact that the Leader of the Opposition who would just love to be the Premier of this province would condone such a thing shows that they will never form Government.

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on Bill 4, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2) put forth by the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake). I can tell you that after spending many hours in the Estimates process, I know to what great extent the Member for Assiniboia goes to research legislation and the Estimates of the Department of Highways and Transportation.

We spent some 33 hours, of course, in an unrelenting attack on the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) and had a very in-depth look at the Estimates of that department. We had the opportunity to look at pictures, diagrams, maps and letters. We know that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) has travelled many of the highways and byways of Manitoba. Certainly his research was exceedingly thorough.

He questioned the whole process of the Highways Department, the survey and design that went into the building of many of our provincial highways, looked at the Land Acquisition Branch of the Highways Department and did a very thorough job of really putting the Minister and his staff to the task of defending those Estimates. Because of that, I think there is probably something more in this Bill that a lot of us are missing. His thoroughness in the past has led me not to just accept this at face value. I think probably we need to look at this in greater clarity and see what the substance of this Bill really is.

I know earlier in the Session the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) indicated that there were times that she was presiding over an adult day care, but I am sure that reference was not to the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake). He is obviously also recognized not only by the Members on this side, but by the Members in his own caucus in that he was given unlimited time to thoroughly go through the Minister of Highway's (Mr. Albert Driedger) Estimates.

* (1720)

As a result, many of the Ministers in our Government were not given an opportunity to present their Estimates and have them questioned by Members of the Opposition. I know Ministers and their departments were exceedingly disappointed that they did not have the opportunity in this 240 hours to have a chance to have their departments scrutinized. Departments like Finance, Government Services, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Executive Council and even Education did not have an opportunity to have their departments looked at. All the time, energy and hours of preparation that was put into that, and they were not given that opportunity to have those Estimates scrutinized by the House and certainly give the public of Manitoba an opportunity to better understand the workings of Government.

Earlier in this Session in the debate on this particular Bill, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) labelled this

as an attack on rural Manitoba. I would like to just maybe spend a few minutes making a few remarks on that as well, because it seems that the Liberal Party has taken a very strong stand and have no understanding of rural Manitoba.

I know, soon after we came into the first Session, the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) attacked this Government for the repair and the upgrading of the Court House in Minnedosa—a very historic building in our community, a landmark, a heritage building. The previous Government, of course, was prepared to bulldoze this building down and through the farsightedness of the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), the demand by the citizens of Minnedosa, that this building be repaired, it has since been fixed to the point where it is now in use again. I can tell you the citizens in Minnedosa were quite surprised that a Liberal Member from Ellice would condemn this step taken by this Government. Again, it is part of this attack we see by the Liberal Caucus on rural Manitoba.

Day after day in the House we hear the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), the Health Critic for the Liberal Party, questioning the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and criticizing the capital dollars that are spent in rural Manitoba, in hospitals and personal care homes, and we cannot help but think that -(interjection)-

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the Honourable Member to stick to the Bill under debate, please.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 4, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, is a very important Bill to us in rural Manitoba and I think it is important that we have an opportunity to look at Bill 4 and to reflect on some of the things that Members of the Party sponsoring this Bill have said in previous days. I know that a rural paper in the Pine Falls area referred to the criticism of the Liberal Health Critic (Mr. Cheema) when money was being spent for hospitals and personal care homes in rural Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: It is not a health Bill.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) is indicating that we should speak on health matters, but I would just mention just one more thing in that respect. I know that the Leader of his Party was in Minnedosa in recent times and spoke on a number of matters to do with rural Manitoba. One of the quotations in the Minnedosa Tribune was that 40 percent of the personal care beds were not necessary, that 40 percent of those people should be turfed out of the personal care homes, that 40 percent of the people on those waiting lists should be turfed off the waiting list. On top of that she further commented that the people in the care homes only needed 20 minutes of care each day. I was quite concerned about this because we have opened a new personal care home in Erickson and we are looking at a new building in Minnedosa as well, and I am really concerned that the Liberal Party is forsaking rural Manitoba completely.

Anyway, getting more specific on Bill 4, it strikes me that perhaps there is some confusion amongst the

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Members of the Liberal Party as far as this legislation goes. The sponsor of this Bill, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), on October 5 really raises the question whether the legislation had to do with just the numbers on the plate or whether it also referred to the letters. I could not help but notice on that big white Lincoln out there that there were no numbers, that there were just letters. This legislation obviously is of a very personal nature. I know his concern for that is a very personal one.

By the same token, the Member for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger), speaking on October 24 really questioned whether the licence plates should have any letters on them at all and whether they should have any other information. In fact, I just quote from that speech the fact that we can now also personalize our licence plates is something he objects to.

I believe that one of the things we do with respect to the purchase of a registration for a vehicle and the validation of the Autopac sticker is to try and have some sort of uniformity.

He spoke very eloquently on October 24 on this Bill and I see some conflict here between the Member for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger) and the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) where they are saying really the opposite on this issue. I wonder in fact if the Liberal Party did caucus this legislation before it was put before the House and whether perhaps they need to withdraw it and take it back and have a second look at it. Their statements on it certainly create some confusion.

One of the things that is mentioned in that speech by the Member for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger) is that probably the front plates should become mandatory again in Manitoba and I cannot help but agree with him. In recent weeks I have had a number of letters from people, again in rural Manitoba, who are calling for the return of the front licence plate, people who are involved with the Neighbourhood Watch Program, the Range Patrols, Block Parents, the police, are saying that the lack of the front plate does not allow them to do their job as well as they would like to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps when the Liberal Caucus does take this legislation back to have that second look at it they could perhaps see if an amendment could be brought forward to this legislation which would incorporate the bringing back in Manitoba of the front licence plates.

If they truly want to make amends in rural Manitoba and make up for some of their errors in the past to do with the personal care homes and hospitals, the spending of money in rural Manitoba to repair items such as the Minnedosa court house, I think perhaps if they brought back an amendment here to do with the front licence plates it would be well received by people in the rural areas. I think it would certainly be a start on a long way back for them in getting the recognition and winning the hearts of rural Manitobans again.

I think then that this legislation is something that we need to take a second look at—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member's time has expired.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must apologize, I am watching the wrong clock and the Honourable Member still has two minutes left.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have left? Two minutes. Thank you. Time flies so quickly when you are debating legislation like this.

Many of the critics in the Liberal Party have attacked this Government over the last while, and I think that this Bill is a chance for them to refocus some of their thinking and to withdraw this bill because it is seen not only by Members on this side but by many people in Manitoba as an attack on the rural area. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and his comments some time ago spoke very eloquently about this. I think that the Liberal Caucus would be well advised to take a look at some of their policies and not really expect to be able to solve all of them by backing up that Brink's truck that we have heard so much of in the past to solve problems whether they be in education, in health, in family services. To come up with constructive ideas that can be brought forth in Question Period and in Estimates. I know that they have used their 240 hours at this time and are going to be able to—

* (1730)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member's time has expired. Again, I apologize for interrupting the Honourable Member's train of thought.

The Honourable Minister of Environment.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to be able to rise to say a few words in honour of Bill 4. As has been pointed out by a number of Members on this side, this is obviously a Bill of great importance, a Bill of very great significance for Manitobans given that it is No. 4 on the Order Paper. One might think that this is a Bill that will contribute to the future stability of this province. It may be a Bill that, in fact, will provide that missing link in law enforcement across the Province of Manitoba, or perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is more a case that this is a Bill that has some kind of a hidden agenda, some kind of a hidden meaning.

Perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 4, to require the cleanliness of licence plates across this province, has some kind of a sinister implication for the people of this province. Perhaps it is to take the mind of the public off what might otherwise be spent on examining the operations of the Government and the Opposition in this province.

Maybe that is what the real hidden meaning in this Bill is, that a compliant and obedient public would be out there cleaning their cars, cleaning their licence plates, not spending their time thinking about what is going on in the Government of this province. Because I conceive no other real reason why this Bill would be introduced, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have here something of considerable significance for the people of this province. After all, there has to be something

hidden about the importance of a licence plate. The NDP went to great ends to make sure that there was only one on the cars in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just on that issue. I want to assure you that I will have a plate on the front of my car that I think represents what I feel is the true sentiments of many Manitobans these days. I happened to come across this plate at Eddystone and I would venture that half the people in this House do not know where Eddystone is. - (interjection)- Well, there you go, a lot of people behind me here know where Eddystone is. There it was sitting on the counter and I knew it was just meant to be for me because it is blue and white and it says "It is hard to be humble when you are from Manitoba." I said to myself, that is what I want on the front of my car, and I am going to make sure that one is clean, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I want people to get that message.

It seems to me that maybe, however, the Liberals have taken a different tactic because they are looking to see if their compliant and obedient public out there are is going to start to spend their time making sure that they have clean licence plates. They will clean those licence plates, be out there on Sunday morning, instead of listening to CBC Radio they will be out there cleaning those licence plates. After they get home from work, instead of rushing in to turn on the television to see what happened in the Legislature today, they will be out there cleaning those licence plates. Maybe they will even be out there with a flashlight, instead of watching the late news and the reruns and the rehash of what is going on in the Legislature.

They do not want to have exposed the incompetence of the Opposition in this Legislature; that is what I think the real reason could be for putting this together. You know, it has to be a challenge for those who do not really want the public to know what is going on, to try and come up with something original to deflect careful examination of the activities of the legislators in this province.

I have no problem with the examination of what we are doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so there must be some reason for the Opposition not to want the public to know what is going on in this Legislature. Are they concerned that this Government is maybe doing the kind of job that the people of this province want? Is that what their concern is? I can almost see the caucus meeting where the Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), and the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), being the sharp minds that they are, contemplating the future of the Liberal Party and how they are going to assume authority in this province, and the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) came through with this plan for a clean licence plate and they said: By golly that is it, that is what we need, something to deflect the interest of the public, that will make sure that the public does not spend their time examining our malfunctions in the Legislature.

Some Honourable Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cummings: Well, I have to give my credit to the Member for Assiniboia, he spent hours and hours

scrutinizing the Highways Estimates of this province; he did a great job. The only thing was that probably the three wise men from Winnipeg forgot to tell him there were only 240 hours for going through the Estimates because, all of a sudden, we spent 25 hours on Highways, and how much did we spent on Finance?

An Honourable Member: Zero.

Mr. Cummings: Zero, that is right. One of the most important departments in this Government in the Province of Manitoba, how the Department of Finance functions, and it was not examined during the Estimate process.

It seems to me that is the kind of thing that they might wish to have not demonstrated too well to the people of Manitoba, because it might demonstrate that this Government has a very weak Opposition that is sitting over there, hoping that nobody watches what it is that they are doing.

Well, we want a compliant and obedient public. How else do you get them not to pay attention to some of the other things that are going on? You send them out to wash the car. Make sure that they do not have a dirty licence plate. Maybe it could be attached to the merit system. After all, if you are caught speeding you lose merits.

Maybe we should change the merit system as a result of this Bill if it were to ever come into law, that a person could be given a bonus. You could have a five-point bonus if you had a clean licence plate every time that you were stopped, so that would give you an additional buffer against speeding tickets, because first thing that the officer would do would be to check your licence plate. He would say ah, this guy has a clean licence plate. Check his driver's licence and, unless he has six demerits, well then he probably will still be all right when he goes before the judge. That is something that would help coerce a compliant and obedient public into agreeing with this type of legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have spent hours and hours on debate of various issues within this House. How many Bills have been passed? How many of the really important things have we dealt with in this Legislature? We have over 90 pieces of legislation before us and very, very few of them have made it into committee let alone make it back for third reading.

We are looking at a Bill that is basically covered under The Highway Traffic Act, a Bill that I hope I have demonstrated is not one that will be of import to the people of this province. Meantime, we have people out there who are asking, is minority Government working? Are you able to get forward the kind of legislation that you need in order to provide good Government for this province? People out there are asking, why is it that this Government now has a tremendous backlog of Bills that cannot even get out of the Legislature into committee? Maybe a licence plate Bill such as this is a good idea, because if the public really knew what is happening in here they would not be too pleased.

* (1740)

When I look at the three wise men from Winnipeg and how they feel that this could perhaps be a way of turning around the tide of public interest that might very well be directed at this Government, showing that it is prepared to provide leadership and provide good Government for the people of Manitoba, they want to send them out to their back yards to wash their cars. Kind of a cold job these days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but nevertheless something that would occupy the time.

They would not maybe have time to turn on their radios in the morning and listen to the news bulletins before they rush off to work. Perhaps they would be too busy checking on their neighbour when they were driving to work. Has he got his licence plate clean? Maybe I can get an additional merit point if I turn him in. That would be an interesting aspect of this Bill if they were to carry those thoughts on as far as I suspect some people might want to.

We do not want a compliant and obedient public out there in terms of what interests are attracted to this Legislature and to the business that is going on in here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We want a public that is interested and vibrant and concerned about where this province is going. We want a public that understands where we are taking this province. We need to be able to get the legislation passed so that we can provide the direction and the leadership that this province has been so desperately lacking for the last two terms of Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at the fact that the public is starting to question—the reactions that we had on the Repap-Manfor deal, where, on one hand, we had those who were opposed. They said that we were going to rape, pillage and plunder the North, and that there was no way that the Opposition felt that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) should be able to continue with negotiations. They were going to keep him up all night, so that he was unable to complete his duties the following morning in negotiations with Repap, which eventually led to the pizza and beer caper. Then we find out, and I think the public has a right to know and needs to know, that all of a sudden we had the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) who, suddenly a light came on, and he started pounding the table and he said, Cummings, when are you going to give these people a licence?

Is that the kind of thing that they did not want to be shown to the public of this province and hoped to deflect with this kind of a Bill? I hope that was not the motive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because frankly, we need to get on with the work of this House. We need to move forward. Frankly, if these kinds of pieces of legislation are an indication of the seriousness of the representatives who have been dealing with the business of this province, then I think there is every legitimate right to ask who is responsible for moving some legislation forward in this House.

It needs to be done and it needs to be done soon. We cannot hide behind the facade of Bills that are not of import to the public of Manitoba. What we need to do is make sure that we deal with the real meat and potatoes of the Legislative Session. Ninety some Bills on the Order Paper—now is the time to deal with them.

We have to start being serious about the matter of Government for this province.

I would like to give credit at the same time that occasionally there are rays of light that enter into this Chamber, and occasionally the Bills will pass. I have to tell you that I think the public would be poorly served if all of a sudden we find that we have reached a very critical stage in terms of managing the affairs of this province. We are faced with the responsibility of bringing forward a budget for the next fiscal year, just finished wrestling with the Estimates process and still wrestling with some 90 Bills in the Legislature.

I think the time has come for both Opposition Parties to recognize the realities of the responsibility that we all have in providing good leadership within this province. Good leadership is not demonstrated by Bill 4, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Good leadership would be represented by debating the Bills of import to the public of this province, get on with the opportunity that we have to turn around almost a decade of mismanagement in this province and make sure that we can debate the Bills that are reasonable and proper for the people in this province.

I therefore put forward the request, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Opposition consider whether or not this is one of the Bills that they wish to continue debating, or whether they are prepared to say, yes, this is not one that is critical to the future of Manitoba. This is one that we can afford to live without, but we want to get on with the business of this province and deal with the important Bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us deal with the issues as I have just outlined them. I appeal to the Members Opposite that we move forward with the serious business of this House.—(interjection)—With the greatest of respect to the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), he worked hard in the Estimates of Highways, and I respect him for that. Now is the time for all of us to get on in this House to work hard on the rest of the Bills of importance in this Legislature.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill 4, a Bill that obviously had very high priority in the Liberal Caucus, because they bring it in at the beginning of the Session. I guess somebody must have given them the message that we have to tie up Government and keep the process of Government going on with a lot of Private Members' Bills.

The Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) has spent a lot of time in putting this Bill together. I just happen to have The Highway Traffic Act in front of me, Section 6(8), and Bill 4 says repeal Section 6(8) and replace by, and I will not read the whole thing because there is really only four or five words that count here. He has added in the words "numbers, letters and validation sticker" and taken out the word "may" and put in the word "are."

Very significant Bill. The intent is exactly the same as what is under the present Highway Traffic Act, so what is the intent of the Bill? Just to put something in front of the House to show that they try to be

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Government. I can tell you, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) very clearly said when he spoke to this Bill, this is very definitely an attack on rural Manitoba. There is no question about it. It has nothing to do with responsible Government. I have heard it said over there, we are the Government in waiting and we have the ability to govern. This kind of Bill is going to be used over and over again as an example of how the Liberals have no concept of what is good for rural Manitoba or what is good in terms of responsible Government.

I think the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) would be responsible if he, at the first opportunity, would withdraw this kind of Bill. Here we are in the 124th day of the sitting of this Legislature and 135 days is the record. There is no question we are going to pass the record.

I see the Liberals have accomplished something very significant. They have introduced a Bill that changes nothing, changes nothing. What it really says to the farmers of Manitoba, who by the way, have gravel roads to drive on out there; it does rain once in awhile and there is a little bit of mud involved and it splashes up on the licence plates. Is that -(interjection)- I tell you, the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) is worried now whether I understand whether there are gravel roads in Winnipeg. I have driven around and there are not very many. There is lots of pavement in the City of Winnipeg.

I can see what the Liberals' objective is. They are saying to rural Manitoba, we want to regulate you to death. It is required that every mile that you drive down this gravel road, you have to stop and check your licence plate. Does that mean you have to carry a little cloth with you and wipe it off, because there will be a little bit of dirt gets on it, or does that mean we are going to stimulate a whole new industry in Manitoba, automatic licence plate washers? We have windshield washers, we can have automatic licence plate washers. How are you going to be able to see whether that is working or not? Maybe we have to have a TV camera that checks the rear licence plate as you drive down the road to be sure that licence plate is clean.

Is the intent of the Bill and the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) really to have it clearly recognized as to whether the vehicle has a licence plate and what the licence plate says? If that is what he wants, then why does he not support a front licence plate? Why do you not put that in the Bill? That would have been something meaningful, but to require just that the numbers, letters, and validation sticker must be clearly visible at all times is ludicrous.

* (1750)

An Honourable Member: That would be an expenditure of money, so we cannot do that.

Mr. Findlay: This is not an expenditure of money to put an automatic licence plate washer on? That is an expenditure of money if ever there was an expenditure of money. Maybe the idea is that there should be checkers at every mile or at every town to be sure that everybody who comes into town has a clean licence

plate. Is this the Liberals' idea of decentralizing Government jobs, to put people out there to count the clean licence plates and report those that are not? That is the very Party that was against decentralization. They are opposed to the concept of putting Government jobs into rural Manitoba where the services need to be delivered. Is this their example of what we need for Government decentralization of jobs? I mean, it is a pretty cushy job to sit and watch whether the licence plates are clean or not.

I can assure the Members opposite that in the business of farming you are doing business in rural Manitoba, it is pretty difficult to assure at all times that your licence plate is clean and not obstructed from view because you may be carrying a load, or pulling a trailer, or pulling a piece of equipment and it is clearly going to be recognized that the Liberals' approach to regulation in this context is a very definite attack on rural Manitoba. There is no question about it and unless the Member withdraws the Bill we will continue to say that on every signpost and in every opportunity we have that the Liberals' idea is we regulate, regulate, regulate. That is all we hear from over there, spend money and regulate. They do not believe that the public has the right to have input. They do not believe in the principle of common sense in Government.

Very clearly, what is being brought in by this Government is common sense in terms of how you deal with the citizens of Manitoba and very clearly the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) and all his caucus over there, they are responsible for doing exactly the opposite thing. They decided that rural Manitoba has to be controlled. They know they will not win a seat out there ever in a day, but we will control them. This is an example of how they intend to do it. There is no question about it.

If you wanted to propose something reasonable for rural Manitoba, you might propose that we should not allow potholes in the roads. You might be opposed to weight restrictions in the spring which pushes the trucks off the pavement onto the gravel roads and just pushes the heck out of them. You might propose that we control the weeds on the roadsides which creates a sort of an unattractive atmosphere in rural Manitoba. But, no, we must have clean licence plates. I think that the Member for Assiniboia might want to rise in his place fairly soon and withdraw this Bill because we have lots of Members left to speak to it and I know they are going to continue to make the same points, that we need to have responsibility in what we do in this Legislature.

It is kind of disappointing to see the hours and hours we spend debating issues of real insignificance of whether the economy of the province or rural Manitoba is going to move ahead or not. If the Liberals really believe that they want to see progress in the economy of rural Manitoba, they might have brought the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) into Estimates, but, no, they raise questions on the other side of the House repeatedly about the economy of Manitoba. The economy is in terrible shape. They have an opportunity, 240 hours, to address that issue. They could have brought the Minister of Finance in, but, no, they choose not to ask a question, not a question in Estimates.

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I mean it is two-faced. You talk out of both sides of your mouth. You want to do something, you do not. It is rather surprising that you take this approach and I find it absolutely appalling that you take this kind of approach.- (interjection)- The Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) is saying we should not speak to the Bill. Why did he introduce it? That is the right of the Legislature. Every Member in this Legislature has the right to speak to every Bill that is introduced. That is the democratic process, but I see your point of view. If you object to what I say, then I am wrong, then I do not have the right to express my opinion. My opinion is being exemplified by many people on this side of the House and we will repeatedly make the statements whether you like them or not. You have introduced the legislation; it is frivolous. It is an attack on rural Manitoba. It is essentially meaningless in terms of changing the intent of The Highway Traffic Act under Section 6(8).

I just really am surprised that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) could have been led into doing this sort of thing.- (interjection)- It must be the Member for Assiniboia who sent this over. I have not checked my licence plate even lately to see if it is clean.

An Honourable Member: Is it incoherent? Then it must have been his.

Mr. Findlay: It is incoherent, I can assure it is relatively incoherent. But rural Manitoba by and large does need some economic stimulus. There is no question we have had some difficult times. We have had some droughts out there, so maybe our licence plates will stay a little cleaner, because there is not the splash on the muddy roads to deal with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have thought that the Members on the other side of the House would have introduced some more meaningful legislation challenging us to do this, challenging us to do that, but no. Maybe they are challenging the private sector to come up with the automatic licence-plate washers which would be needed if we are going to abide by this law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will say that I have had the occasion to experience a country where they do put a lot more emphasis on cleanliness than what I see on vehicles in this province. When we were in Japan last year, just about a year ago right now, it was the rainy season. It was wet. The thing that appealed to me most was, the first few days that I was there, the sidewalks were clean, amazingly clean. I do not know if they regulated it or not, but I know the Liberals will take the approach that they should regulate it.

The other thing I noticed was that no matter how dirty the streets were, the cars always seemed to be clean. It was amazing in comparison to here, when things are wet and muddy cars get dirty, but there, they were not. Every taxicab we got in over there was amazing for cleanliness inside the cab, and every cab had a feather duster just over the rearview mirror. The taxicab drivers were I guess obsessed with cleanliness. Every time that they were stopped waiting, they would be out with their feather duster cleaning the cab off

and cleaning the licence plate. So maybe we are going to promote a feather duster industry here in the Province of Manitoba to keep these license plates clean.

An Honourable Member: You know where to get the feathers from.

Mr. Cummings: The Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) is an expert on the chicken business, but I will let him tell us more about it when he rises to speak to this particular Bill.

An Honourable Member: Might be a new little cottage industry.

Mr. Cummings: Maybe a new cottage industry, maybe there is. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that citizens of rural Manitoba are probably going to have to be exposed more to the Liberal approach of common sense in Government, which is clearly whenever an issue comes up that they do not think people can make the right decisions on, they regulate, they regulate. I have heard that message across the way in questions to all the various Ministers on this side of the House. If they do not agree with what the people are doing, you regulate, you legislate, you regulate, and this is exactly what they are proposing in this kind of Bill. That is the intent of the Bill. That is the way I read it, and the way I am going to tell the citizens of rural Manitoba, that it is against the law to have a dirty licence plate. Regardless of the reason, it must be clean.

He changed the verb here. It must be clean. All the dirt and debris must be off the licence plate at all times. The question is, does that mean when the vehicles are moving or when they are sitting also? When are they in violation of the law? I assume if you want to really promote the diversification of rural Manitoba you will say, the licence plate must be clean at all times.- (interjection)-

What is that? You are going to have another amendment? Is that what we are going to do? I challenge you to bring an amendment in so we can have another round of discussion on this very important Bill. Bill No. 4, right off the top, one of the most important pieces of legislation that the Liberal Government could bring forward, a group of people who say that they are a Government-in-waiting, which very clearly this is an example of how they are going to self-destruct, absolutely self-destruct.

They talk about the finances of the Province of Manitoba and they are scared to call the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) in for Estimates. There is no question about it. Those messages we will put out repeatedly and continually unless you are prepared to do a better job in Opposition.

The third Party in this House does a much more viable job of addressing the issues. They are not afraid of the issues. The Liberal Party very clearly is. With this kind of legislation they demonstrate that loudly and clearly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see the time is just about up. I suppose my time is just about up. I thank you for the

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opportunity to address this question. I hope that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) supported by the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) will actually withdraw this Bill and prevent -(interjection)- oh, we might have to go knock on some doors just to tell them what their Member is up to, the vibrant activities brought to the House. He brings in very meaningful legislation. Maybe there is some muddy road in Assiniboia.

We will have to point out to them that it is going to be dangerous to drive down that road in case there is a little bit of mud splashes up on their licence plate, and then they would be violating the law of the Province

of Manitoba. If you ever elect that Member again to this House, this is the kind of thing he will bring upon you as a Member of the Government if that ever happens. I can assure him that the probability is very slim and remote. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

I am interrupting the proceedings in accordance with the Rules. The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).