

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA  
Monday, 17 March, 1980

Time: 2:30 p.m.

OPENING PRAYER by Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. SPEAKER, Hon. Harry E. Graham (Birtle-Russell): Before we proceed, I should like to draw the honourable members' attention to the gallery where we have 48 students of Grade 5 standing, from Chancellor School, under the direction of Ms. King. This school is in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Health. On behalf of all the honourable members we welcome you here this afternoon.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Minnedosa.

MR. DAVID BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Petition of the Agricultural and Community District of Newdale, praying for the passing of an Act to amend an Act respecting the Agricultural and Community District of Newdale.

MR. SPEAKER: Reading and Receiving Petitions . . . Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

HON. WARNER H. JORGENSEN (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table copies of the report that I issued at a press conference yesterday. I wonder if I may be permitted to, in addition to that, to make an additional statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps with the agreement of the House we can go to Introduction of Bills and come back to this matter. (Agreed)  
The Honourable Minister of Fitness and Amateur Sports.

HON. ROBERT (Bob) BANMAN (La Verendrye): If I could, Mr. Speaker, table two reports. I'd like to table the Annual Report of the Co-Operative Promotional Board, year ending March 31, 1979.

I'd also like to table the Annual Report of the Co-Op Loans and Loans Guarantee Board for the year ending March 31, 1979.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HON. STERLING R. LYON, Premier (Charleswood) introduced Bill No. 2, An Act respecting the Operation of Section 23 of The Manitoba Act in regard to Statutes.

Loi sur l'application de l'article 23 de l'Acte du Manitoba aux textes Législatifs.

HON. GERALD W.J. MERCIER (Attorney-General)(Osborne) introduced Bill No. 3, The Powers of Attorney Act, Loi sur le mandat; and Bill No. 5, An Act to amend The Public Trustee Act.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

MR. JORGENSEN: Mr. Speaker, I have a further statement I would like to make in connection with the tabling of the report that I gave at the press conference yesterday.

Following the events that took . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please. Has the Honourable Minister copies?

MR. JORGENSEN: Following the events that took place on the weekend, I wish to provide to the members of the House additional information and clarification.

In the first place I think it perhaps would be helpful to describe to you the properties of vinyl chloride. There seems to be some misunderstanding of that particular subject.

This is a synthetic, colourless, easily liquified, flammable material, slightly water soluble having a pleasant ether-like odour at greater than 1,000 to 2,000 parts per million.

It is used in the manufacture of polyvinyl chloride and other plastics such as synthetic leather. In high concentrations it acts as an anaesthetic and at one time was used for this purpose. In vapour form it causes irritation of the skin and eyes, a similar reaction to that of tear gas.

It is a known human carcinogen if there is exposure to large amounts over a long period of time, the gas is heavier than air. The boiling point of the liquid is -13 degrees Celsius. It is an explosive hazard when vapours are exposed to high heat or direct flame. As I say, it is extremely flammable, it may be ignited by heat, sparks or flame; burning releases hydrochloric gas. Fire may cause a rupture of a container tank.

In respect to the health hazard, Dow Chemical has been manufacturing vinyl chloride for almost 40 years. The first established standard for exposure in the workplace was 500 parts per million in an eight-hour day. This was later reduced to 250 parts per million and still later to 50 parts per million. The current permissible level in Canada is 5 parts per million and in the United States one part per million per 8-hour day, five-day week over a working lifetime. Notwithstanding the standards, my personal view is that the best exposure is no exposure.

In all the years of manufacturing this product not one employee of Dow Chemical's plants, worldwide, is known to have developed angiosarcoma of the liver. This is a particular cancer of the liver that can be induced by exposure to large amounts of vinyl chloride vapour over a long period of time. It is important, Mr. Speaker, that I stress that on the basis of the results of monitoring of the air beyond a radius of 100 feet of the spill, it is indicated that there is no health risk to the area residents. Given the properties of vinyl chloride, as described, the attendant health hazard and the relatively small amounts of leak material that was originally reported, it was planned to spread the contaminated snow over a large area in order that the vapourization and disposition into the atmosphere would be speeded up. This was not to take place until all of the material in all of the cars, and even the cars themselves, had been removed from the site.

Upon learning of the second leak, however, it was agreed that this cleanup process should be reconsidered. The ultimate procedure would be determined on further consultation with additional experts. Throughout this incident there's been very close liaison between Dow Chemical experts and our environmental staff. We are fortunate, indeed, that our assistant Deputy Minister of the Environment Management Division, is eminently qualified in the field of chemistry.

Dr. Bowen was born in Calgary and took his early education in Western Canada College. He is a graduate of McGill University, awarded a PhD in organic chemistry while studying under National Research Council Scholarship. He joined the Faculty of the Department of Chemistry, McGill University following graduation. He was appointed Research and Technical Manager of TCF of Canada, and was later Manager of Operations in Engineering, Research, Planning and Production. He represented Canada at the Second International Symposium held in Stockholm on cellulose technical questions. Dr. Bowen was appointed head of the Environment and Management division here in Manitoba in 1971, and has been serving Manitobans continuously since that date. He has demonstrated his capabilities and knowledge most effectively and, furthermore, since that time he has recruited highly competent staff persons with a most disciplinary background. This is but a brief resume

Monday, 17 March, 1980

of Dr. Bowen's credentials, however, I am sure that we can agree that they are meritorious and exceedingly appropriate to its current situation.

In addition to this source of expert knowledge, Dr. Bowen has communicated with Dr. Perry Gerrie, Toxicologist and Director of Health and Environment Research with Dow Chemical in Midland, Michigan; Dr. Nadeau, with the Environmental Response team of the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States; Dr. Gabby Plaa, Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Montreal.

In all of these conversations, the assessment of the health risk is essentially coincident with that reached by a Dr. Bowen and the on-site Dow Chemical experts. In discussion with Dr. Plaa, he indicated his willingness to make his expertise available to us and we are making arrangements for him to come for further consultations.

Mr. Speaker, in my statement of March 16th, I said it would be imprudent to act on the advice of any single individual or agency due to the fact that every environmental accident has its own distinctive peculiarities. I have detailed these additional contacts to assure members and the public that we are searching out the best available information and advice.

On Friday, we learned that CN rail, with a concurrence of CTC representatives had decided to transfer the vinyl chloride from all twelve cars of the original train to new cars. Up to this point, as long as the material was not being handled or disturbed, there was no increase in the risk. As a matter of fact, monitoring indicated some diminishment of the vapour in the ambient air.

Given this decision by CN rail however, it was decided to call a strategy meeting of all appropriate authorities and agencies and this was held on Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon. The plans were formulated and I announced these at a press conference . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order please. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. PAWLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's an extremely important statement and page 5 wasn't attached to the copies, at least given to myself; I'm not sure whether the Member for Churchill received page 5 of the report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

MR. JORGENSON: I will see that my honourable friend gets a copy of that final page. I regret that the staff are unable to provide it at this time.

The most current development that I can report is that there are now two pumping mechanisms on site to be used to transfer the vinyl chloride into the new cars. Furthermore, seven empty cars are now on site ready to receive the material. I am further informed that Environment Canada will step up its independent monitoring activity. In addition, I have learned that Environment Canada has been continuing to do its independent monitoring, and shortly before going to the press conference on Sunday I was advised that they were getting zero readings of vapour in the ambient air anywhere beyond a distance of forty feet of the actual spill.

Mr. Speaker, I feel it is incumbent upon me to stress the fact that, according to the best information that is available to us today, the residents in the area of the derailment are not in any immediate health risk and, should any circumstances develop that should suggest otherwise, we are mobilized to respond quickly. And I want to advise the House that, in connection with their respective responsibilities, the Minister of Labour and the Minister in charge of the Emergency Measures Organization will want to make statements as well.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. COWAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll be brief in my reply to the Minister's statement. AS much as the information has been . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. The Honourable Minister of Government Services on a point of order.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

HON. HARRY J. ENNS (Lakeside): Just as a matter of courtesy to honourable members opposite, should they wish to hear out the very brief statements of the Minister of Labour and myself in connection with the same manner, we would be prepared to do that. On the other hand, if he wishes to respond at this time . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. COWAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I thank the Minister for the opportunity to reply to all of them at once or one at a time, but I feel the information that was presented in the first statement is important enough to respond to singly.

The Minister has at last given us some information as to the properties of vinyl chloride; it's one of the first times that we hear the Minister suggesting or discussing the carcinogenic properties of the chemical, except that he does put a qualifying factor on it, that if there is exposure to large amounts over a long period of time and then further qualifies that with his own statement, of course, that no exposure is the best exposure.

It is known in all known human carcinogens that the proper safe level exposure is no exposure for any time, and that point has to be made.

We now know, Mr. Speaker, that workers at that site - the Minister tells us that the environmental people assure him that residents of the area are in no extreme danger. I'm not qualified to address myself to that statement - but we do know that workers at that site are now currently seeing doctors in regard to symptoms that are closely associated with vinyl chloride intoxicification; that they are experiencing swelling of the eyes or eye problems and they're experiencing headaches, two symptoms which we would know to be symptomatic of vinyl chloride exposure. Although they are not necessarily attributable to that there is some suspicion that they may well be.

The Minister says in his statement that Dow Chemical has - and I would have to find the spot - he says that Dow Chemical has not come up with any cases of angiosarcoma. Not one employee of Dow Chemical Plants worldwide is known to have developed angiosarcoma of the liver in manufacturing this process.

Well, I have, Mr. Speaker, before me results of cohort studies of occupational exposure to vinyl chloride, and I think it's important in addressing myself to the Minister's remarks, that I give you some of the information on this.

It's true that Dow did a study in July, 1975, in which they found no increased risks of cancer for angiosarcoma, liver cancer, lung cancer, central nervous system cancer or lymphatic or haemotobic cancer.

But let me tell you that in 1974, Tabershaw Cooper, an independent research group, found that, yes, there was increased risks of cancer in some of those areas.

In 1974 the Harvard School of Public Health found, yes, there were increased risks of cancer.

In 1975 the Mount Sinai study found that, yes, there were increased risks. Dow, in 1975, found not.

B.P., British Petroleum, found no, there were not. That is not surprising.

But NIOSH, the Occupational Safety and Health Organization in the States who is a known authority on this, found in 1976 that there was increased risks of angiosarcoma, increased risks of liver cancer, lung cancer, central nervous system cancer and lymphatic cancer.

So while Dow may not have found the risk to be inherent in the use of the product, others certainly have.

I could go on at great length. I don't believe that it is important to at this juncture because we do plan to proceed with this matter throughout the course of today's events. So having said that, I would just thank the Minister for finally now coming through with the realization and an admission that there is a carcinogenic problem involved in this very serious environmental spill and contamination problem outside of MacGregor.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Labour.

HON. KEN MacMASTER (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement to make in relationship to the same situation. I have copies here.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

Mr. Speaker, our government has been concerned about the derailment of the CN train near MacGregor. As Minister of Labour and Manpower I have been particularly interested in the safety and health of the workers involved, the workers on duty when the derailment happened and the workers who have been involved in the cleanup.

I have been concerned about the safety and health of the workers even though I recognize that the railway and its workers operate under federal jurisdiction and responsibility for worker safety and health rest with the Railway Transport Commission.

For this reason I have made some enquiries into the workplace conditions. I have been assured that CN has given paramount attention to the health and safety of its employees. This assurance has come personally from Mr. Ralph J. Hanson, Vice President of the CN Prairie Region.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, CN has an active accident prevention program in the prairie region. CN also operates with a strict set of procedures designed for emergencies like the one at MacGregor. These procedures have been approved by the Railway Transport Committee of the Canadian Transport Commission.

CN employees know what cargo they are carrying on a train. They also know that they are supposed to call a CN Dangerous Commodities Officer if there is any problem such as happened at MacGregor.

The CN procedures forbid, and I repeat forbid, any employee from going near a damaged car which holds a dangerous cargo until after it has been checked out and cleared by the Dangerous Commodities Officer.

The MacGregor incident happened shortly after midnight; the Dangerous Commodities Officer was there by about 6:30 that morning.

Under CN's procedures no worker should have been near the car containing the vinyl chloride. CN is currently investigating to find out if any employees disobeyed the procedures. They don't believe anyone did but they want to be certain.

As recent as 20 minutes ago, 40 minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, - it's not in this statement but for the information of the members opposite - CN informed me that in fact no workers did go through that area until the Commodities Officer arrived.

The Dow Chemical representatives arrived about 12:30 noon that day. They and the Dangerous Commodities Officer then began marking off all areas where the level of vinyl chloride exceeded 5 parts per million.

Workers have been prohibited from going into these areas. Monitoring has been going on on a 24-hour basis since then and will continue to be until the situation is resolved.

Mr. Hanson has assured me that everything possible has been done to protect workers involved in the cleanup from being exposed to levels above the 5 parts per million, which is the standard set by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists and adopted by the Canadian and Manitoba authorities. This standard has been established in various jurisdictions on the insistence and compliance by various interested parties, including manufacturers and unions.

I might add that prior to 1971 the standard was 500 parts per million; in 1976 the standard was down to 200 parts per million. The point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that the Workplace Safety and Health standards are continually being studied and revised.

The reason that people didn't go through, Mr. Speaker, is because the railway believes that the procedures prevent CN employees from working in dangerous situations. The railways also assure me that appropriate equipment would be made available to its employees if there had been any danger.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to announce that the CN will set up a medical inspection process for any of its employees who have been at the MacGregor site. The railway cannot force its workers to take advantage of this medical review but Mr. Hanson has promised that CN will strongly encourage its employees to do so.

Vinyl chloride is a potent chemical; it must be used safely. Although I recognize that federal authorities have jurisdiction in this case I feel a responsibility to the Manitoba workers involved to keep abreast of the situation.

My Workplace Safety and Health staff will remain in contact with CN to keep me informed about the medical inspection process.

Mr. Speaker, in the past I have been accused of poking my nose into areas which were none of my business. Considering the federal jurisdiction, that charge may be made again in the MacGregor situation. However, I wanted to assure myself that the safety and health of Manitoba workers was monitored.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. COWAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again, I'll be brief. I thank the Minister for his concern that he shows now, although I happen to suggest that it is a bit late in coming, now that we already have workers who are forced to seek medical treatment for symptoms that they believe may be attributable to high exposure to vinyl chloride at the MacGregor site. The Minister says he has been in contact with CNR officials, and I do not doubt that he has done such and that they have assured him that everything was being done properly on the site.

Mr. Speaker, as late as this morning I had been in contact with representatives of the Maintenance of Way Union, which represents some 20 workers, approximately 20 workers, who had been involved at the cleanup of the vinyl chloride spill in MacGregor. The union representative assures me that they have been working there without respirators, that they have been working at that area in an area where we have extremely high levels of vinyl chloride concentrations, and they are being exposed to them over long periods of time without the proper equipment. They tell me they did so, because they were assured by CNR that it would be safe to do so. And so when the Minister says that CNR is assuring him that it is safe, indeed, he is most likely correct, as CNR had assured the workers who are now seeing the doctor because of symptoms that they believe are attributable to their exposure.

Mr. Speaker, these Maintenance of Way workers were needlessly exposed. I'm not saying that the Minister could have done anything different. I would have hoped that he would have. I'm not certain, given the jurisdictional dispute, said he could have, but I do say that, for whatever the reason, those workers need not have been exposed to levels of vinyl chloride, which regardless of what the Minister says - he tells us how bad the standards were before; well, I tell him how bad our standards is now - regardless of what the Minister says, the levels to which workers have been exposed have been considered unsafe by the United States government for several years now; that they, in the middle 1970s, put in place an emergency standard because they were so concerned about minute exposure to vinyl chloride. They considered it to be that specific a problem and yet here, many years later in Manitoba, we are still attempting to protect the workers from being exposed to levels which are known to cause specific problems in workers who suffer such exposure.

So while the Minister's concern is appreciated, I think it's just a little bit too late for those workers.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Government Services.

MR. ENNS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a further brief statement to make with respect to the events at MacGregor and, Mr. Speaker, it's merely to indicate the role that the Emergency Measures Organization has played within minutes of the actual accident and in lieu of the fact that the removal of the cars at the accident scene may take some time, that is the pumping out procedure Emergency Measures has developed. What they would be doing and have been doing in situations such as this, the necessary actions that take in even the most unforeseen possibility, and that is the possible requirement for some evacuation.

The following actions have been taken Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization:

Number one, an EMO officer is working in close liaison with the town and municipal authorities at MacGregor. Two, the province's Emergency Health Services has been advised and has made all necessary arrangements for the evacuation of the MacGregor Hospital, if necessary. This institution would move to Portage la Prairie. Emergency Welfare Services has been advised of the necessity of evacuation planning and has arranged with its regional office to prepare necessary reception measures at Portage la Prairie. The Mayor of MacGregor was contacted and advised of the requirements and given all assistance in setting up warning procedures for his town, as well as arranging for transportation, if needed.

There are approximately some 950 persons living in MacGregor and surrounding area. Emergency Measures Organization held discussions with the municipal authorities and a warning system for the town was devised. All the residents are to be visited by municipal representatives and informed as to procedures if an evacuation should become necessary. Transportation of people needing it would be by school buses from the local school division.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

Further contact was made with Emergency Welfare Services in Portage and the provincial welfare regional director is making necessary arrangements, and will be working with Portage officials. Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization has also discussed this overall situation with the Mayor of the City of Portage la Prairie, and she has offered to provide all municipal assistance which may be necessary.

Our EMO officer is in immediate contact with the local municipal officials and all aspects of planning for evacuation and reception, if necessary - and, Sir, I must repeat and continue to repeat the words, "if necessary" - are being taken care of. EMO is maintaining a liaison with the provincial Information Office that has been set up in the village municipal offices in MacGregor to provide public information. Assistance and contact with municipal officials will continue until the entire matter has been satisfactorily resolved.

I want to assure the honourable members that Emergency Measures Organization is co-operating fully with the local authorities and it stands ready to activate further its traditional co-ordinating role, as required.

Thank you.

MR. COWAN: Mr. Speaker, again we thank the Minister for concern that is shown, although I and my colleagues on this side do believe that concern may be belated concern. We had asked this question last week, on Tuesday, I believe, in these Chambers. We were not given the sort of assurances; we had sought these sort of assurances at that time. It seems strange that these types of assurances are coming now after a period of extreme confusion, extreme disorientation by the government on that side, at all levels, a lack of co-ordination, a bungling of the whole exercise in trying to deal with this, several blind alley attempts at polluting our environment with this carcinogenic substance, and now we see that there is some, what appears to be, genuine concern on their part.

We had only wished that the government had acted right from the start, right from the start, in a responsible manner and having not had the time to study this document thoroughly, I respectfully ask the opportunity to be able to review it before we would be discussing it throughout the Question Period perhaps or other opportunities during the course of this day.

So I will not, at this time, make any value judgment as to the contents or the procedures outlined here, but just speak briefly about the lack of concern that we saw, the lack of concern that we have seen and say that we are pleased to see that something is . . .

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. SPEAKER: Before we proceed any further, I should like to draw the honourable members' attention to the loge on my right where we have the Honourable Walter Dinsdale, a long-time Member of Parliament from the Brandon area, the Honourable Walter Dinsdale.

Notices of Motion . . . We've had the Introduction of Bills.

#### URGENT DEBATE

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. COWAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition:

PURSUANT to Rule 27, Subsection 1, I move to set aside the ordinary business of the House to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, to wit:

WHEREAS the recent train derailment which occurred outside of MacGregor, Manitoba, has resulted in a potentially hazardous situation for residents of the area, and a known hazardous situation for workers involved in cleanup of the vinyl chloride spill; and

WHEREAS actions of the provincial government have created serious doubts in the minds of many as to the prudence and appropriateness of government actions as outlined by the Minister of the Environment; and

WHEREAS potential hazardous dispersion of this known human carcinogen and otherwise generally toxic substance may increase as the temperature returns to normal seasonal levels creating a potential environmental and health hazard for persons in the area; and

Monday, 17 March, 1980

WHEREAS the government has failed to develop any comprehensive and competent plan for containment of this chemical contaminant;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this House instruct the Government to immediately initiate action to contain and remove this known human carcinogen from the area as soon as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Under Rule 27(2), a member may, in making a motion under Rule 1, may explain his arguments in favor of his motion in not more than five minutes. The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. COWAN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I had not intended to pursue this debate in this manner nor at this time, Mr. Speaker, had we been dealing with a reasonable and a responsible government this urgent debate would not be necessary, we could go about the regular business of the House. But the incompetence, and I can use no lesser word because that is what it has been from the first day, the incompetence of this government in handling this derailment and the subsequent contamination of workers and potential contamination of residents of the area, and known contamination of the environment by a toxic and potent carcinogen, one of the. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please. May I suggest that the honourable member confine his remarks to the urgency for debate rather than the debate itself. The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. COWAN: Mr. Speaker, that is the urgency, because their actions have exasperated an already serious crisis and that exactly is the urgency of the matter. What has been done has been done. This is not the proper place to discuss that and I know. There are other ways and means to debate that subject, to outline the incompetence. But the reason we demand this urgent debate at this time is that we still have no commitment from the government to abandon their ill-conceived plan, to spread this potent toxin, this known human carcinogen throughout the environment.

On this side, Mr. Speaker, and I think I speak for many of the public, for much of the public, the majority of the public, Mr. Speaker, we are not convinced that the government understands the total significance of the crisis situation that faces all of us. And the crisis is far from over. That is the urgency. As a matter of fact there is substantial evidence to lead us believe that the immediate situation is just as serious and just as immediate and just as urgent than it has been for the past week. The urgency today is that as time passes, and the weather may grow warmer, Mr. Speaker, thereby allowing for further dispersion and release of this carcinogen into the area, we are facing a very urgent crisis. Once that contamination occurs, and it can occur, then it will be too late for debate and discussion; it will be too late for the sometimes luxury of allowing the parliamentary process to unfold as it should, Mr. Speaker; it will be too late for the workers, it may well be too late for the workers now I'm not certain, that's urgent; it will be too late for the MacGregor residents; it will be too late to save our environment from this totally unnecessary injury.

And that is why we respectfully request this debate, to be able to talk; to be able to use this opportunity to convince the government of their folly; to convince them of the seriousness of this injury of no small significance, an injury that should not have been. So with this urgent debate, Mr. Speaker, if we proceed, we seek to prevent this assault on our environment which need not be.

In further defense of the urgency of the situation I would remind the House, Mr. Speaker, that on at least three previous occasions during the past seven days the House has, by leave, permitted the Minister to disrupt the normal procedures of this House in order to allow the Minister to speak on this urgent subject. We all recognize the urgency, Mr. Speaker, of this crisis in our province. The Minister himself indicated that he recognizes it yesterday when he called an urgent and a rare meeting of the press on Sunday. Because this situation is critical, because it is urgent, my colleagues and myself, Mr. Speaker, believe that the situation is still out of control; we believe the danger to be eminent; we believe the situation to be urgent; and we further believe that we have information, important information, that we can present to the government to try to convince them to stop from their foolish plans, to despoil our environment with this

Monday, 17 March, 1980

known toxic substance and this known carcinogen. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, we have called for this urgent debate.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader will have five minutes.

MR. MERCIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me firstly say that if the Member for Churchill has information which he believes the government is not in possession of that is likely to threaten the lives of somebody in this province, then I say he has an obligation not to wait until 2:30 when question period starts, he has an obligation, Mr. Speaker, he has an obligation to bring that to the proper authorities immediately and not wait until question period when he has the benefit of television cameras. To demonstrate the urgency of the situation obviously, Mr. Speaker, is not this situation but the vain attempt of the Member for Churchill to do something public to get re-elected again.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that we have before us refers to a potentially hazardous situation for residents. We have heard the Ministerial Statements from the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and the Environment indicate that Environment Canada is taking readings in this particular area which show zero readings beyond 40 feet of the spill. He has assured the House that the residents are not in any health risk whatsoever, despite that. But on the remote possibility that something may happen the Minister of Government Services responsible for the Emergency Measures Organization has indicated that a contingency evacuation plan is ready to be implemented should that be necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour, with respect to the urgency of this matter, has his Estimates before the House. Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Churchill wishes they can go immediately into the Estimates of the Minister of Labour which are before the House, they can waive question period and go right into the Minister of Labour's Estimates to discuss their concerns of workers, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Speaker, Rule 5(a)(d) clearly refers to: "A motion shall not anticipate a matter that has previously been appointed for consideration by the House," and the Minister of Labour and Manpower's Estimates are before the House now and can be started immediately if members of the Opposition wish, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Labour also indicated in Beauchesne, Page 91, Citation 285 refers to this matter also. This is a matter considerably under the jurisdiction of the federal government pertaining to a railway matter, Mr. Speaker, and such a motion I suggest is out of order.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and the Environment has clearly indicated that the site is being carefully monitored, there is no danger to residents, consultation is taking place with a number of experts across the country, Mr. Speaker, before the material will be disposed of, they are continuing to consult and seek out the best information and advice available, Mr. Speaker, and I suggest that the Member for Churchill has not shown the urgency of this motion.

#### SPEAKER'S RULING

MR. SPEAKER: I've listened carefully to the remarks of the Honourable Member for Churchill in his argument in promoting the urgency. I have listened to the valid remarks of the Honourable Attorney-General in his reply. Likewise, I have perused some 25 Speaker's rulings that were made between the years 1970 and 1977, and I have also looked at our own rules; and under our own rules, Rule 27(3), "After any explanation made under sub-rule (2) the Speaker shall rule on whether or not the motion under sub-rule (1) is in order and of urgent public importance, and if he rules in favour of the motion he will then put the question 'Shall the debate proceed?'; shall put the question to a vote of the House."

I have checked the resolution put forward by the Honourable Member for Churchill and, in my opinion, I do believe that the wording of the resolution is in order. As to the matter of urgency, I have heard the arguments from both sides and I find it somewhat difficult to rule whether or not the matter is of

Monday, 17 March, 1980

sufficient urgency to this House. Therefore, I think it is my duty to let the House, itself, make that kind of decision. Therefore, shall the debate proceed? (Agreed).

The Honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

MR. JORGENSEN: You have now ruled the motion in order?

MR. SPEAKER: I have ruled the motion in order as far as the technicality of it. I'm having some difficulty with the degree of urgency and I'm asking the House for advice on whether there is a degree of urgency to the debate at this time.

The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. SIDNEY GREEN (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I believe that you have to rule that the motion is in order and, if it is in order, then the House decides whether the debate will proceed and you have ruled that the motion is in order and the House will decide as to whether debate proceeds.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader on a point of order.

MR. MERCIER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My reading, Mr. Speaker, of Rule 27(3), is that you have to rule on whether or not the motion is in order and of urgent public importance. You have to make that decision, not the House.

MR. SPEAKER: If I have to make the ruling on the issue of whether it is of public importance then I do believe that it is a matter of urgent public importance. Now shall the debate proceed? (Agreed).

The Honourable Member for Churchill has ten minutes.

MR. COWAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Well I thank the honourable members of this House for this opportunity to bring forward as soon as is possible information and facts as to the urgency of this matter, as to the seriousness of the situation that faces not only the residents of McGregor, Mr. Speaker, but also faces all of us as inhabitants of a very small world that is being abused and assaulted far too much by environmental accidents and by environmental incidents of this nature.

I want to talk about several specific subjects but, before doing so, I would just like to answer the criticisms of the Attorney-General in regard to the fact that he believed that I had not acted in urgency to bring this matter before this House. I will remind the Minister that on Tuesday, when we first discussed this item, when we were first informed of this item by a Ministerial Statement by the Minister responsible for the Emergency Measures Organization, that I did stand here in this very spot, Mr. Speaker, and I did talk about angiosarcoma, a carcinogenic disease that is closely associated with vinyl chloride, and that I did talk about incidents of brain tumours, incidents of fetal deaths, statistical incidents. Incidents of many health hazards and many environmental hazards that are associated with this spill of vinyl chloride outside of McGregor, Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

So I, at that time, took the first opportunity to address this House and provide them with what information I knew at the time, Mr. Speaker, and I'm somewhat ashamed to say right now that I had underestimated the extent and the significance of the danger at that time, mistakenly so. I had used the same figures that the Minister used today of 5 parts per million. I had attributed it to OSHA, which the Minister did not make that mistake, he attributed it to the proper body which is the American Conference of Industrial Hygienists. But I had at that time, Mr. Speaker, been acting upon the basis of the best available evidence that I had at the time, on very short notice.

Pursuant to that, I had opportunity to discuss this matter with people that I consider to be worthy of recognition in the field of toxicology and environmental science. Not only one executive director of the Women's Occupational Health Resource Centre, New York, and assistant professor to Columbia University, who was aghast at what was going on, who thought the plan to spread this carcinogen throughout the area so that it would disperse nicely into the environment was insane. Those were her words, not mine, Mr. Speaker; I would not have used that

Monday, 17 March, 1980

type of terminology in describing it. But the fact is that this person, far more learned than I, far more knowledgeable than I on this, did choose to use those words because she believed that those were the words that were appropriate for the actions of that government and she did as much as she could to try to persuade that government not to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I could have kept that information to myself. I could have come in this House and I could have embarrassed the Minister with that information. That was within my power, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister just that morning had made some statements that could be embarrassing when he talked about 5,000 parts per million as being a safe level, when we are dealing with levels that are a thousandth of that as being unsafe.

But I did not do so, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the Attorney-General is listening because my leader and I called up the Minister immediately upon learning of the hazards and the significance of the hazards and said, "We have someone we would like you to talk to, a Dr. Jeanne Stellman, an expert in the field. We want you to talk with her about what you are planning to do in MacGregor because that is, in our opinion, the wrong way to proceed; it's dangerous."

So we took that person to the Minister's office and at that time we said to the Minister, "We would like to stay and discuss this item with you. We know that it is your prerogative not to have us stay but we would like to stay and discuss this matter with you", and the Minister said "no".

So, if the Attorney-General is telling me that we are not providing information, then let him tell us how we are going to have the access to provide that information when the Minister won't let us stay in a meeting that we consider to be an important meeting.

And then that day, Mr. Speaker, we tried to raise the subject in Estimates, on the floor here, under Apprenticeship and Training, which we could do and the chairperson at the time ruled that we could do it, Mr. Speaker. And what did the Minister get up, the Minister of Labour; he got up and went on a tirade, Mr. Speaker, about how we were profiling, how we were making mockery of the system by discussing a very serious subject, a subject that we wanted to discuss very badly.

So we have made every attempt to discuss this. We have made every attempt to find out the facts as they are, Mr. Speaker, because there is a serious hazard here and let us just talk about it, Mr. Speaker, because I know that the people who follow the proceedings of this House do so for a reason, and one of those reasons is to be provided with information.

What we are talking about is a very specific human carcinogen. There are some suspected 2,000 carcinogens, Mr. Speaker. Out of that 2,000 we only know of 20 that we can confirm are human carcinogens; only 20 and this is one of them. It is not the type of chemical that you can play around with. It is not the type of chemical that allows you to make mistakes. When you are dealing with at least 3,300 gallons of the chemical, if we are to believe the Minister's approximate figures on this, then you have to proceed with the utmost urgency. But not only that, Mr. Speaker, you must proceed with the utmost caution and you can only do that if you know the dangers which you face.

Those workers, and that's who I'm concerned about right now, because they are the ones that have been exposed to levels which I consider to be unsafe and levels which most known experts in this area, in the field of occupational health and medicine, consider to be unsafe.

The Minister talks about exposures over long terms. Let me tell you what happens in the States, Mr. Speaker. If a worker is exposed to vinyl chloride of .5 parts per million, not 5 parts but .5, 1/2 of one part per million for an eight-hour day, they are immediately requested to attend to a doctor to have a medical examination. That doctor is supposed to do a physical examination of their spleen, their liver, their kidneys, to ensure that there is no enlargement. The doctor then does urinalysis and blood serum tests to see if there has been any liver, spleen, or kidney disfunction. The doctor then does a complete medical history, and I won't go into details there is not enough time. The doctor then takes those records and the company is required to keep those records for a period of 20 years past the time that worker quits his or her employment with the company, or 30 years, whichever is longer.

That is the seriousness and the extent of how they treat this exact situation in the United States, our neighbour to the south. There have been studies, I've

Monday, 17 March, 1980

read off the studies before. The studies that are done outside of the industry itself show that there is increased chances of angiosarcoma of the liver; that there is increased chances of other liver diseases, of lung cancer, or central nervous system cancer, that includes brain cancer; and that there is increased dangers of leukemia. It is a very hazardous substance.

Then we find out the Minister's own assistant yesterday is assuring the public that, to the best of his knowledge, the workers at that area are being properly protected, that they have the proper respirators, the proper facemasks. Today, not willing to accept that information on the basis of one statement alone, I called the union rep and he says, no, they're not. They have not been, they have been told it's safe to go in there without them, and that, Sir, is a tragedy because that need not be. Anyone who knew the significance or the danger would not have allowed those workers anywhere near that place without a mask. I'm concerned because I saw the Minister get off of a helicopter and walk in that area without a mask. And I'm not being ludicrous, Mr. Speaker, because I was informed, by experts in the area, do not go near there if there are 5 parts per million without the benefit of a respirator because you are creating a hazard that you need not suffer. Not that you'll get cancer, but just that you are exposing yourself to a substance that you need not expose yourself to.

And I find out from the Maintenance of Way railway union representative, I find out that the workers that worked out there, or a number of the workers, are now seeing their doctors because they are exhibiting symptoms of acute intoxication from vinyl chloride. I'm not a doctor, I haven't examined them, I don't know if that's the case, but they are concerned enough to go to their doctor to find out if that is the case. We know that vinyl chloride exposure irritates the eyes, we know that from NIOSH an authority on the experts, the one who writes the textbooks on these substances, there is irritation of the eyes. We know there is light-headedness and nausea. We know that the workers are complaining of some of those very same symptoms, not coincidentally, after a few days of exposure to vinyl chloride.

Now, I'm not going to make a medical judgment, it is not up to me to make that judgment, but I am going to make a value judgment. And the value judgment is that given those circumstances we must do everything that we can do to protect those workers from further exposure, and we must also do everything that we can do to ensure that they receive the proper medical treatment and the proper concern that is due them. And we must do that now, and that is the urgency of the matter. We must have a register of those workers, we must find out what happens to them, and then we must ensure that we do not spread this toxin throughout our environment; an insult to the environment is an injury, and that's what this would be, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member's time is up.

The Honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

MR. JORGENSEN: Mr. Speaker, one of the statements that was made by my honourable friend, perhaps more than anything typifies the kind of imagination that he's exercising in relating these concerns, when he said that he was concerned for the Minister when he saw him step off the helicopter into that pollution-ridden atmosphere. Well, Mr. Speaker, I got off the helicopter a mile and a half away, east of MacGregor, and I can tell my honourable friend that's some distance away from the site of the spill, and I can tell my honourable friend also that the area was cordoned off, that I was one of the very few people that were allowed into the area some distance, I was not allowed to go anywhere near the spill. Some distance away in a railway dining car, where the conference was held - and I might tell my honourable friend as well that accompanying me was the Reeve of the Municipality of North Norfolk and the Mayor of the Town of MacGregor who were in on the initial briefing that took place on that particular subject when the CN and Dow officials briefed us as to the potential dangers, the precautions that they were taking, and the problems that they could possibly foresee.

So Mr. Speaker, rather than my honourable friend making wild statements about the workers being in danger by exposure, he should perhaps acquaint himself with some of the facts that took place that were outlined by the Minister of Labour earlier this day when he inquired as to the safety precautions that were taken,

Monday, 17 March, 1980

and he might do well to acquaint himself with the procedures that are followed by the railway in situations such as this. I can assure him that those safety precautions and those safety procedures are such as to preclude any undue exposure to the chemical that was spilled at MacGregor or any other spill that may take place.

This is a well rehearsed practice on the part of the railways whose employees are well informed as to what the train is carrying and what the dangers may be. And I want to advise them as well that within a short time of the first indication of the train wreck which took place at about 2:00 on Monday morning, by noon the first representative of Dow Chemical was on the scene, and from that point on every safety precaution that could be taken by the people involved were taken to ensure the protection, not only of the workers on the site, but the people in the area. When it was first determined that there was a spill monitors were set up to determine the extent of that spill and, as I have said repeatedly, within a short distance of the actual site of the spill, monitor readings of no more than five parts per million, the monitors at varying distances from the site of the spill, indicated that there was very little danger beyond that point.

And it's true that rescue operations, or salvage operations were taking place some distance from the spill; there were workers at other portions of the track, not in an area that was downwind from the spill itself but in other areas where they were able to safely carry on the work that they were doing in order to begin salvage operations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend has left the impression that the chemical that spilled out of the two tanks that were found to have a leak is lying in one huge pool at the bottom of the spill. Sir, nothing could be further from the truth. Most of the chemical that had escaped has evaporated and there is no large pool of chemical lying, waiting to destroy everything that it comes in contact with. It's consistent readings and continuous probings of the area in question have indicated lessening degrees of the concentration of the chemical, which indicates that rather than lying there in a dangerous form, waiting to destroy something, it is evaporating and disappearing into the atmosphere.

So let's not be carried away with the impression that my honourable friend is attempting to create and, Sir, I'm not criticizing him for doing this. He's a member of the opposition. His role, as he perceives it, is to draw attention to himself. He's very competent and very capable of doing that. But I question, Sir, whether he is doing the community of MacGregor any good, but I never at one time ever figured that that was any concern of his, that he was ever concerned about the fact that he may be causing more problems than he thinks he is solving. I don't think he has ever been involved in a rescue operation or in an evacuation operation and I don't think that he understands the necessity and the need, first of all, that the people are informed and informed correctly of what is going on.

I've had that experience in the Red River Valley on a few occasions and I know how important it is that you have an information service that will provide you with information that you can depend upon, to the best of our ability to provide it. It may not always be perfect because conditions and times change and so one has to keep updating the information that is being provided to insure that the residents of any area are properly advised as to what is happening. And I must say that the reports that have been published and that have been publicized over the media are, in my view, calculated not to inform as much as they are to draw attention to themselves, and I know that scare tactics and I know that glaring headlines will always sell more newspapers and perhaps get more of a listening and viewing audience.

So that's why it is important that the information officer at the site is able to be kept informed by those who are performing the task of cleaning up, that they get information from them as quickly as it is possible to get it and pass it onto the residents of the area. That's the reason that information officer is in place at this present time. We realize that when the decision to remove the chemical by pumping it into empty tank cars on track that presented a new dimension and it also presented its own hazards. I feel it was important at that time that an information office be set up so that in the unlikely event - and I want to repeat this as often as I can - that in the unlikely event of an accident that residents can be advised and moved out of there as quickly as possible.

The Emergency Measures Organization is not unfamiliar with evacuation procedures. They've had some practise in doing that in the past. I might say that

Monday, 17 March, 1980

every situation presents a different method. Evacuation from a flood area is a little bit different than an evacuation from this particular site. It's a little bit different from the procedures that you would want to practise at a fire, and it's different from something else. So Emergency Measures are attempting to keep themselves advised and acquainted with the various problems that may be met during the course of any emergency that arises. It is for that reason that they are now on the scene and they are attempting to keep the residents of that area advised as to what is actually taking place so that the residents can be informed factually as to what is happening, rather than listening to wild stories that are being spread.

Now then, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member is also attempting to create one other impression that I think I would like to correct. He is quite naturally blaming, since he's in this Chamber, and we're on this side of the House, he's quite naturally laying the blame on to the provincial government.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable member's time has expired.  
The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. PAWLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's most interesting that the Honourable Minister, the Minister responsible for Environment in the province of Manitoba, obviously confronted with a difficult situation, a matter which is of deep concern to all Manitobans, rather than attempting to inform is using a considerable portion of his speech time to attempt to disentangle himself from the sticky wicket which has enveloped him to extend an attack upon the media, opposition, to suggest that there had been wild stories circulating, pertaining to the incident at MacGregor, Mr. Speaker, I believe to be patently untrue; I believe the Minister knows his statements to be untrue.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would sooner not deal with the Minister's statements this afternoon but rather to deal with the sad array of mismanagement and incompetence, which has taken place under that Ministry, under that government, Mr. Speaker.

First we have, and if I am incorrect in the facts which I am relating this afternoon then I will be most interested in receiving differing points of view based upon fact, because I believe Manitobans would be relieved to know that which I have observed is in fact not true. But, Mr. Speaker, I have first the very distinct impression that the Minister has relied pretty well exclusively upon the carrier and the shipper for the information which he based his opinions upon from Tuesday to Friday of last week. Mr. Speaker, the shipper and the carrier are the two parties that are liable to court action if there is negligence pertaining to what has happened last Tuesday out at MacGregor. To proceed to those that have a particular interest rather than proceed to impartial bodies of authority and expertise, Mr. Speaker, is the height of incompetence on the part of the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister if between Tuesday and Friday of last week, did he contact those that were engaged in the difficult situation involving Mississauga, Ontario. Did the Minister contact Environment Canada? In fact on Friday evening we heard a spokesman for Environment Canada confirm the allegations that were made by Dr. Stellman in Manitoba on Friday in which the spokesman for Environment Canada advised Manitobans that the route of dispersing the contaminated snow over a wide area was the worst of alternatives. Did the Minister, Mr. Speaker, consult with you U. S. Environment? Certainly U. S. Environment has been the most involved in respect to spillage involving vinyl chloride. They've had many such occurrences.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister's statements, unfortunately, between Tuesday and Friday of last week, I fear, Mr. Speaker, and I wish I did not have to say this this afternoon, were basically statements that were prepared and written by Dow Chemical Regional Office, Edmonton, Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in addition we have a situation by which, in Saturday's newspaper, there is a reference to Wednesday's Winnipeg Tribune, a comment by a CNR official, to the effect that the vinyl chloride is, "nicely evaporating into the atmosphere". That statement was made last Wednesday, Mr. Speaker. I ask, Mr. Speaker, what damage was done between Tuesday and Friday of last week before we were alerted to the effect that vinyl chloride was "nicely evaporating into the atmosphere". Was that statement by the CN official at that time correct or incorrect? Has there been an evaporation of vinyl chloride into the atmosphere?

Monday, 17 March, 1980

And, Mr. Speaker, I do not claim to be an authority or expert in these fields, but I expect the Minister to have expertise that can properly advise him so that Manitobans can be safeguarded in the event of such occurrences as this. I would expect that all reasonable Manitobans expect that, Mr. Speaker.

Then we have, in addition, announcements today by the Minister responsible for Public Works. Suddenly the Minister responsible for Public Works arrives on the scene. He has a course of action, a course of action providing for evacuation of the MacGregor Hospital, if needed, MacGregor School, the residents of the town of MacGregor. Where was the Minister of Public Works last Tuesday, last Wednesday, last Thursday, last Friday, Mr. Speaker? One week later the Minister responsible for EMO comes forward and announces to Manitobans that he has a program of action.

Mr. Speaker, if that is an example of the competence of that Minister then, indeed, Manitobans are in serious shape if they must depend upon a Minister of that competence responsible for EMO in the province of Manitoba.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we had last Wednesday, last Thursday, statements by the Minister responsible for the Environment that 5 parts were a safe level; five parts were a safe level. Mr. Speaker, I took the Minister at his word. Today the Minister advises us that there is no safe level, Mr. Speaker; no safe level. And the Minister has changed his mind because we were fortunate in Manitoba to have the visit by an American scientist who advised us there was no safe level. Why was the Minister not aware of that prior to Friday of last week? Where were the Minister's advisers? Who did the Minister consult, Mr. Speaker, prior to Friday of last week? Why does it require six days, Mr. Speaker, for us to be advised by the Minister responsible for Environment that there is no safe level?

Mr. Speaker, there are routes, there are methods that must be approached. Has the Minister made arrangements since last Friday to ensure that the snow is properly vacuumed and contained so that that snow that is contaminated by the vinyl chlorine can be destroyed. Every day I believe to be important. The Member for Churchill properly refers to the fact that temperatures rising, evaporation increases, the expertise which we have received, the information which we have received has indicated clearly that this creates a problem. If it creates a problem, as has been suggested by expertise, involving potential for cancer development, then Mr. Speaker, why has there been no action to ensure that that contaminated snow has been contained since last Friday? Why, Mr. Speaker, are we still in doubt today as to whether that contaminated snow will be dispersed, or whether it will be contained? Why are we still in doubt?

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in Manitoba that demands action by a competent Minister, but we do not have competence in the Ministry of the Environment. Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in Manitoba where information is required, but we have little information, or half information in Manitoba, or we have information that takes days and days to be unfolded as a result of a lack of consultation with those that do have expertise in this field. We require a public inquiry in Manitoba; we require regulations at the federal level in order to ensure that there is proper protection provided; we require backup and expertise in the Department of the Ministry of the Environment so we don't have to depend upon some chance that there will be a visiting scientist from the United States that can alert us that we have a problem in the province of Manitoba pertaining to incidents such as this. To leave that to chance, Mr. Speaker, is the height of folly on the part of the Minister, on the part of the First Minister. And Mr. Speaker, the First Minister, we have noted, has not particularly taken this as a serious matter.

So unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I must charge the Minister responsible for the Environment with incompetence; I must unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, suggest that the First Minister has not been taking this matter as seriously or as earnestly as we would anticipate or expect from the First Minister of the province. I charge this government, Mr. Speaker, with incompetence, and with a lack of information and leadership pertaining to this important and critical area.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Government Services.

MR. ENNS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There really is very little reason for any applause in this Chamber when we witness this kind of a demonstration of political opportunism, Mr. Speaker, of the basest kind. Mr. Speaker, the

Monday, 17 March, 1980

Honourable Leader of the Opposition asked where I was last Wednesday. Last Wednesday the political opportunistic thing to debate was to bring in an emergency debate in this Chamber to talk about school costs. Do you remember that? Because that was the headline at that date; that was the issue for that week. What was the issue? That was on the same day that he just finished telling me that he got such an overwhelming concern about something evaporating nicely into the atmosphere. But that wasn't important to either the Member for Churchill nor the Leader of the Opposition on that day. No, school costs were important because School Division No. 1 happened to be in the headlines that day, school costs and so forth.

And so, Mr. Speaker, let's understand the kind of political footballing that's going on in this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition pounds, and I'm sure the only damage he did in this Chamber today was to his knuckles, he pounds that table and he says, who are the guilty culprits in here? Who should be charged? The carrier and the shipper. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's examine that statement. Who is the carrier? The people's railroad, eh? Or had he forgotten that all of a sudden? Supposedly a responsible public organization. One of the finest organizations that we have in this country, the CNR, Mr. Speaker, it's not the CPR. I think he mixed that up for a little while in his charge. Mr. Speaker, is the Honourable Leader of the Opposition suggesting that it is faulty for a Minister of this government not to accept the advice of senior vice-presidents, officials of one of the finest transportation systems in this country, namely the CNR, or in his attempt or in his hurry to make some political hay of this story, does he wash them all in the same brush of that villainous corporate image.

I can understand, of course, Mr. Speaker, that he has that image of the shipper, namely Dow Chemical, but we have come to expect that of anybody opposite, any statements made on that subject opposite.

So Mr. Speaker, that, in the first instance, tends to colour the kind of remarks that we have heard from honourable members opposite. Firstly, the callousness of this sudden urgency with respect to this question, the fact that reading the newspapers yesterday or today or over the week-end, they felt that well, we have to find some issue for this week, we'll make it into a scare tactic on an unfortunate and very serious accident that's taking place at MacGregor.

Mr. Speaker, it is a serious matter at MacGregor, and I'm satisfied that this House should be (a) commending the Minister for wasting no time at all, but on personally being on that site within the first daylight hours of the day that that accident happened, namely Tuesday morning. He did not simply rely on staff or public servants, or send his Civil Service out to check that. The Minister himself, as he ought to, and as he was, was on site, and Mr. Speaker, at that time was assured that while the situation was grave, it was under control. Indeed, at that time it looked like a 72-hour, perhaps a 48 to 72-hour problem, that with the righting of the derailment of the track itself, or the repairing of the rail and the righting of the cars, would perhaps in 72 hours be gone.

Mr. Speaker, prior to that Emergency Measures fulfilled its role to a T. They were informed immediately after the crash. They did what the regulations prescribe for Emergency Measures to do, to contact the responsible agency, in this case it was the Minister responsible for Environment. As it is, if it's a case of flood, we contact the Water Resources people under the direction of my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources; as it would be if it were a hospital emergency, we would be contacting immediately the health officials. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs wasted no time. Mr. Speaker, I don't think there can be any suggestion made that any time was wasted in his reaction to the problem. He was there in person; his staff was there; and he was getting the best possible advice to advise him.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on the question of ecology, I think we can all agree that there is a wide variance of advice. The Honourable Minister read into the record some of the credentials of his Assistant Deputy Minister, who was advising him. But that's not good enough, Sir, we are also going abroad to get further independent advice. But, Mr. Speaker, let's also recognize that the particular advice that the opposition is leaning on in this particular case, is being paid for by the NDP to do precisely that. She is a paid consultant of the New Democratic Party, brought up here for that purpose. So let's understand that. Let's understand that. Let's colour into this whole ego-argument that we're now going.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Honourable Member for Churchill on a point of order.

MR. COWAN: I believe I seek your assistance, Mr. Speaker, but I would ask the Minister if he can provide us with documentation, because that's news to me. It may well, in fact, be the case, but he's made a serious allegation and I would appreciate documentation.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable member has not got a point of order.

The Honourable Minister of Government Services.

MR. ENNS: I am making a very definitive statement that the doctor in question, has, from time to time, acted as a paid consultant for the New Democratic Party on ecological matters. Now, that doesn't detract one bit from her qualifications. But Sir, highly-trained, renowned toxicologist experts in Montreal, our own Assistant Deputy Ministers, their worth is supposed to be laid aside because we have a visiting, paid consultant from a political party, who drifts in here for a day and says that our people don't know what the hell they are talking about. Mr. Speaker, that is taking this ecological argument to a point where it gets to be somewhat ridiculous.

Let's understand, let's understand. . . Mr. Speaker, I have the floor, unless they are prepared to refute my arguments.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. PAWLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister has made a statement of fact that Dr. Stellman has been a paid consultant of the New Democratic Party. Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege, the statement is untrue. It is untrue and not to be . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. May I point out to the honourable members that differences of opinion on various statements is not a point of privilege.

The Honourable Minister of Government Services.

MR. ENNS: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding, from a source that I believe, that the party and person, namely Dr. Stellman, so indicated that to the person involved, and I will let that person read it himself if he wishes to.

But Mr. Speaker, I'm simply indicating that, this is the kind of politics that gets involved in a serious question. After all, the Member for Churchill believes that if you diamond-drill and take a core sample of uranium out of the ground, that you're going to sterilize everybody within the vicinity of the north country. We have a degree of ego-freakism being exhibited by the Honourable Member for Churchill that really needs to be examined.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question - and I think the action of this government, the action of my colleague, the Minister of Corporate and Consumer Affairs, the action of the Minister of Labour, the action of the Minister of Government Services - have indicated that we treat this matter very seriously; that we put all forces of government into place; that we are prepared, as best anybody can be prepared, to react to what hopefully will not take place. That's our responsibility. And far from the outrageous charges made by the Leader of the Opposition of this government not being willing or able to respond to an emergency situation, I think Mr. Speaker, the events of the last four or five days have demonstrated precisely the opposite, Mr. Speaker. What is taking place now is the kind of fearmongering, the kind of Jane Fonda-ism, that is prevalent across the line. But the only difficulty, Sir, is he's playing very loose and furious with the facts.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Corporate and Consumer Affairs requires the commendation of this House for the quickness and the alertness with which he has handled this matter.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

MRS. JUNE WESTBURY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I am abso-

Monday, 17 March, 1980

lutely aghast at the hostility and hysteria which have been displayed from the Ministers who have spoken already toward the press, and toward anyone else who questioned their tactics in this whole matter.

Mr. Speaker, political opportunism, scare tactics, glaring headlines - we're talking about the safety and health of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, and of others.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if the Minister had consulted the known experts in the field last Tuesday, when this disaster first came to his attention, that the confidence of the citizens of this province, including the media, would not have been eroded to such an extent that we are today having an emergency debate on this subject. I myself have found that some of the apparently contradictory remarks by the Minister have certainly made me question that the provincial government knows what they are doing in this matter. I heard an excerpt from the press conference yesterday - I heard it on the radio this morning - to the effect that there was never any intention of spreading the chemical until the cars were moved. Now, we haven't got Hansard for Friday, but I recall, and I hope my memory's correct, that the Minister said that word had gone out from his office to stop the spreading of the chemical at that time. And the cars were still there.

The Minister assured this House, I believe on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, that there was no danger. I happened to stumble in on his press conference yesterday because I was in the building on another matter, and I heard him say words to this effect, that the residents have been aware from the beginning that there is a possible danger.

Now, there are questions that have not been answered, that to my mind must be answered before we can judge the competency of the government. When were EMO first on the site? I don't believe we've been told that. I want to know when they appeared on the site. Dr. Bowen: We've heard about his competency, and we have no reason to question it. Has he been to the site, has he been working on the site, has he been monitoring the monitoring? We've heard that there is no safe level. What arrangements has the Minister made for the infants in MacGregor, for the pregnant women, and for the elderly in MacGregor. --(Interjection)-- "Oh, my God", they say. "Oh, my God" is a very good exclamation, Mr. Speaker, and it seems to me, I know if I had had family in MacGregor, they would have been out of there by now. And this is not a scare tactic, Mr. Speaker. We are talking again about the safety and health of people in this province.

We're aware that in instances where chemicals have been used, 20, 25 years later, terrible consequences have been discovered. Why are we waiting for action to be taken, apparently without - the Minister for the Environment was extremely complacent last week. I was amazed at his complacency and reassured by it - wrongly I now think. I would like to ask him if he is prepared to table, with the House, copies of the statements which he obtained from the experts whom he has rather belatedly consulted, according to his statement today. I presume that the reassurances we were given by him are not just a repetition of something that happened over the phone, that he has taped their assurances, or obtained them in writing, or has them verified in some way that could be substantiated and that we could check. I would personally like to see what those statements were, and how they can be related.

Why has the First Minister been so uncharacteristically silent on this whole matter for a week? I'm not aware of any hesitancy on the First Minister's part, usually, in speaking out. And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it's difficult to imagine that any competent government would sit by and allow those who are responsible for the danger to be fully in charge of clearing up the danger - and again, as I said already, with the Minister of the Environment as a complacent bystander. Why was there not a state of emergency called at that site, and the government in charge of the cleanup? I suggest that would have been a responsible way to follow up this disaster.

We've been told that there was a responsibility to provide information services. But those who were at the press conference yesterday know that as of 1:00 o'clock yesterday afternoon, the information officer who was put on site had no telephone for anyone to contact him to get information. The information officer was placed on the site yesterday, and I believe in the early afternoon. --(Interjection)-- 10:30 in the morning. Four, five days later. Why was there not an information officer available there to answer questions from people in the district on Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Speaker?

Monday, 17 March, 1980

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Labour.

MR. MacMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my concern in this particular matter dates back to hours after I heard of the particular incident. Our government is concerned, and my department was concerned with the workers that were, in fact, part of the train crew. And we were further concerned with those that were going into the area, that would be working in the particular area.

Even though I should suggest Mr. Speaker, that we knew all the time, and all the while, that the jurisdiction, the rail jurisdiction in this particular matter as far as safety and health went legally, rested with the federal government. And the responsibility for workplace safety and health with railway workers rests with the federal government. But nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, our department has been concerned, and I think has expressed and acted in a very responsible manner. We have been consistently in touch with all parties involved. I have had officers and officials and inspectors from my department in and out of that particular area off and on for the last week. Some of our particular officials are out there today.

The points that seem to come forward Mr. Speaker, as they related to the employees, were first that the employees themselves knew, in fact, the cargo that was on the train. I think that's fairly important, because I've heard in the last few months that sometimes railway workers are not aware of what the cargo is that they're handling, and that I'm led to believe is not correct, that they do in fact know what is on the train.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also aware of the fact that CN procedures, as agreed to by the federal jurisdiction, forbid employees going near damaged cars which have any type of dangerous cargo until after what is called a commodities officer arrives upon the scene. This again is a federal jurisdiction and a federal procedure that I understand the employees are aware of, and I'd certainly think, am led to believe, that they concur with.

I am also made aware, Mr. Speaker, that the areas after the commodity officer and the other officials had started to test the area, that the area was roped off, areas where there was in fact a reading of five parts per million.

Now this particular number seems to be causing some controversy, but it is in fact a number, five parts per million, which is a standard that is set by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists and has been adopted by Canada, and certainly concurred with those of us here in Manitoba. This standard was established in various jurisdictions across our country on the insistence and compliance of input from various organizations, including manufacturers of the product and those that transport it - and I should say the unions have been involved in this. There is no sense going back, which I think bears the point that it's now down to five, but I think it is interesting that just a few short years ago it was 500 parts per million.

The railways believe that, and I just simply say this, that because of their procedures that are in place, people are not to go into the areas until the proper official comes. And the fact that the area was blocked off, the railways feel, and we are not totally satisfied, but the railways feel that people, workers, have been in fact kept out of the area where they might have come in contact with this particular chemical which had in any particular case over five parts per million.

In conjunction with my department, we have certainly followed up on the proposal by CN, and we are going to follow up farther on it, that a medical inspection process be put in place and that people in fact that have been involved in any way, shape or form with this particular incident, that those people be registered. I think I've heard the word before, it's a very common one, and that they in fact be checked out by specialists in the medical field. We will be following up on that, Mr. Speaker, to assure ourselves that those things are particularly done.

I have mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that the area has been roped off. I think it's important to mention that the people that repaired the two cars were not CN employees, they were Dow Chemical employees, along with the help by the commodities officer. It wasn't the CN local employees that did this particular patch job.

I understand that an officer of the union has talked with his people out there, and that's quite correct. I understand that he's advised them that if in fact they do have any ailments that may be suspect, that they should file an accident

Monday, 17 March, 1980

report, and that is correct, Mr. Speaker. That is the position that I have taken since I became the Minister of Labour, that we do in fact wish people, if there is any incident of any type, that they should file a compensation form. I have no argument with what the union is doing, in fact I support that particular position.

I might just say that it is possible, and I hope that all members, I'm sure all members share with me, it is possible that it's a little premature to determine what the particular problems of the workers are. Our people are as concerned as anybody in this particular province. We are certainly as concerned and I think we have demonstrated concern since this particular incident took place. We will continue to do so. Our prime concern at this particular time, my personal prime concern of my department is the well being of the men that are working at that particular worksite, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for The Pas.

MR. RONALD MCBRYDE (The Pas): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can understand the Minister of Labour's concern with jurisdiction, because as far as his particular department is concerned, there is a jurisdictional problem. But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs does have jurisdiction in this case in what happens. The Minister has accepted that jurisdiction and has attempted to reassure us from that particular place of jurisdiction.

But to the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker, who wants to rely entirely upon the advice and the information provided to him by the CN, should be aware that sometimes companies as well as governments can do the wrong thing and take the wrong procedure and, Mr. Speaker, the enquiry into the Missassauga affair does show problems with railway procedures when it comes to transporting dangerous chemicals.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of my concerns in terms of what's going to happen in this situation, is that we are talking about a number of people that are right now, could be, or are affected at this point in time. Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the workers who are there to clean up the situation; we are talking about the residents in the immediate area, the residents of McGregor, and we are talking about the environment and what's going to happen. And, Mr. Speaker, the one thing that concerns me about some of the members opposite, and their comments on this, was the fact that this was just let slide. The Minister of Government Services mentioned that well, why didn't you raise it in this House last wednesday? Why didn't you raise it on Thursday? - or whatever the Minister of Government Services had to say.

Mr. Speaker, our problem was, and the problem of the people of Manitoba was, that we accepted what the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs said to us. We accepted that. We thought that that Minister had the expert advice that he needed and was acting upon that expert advice, and therefore that that Minister was taking the appropriate action on behalf of the people of Manitoba. But, Mr. Speaker, we were wrong, and one of the main problems seems to be that the Minister does not have the proper advice available to him.

Mr. Speaker, this gets complicated because there are so many different types of chemicals that are being handled, and so many different ways of handling all the chemicals, that there's not an immediate expert necessarily available on that particular chemical.

Mr. Speaker, what the United States has done, is set up a special hotline service, so when there is an accident in the transport of dangerous chemicals, that in fact the experts in that field can be immediately referred to by the authorities involved. And, Mr. Speaker, this is where we had a breakdown in Manitoba. This is where the Minister has failed us, by not consulting the experts and not getting the expert advice necessary, and therefore assuming that things were all right and assuring Manitoba and those of us on this side of the House that everything was all right. Mr. Speaker, how did we overcome that problem of bad information and bad advice being given to the Minister, the Minister not realizing the seriousness of the situation, the Minister not realizing the particular dangers of this chemical? Mr. Speaker, we found out about this pretty much by accident that the Minister was not getting good advice, that the Minister did not realize the situation facing us.

Mr. Speaker, by good luck, we have a conscientious member on our side, the Member for Churchill, who wanted to find out more industrial safety. When he read

Monday, 17 March, 1980

that Dr. Stellman was in town to give a distinguished persons guest lecture at the university, having read her book on worker safety, the Member for Churchill called her up and asked if he could meet with her and talk about the situation in lead in industrial workplaces, Mr. Speaker. And the comments of the Minister of Government Services, Public Works, what you call it, Mr. Speaker, is typical of the Minister in terms of trying to create a different issue to take the heat off the real issue. Mr. Speaker, the red herring tactic of the Minister - I keep wanting to say the Minister of Highways, because I guess I wish he was still there - but anyway, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Government Services pulling out this kind of red herring.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Dr. Stellman was here to give a lecture at the University. The Member for Churchill contacted her on another matter, having respect for her professional, scientific information as in books and articles that she has written on chemicals and workplace, health and safety matters. So, Mr. Speaker, it is fortunate for the people of Manitoba and it is fortunate for those of us in this House that this kind of person happened to be here at this time to give us correct information, which the Minister did not have in regard to this accident near McGregor.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the Attorney-General made comments about the political wishes of the Member for Churchill, etc. etc., I'm kind of disgusted with those kind of remarks from the Minister of Government Services and the Attorney-General because, Mr. Speaker, those were cheap shots that don't relate to the facts of the situation that we are in.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in which the government of the day got not thorough information, not enough information to be able to act. Dr. Stellman was here to give them that information and then, Mr. Speaker, they began to call the other experts on the advice and recommendation of Dr. Stellman. She even gave them the phone numbers of who to contact, who were the experts in the area of this particular chemical. Mr. Speaker, there are some people that might have chemistry degrees but not expert on the handling of this particular chemical in a spill situation.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of situation we have. We had the Minister of Consumer Affairs telling us, well everything is all right, no big problem, everything is all right. And then as we asked some questions and some more information came to light, then the Minister is saying well yes, we didn't quite tell you the whole story yesterday, here is the full story today. And then the next day, Mr. Speaker, us asking some more questions, providing some more information - well now we have some more information, and we are going to change our procedure.

Mr. Speaker, we've asked a number of questions in the comments today - and if the First Minister would stop being so rude as to interrupt from his chair, I'll continue with my comments, Mr. Speaker. So we have a situation of the Minister relying pretty well solely on advice from CN and on advice from Dow Chemical. Mr. Speaker, in this case the advice turned out to be not thorough enough, taking the advice solely from the shipper and the person from the chemical company, the shipper and the transporter of the chemicals.

So, Mr. Speaker, we had a number of days when the government was either going to do the wrong thing or not do the appropriate thing in this case. It was a serious problem and the information brought to light by the Member for Churchill and Dr. Stellman then got them moving, Mr. Speaker, to begin to do something. But they have still got a lot of questions to answer and a lot of things that have to be done, Mr. Speaker, before we can be reassured that this situation is in control. So we have the delayed appointment of an information officer and people in the area complaining that they are not being able to get information from the government and, Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentioned that the area was cordoned off and people weren't able to go there. In Saturday's paper there is a story of one of the families living close by going to the site themselves to find out what was going on and apparently they didn't have any trouble going right into the site and talking to the people on site as to what was going on.

We have the situation, Mr. Speaker, that Dr. Stellman did recommend, and I believe her recommendations and her advice was confirmed by other experts that the Minister and his department contacted - Environment Canada for example, the Dow Chemical toxicology laboratory confirmed what Dr. Stellman said - Dr. Stellman recommended that a couple of things happen immediately. One, that as far as pos-

Monday, 17 March, 1980

sible the snow and other contaminants that were there be scooped up or vacuumed up and put in some kind of a container. She also recommended that the workers on the site be required to wear masks because of the danger of this chemical and, Mr. Speaker, we still do not have those things happening. There was one person wearing a mask at the site, Mr. Speaker, a representative from Dow Chemical. A representative from Dow Chemical was the only person protecting himself in that situation. The other workers, Mr. Speaker, are not protected. They are working as they are, in their work clothes, without that kind of protection.

So Mr. Speaker, we, on this side, are disturbed that the Minister had not enough and inaccurate information, we're concerned that the Minister still does not have enough information, and if he does, he is not sharing that information with those of us on this side of the House. And we are afraid, Mr. Speaker, what we're going to find out tomorrow, because we've had to find out things on our own, and we haven't got that information from the government.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. BRIAN RANSOM (Souris-Killarney): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to participate in this debate, because I think it's important that we cast this problem within a larger perspective of environmental concerns and how those concerns are judged and evaluated. I should like to commend the opposition for showing the interest that they have in this problem. I think that's understandable, that the opposition should be enquiring of the government as to what action they have taken, and whether or not that action is likely to be adequate to deal with the problem.

I should also have thought, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition would have been asking those questions in advance, and having been the Minister of Environment for the past two years, I do not recall any questioning during the Estimates Review as to the preparedness of the government to deal with this type of situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another piece of information which the Honourable Minister of the Environment has pointed out, and which must be made clear, is that the company who manufactured this vinyl chloride - which I understand is a monomer and not a polymer - is that in 35 years of manufacturing this monomer, the same type of material that's in the tank cars, that there has not been a single case of liver cancer confirmed in the workers in the plant. For 35 years. And at times, Mr. Speaker, as you know, it has been pointed out that the limits at one time, were much much greater than they are now. In fact as recently, I believe, if I recall the figures, as 1972, the allowable standard was 500 parts per million - 100 times greater than it is now. And under those conditions, Mr. Speaker, there has never been a confirmed case of liver cancer in the workers manufacturing vinyl chloride in this plant, this monomer. That must be borne in mind, because I think it says a great deal about the alleged hazards that people have been exposed to.

I also would like to speak, generally, Mr. Speaker, about the matter of standards, as it relates to hazardous materials in the environment. And this happens to be an area that is very easily questioned, is very easily exploited, if one wishes to conduct a campaign of fear, because standards are based on some kind of scientific evaluation. They are based on the best information available; and most scientists, Mr. Speaker, will not say that there is absolutely no chance of any given chemical being hazardous. And for the non-scientist, it is therefore a simple matter to back a scientist into a corner and say, can you assure me, absolutely, that there is no danger involved with this chemical? And the scientist, if he or she is indeed a scientist, they will have to answer, no, I cannot give you that assurance, 100 percent.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, there have developed a number of positions relative to the safety of a particular contaminant in the environment. There are those people who say there should be no contamination of the environment, because it cannot be proven that they will not be harmful to the health of people, and to the environment generally.

There are others, of course, who say - and I happen to agree with this school of thought - that we must pick some standard which is based on the best evidence available, and which appears to be a satisfactory balance between what is known to be excessive contamination and no contamination, because life, Mr. Speaker, happens to be dangerous. I don't recall who made the statement, but someone once

Monday, 17 March, 1980

described life in pretechnological civilization days as being nasty, short and brutish, because there were dangers, Mr. Speaker. There were dangers from wild animals; there were dangers from disease; there were dangers from pestilence; and there were dangers from the weather. With the advent of technology, Mr. Speaker, we have eliminated many of those dangers, and we have unquestionably substituted some new dangers, such that now life is not short, nasty and brutish, it is long, nasty and brutish.

But there are still dangers, Mr. Speaker. And we must make some standard, we must accept some dangers, or else we are returning, we must return to the days of no technology. And there are people who advocate that, Mr. Speaker. There are people who advocate that we should abandon our present technology and return to the caveman days of existence. I don't happen to be one of those, but we must bear in mind that there are those people who are living on the advantages today of the technological society - and many of them living quite well, doing well within the system, having positions of stature - who would advocate that. And I think society must be aware of those arguments, Mr. Speaker, and be prepared to make the judgments which must be made in weighing benefits against the potential harm that might befall individuals in our society.

I would just hope, Mr. Speaker, that when these judgments are made, that they are made in the light of information, the best information available; they are made rationally, and not on the basis of fear, although I know that fear and emotion have a very real presence in this type of situation. And I'm confident that this particular problem that we're dealing with has been handled adequately; that there has not been undue danger to the people involved, or people who live within the vicinity; and that when the present furor has died down and some review and investigation of the situation has been carried out, we will find indeed that that was so.

I would also hope, Mr. Speaker, that we will have advanced our knowledge somewhat because of this situation, and that should that type of thing occur again, we will be in a better position to deal with it than we have today.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Rupertsland.

MR. HARVEY BOSTROM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The speakers this afternoon from the Progressive Conservative benches have, I believe, given us even more cause for alarm, as far as this situation is concerned. The most that we have heard from them in terms of their dealing with this situation is, as the last speaker indicated, and I believe the previous speaker to him indicated, that they have a concern. But that seems to be the only action that they're taking on this matter, that they're expressing concern. They are not dealing with the situation adequately. Far from it. And, Mr. Speaker, the last speaker indicated that we must accept some dangers. In other words, Mr. Speaker, this government, through its spokesmen, are telling us, and telling Manitobans, that they must accept safety standards with respect to this chemical that are less more-dangerous than those that are accepted in other jurisdictions where there are experts that know a hell of a lot more about this chemical than these people do.

And Mr. Speaker, I can refer to one case in point, and it's from a newspaper headline from the New York Times. And it refers to a derailment of an aircraft . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The hour being 4:30 . . .

The Honourable Member for Kildonan on a point of order.

MR. PETER FOX: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yes. This House, by motion, by vote, made a decision to set aside the ordinary business of the House, and until we complete this business, we shall carry on on this debate. I respectfully suggest to you that you consult Rule 27.

MR. SPEAKER: I thank the honourable member for that advice.

The Honourable Member for Rupertsland may proceed.

MR. BOSTROM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I referred to a case, Mr. Speaker, which has been reported in the New York Times, where there was a derailment of

Monday, 17 March, 1980

tank cars, some of which were containing the same chemical that we are discussing in Manitoba, namely vinyl chloride. And, Mr. Speaker, the report states that the steel-plated tank cars containing the vinyl chloride remained intact. In other words, in this case there was no leakage, there was no obvious problem as there was in Manitoba. And in this case, Mr. Speaker, all 500 residents of Sunset Bay, New York, were ordered out of the Lake Erie Shorefront Community 30 miles southwest of Buffalo yesterday after the derailment of the 21 cars of the Conn-Rail freight train, and I refer directly to the article in point. And Mr. Speaker, the evacuation in this case was ordered by the authorities after they were warned of potential hazards to anyone within a half-a-mile of vinyl chloride.

Mr. Speaker, this government has felt that the workers who are dealing with this chemical must accept the standard that the U.S. authorities wouldn't allow anyone to accept within a half-a-mile of this chemical. And, in this case, there was not even any leakage from the tank cars. Here we have a situation where there was a very serious leakage, and this government is not taking action to deal with it.

If we look at the Ministerial Statement which was given to us today, we understand, Mr. Speaker, that on Friday of this week, when we heard the Minister make a statement to this House, he claims that upon learning of the second leak, it was agreed that this clean-up process should be reconsidered. We all know what clean-up process we're referring to, so I won't go into it.

But, Mr. Speaker, the real reason there was a second look at this clean-up procedure, which these guys don't even seem to want to give credit to, is the fact that the NDP opposition referred to them a visiting U.S. expert in this area that gave them clear advice on what to do in this situation. And that advice, Mr. Speaker, was to clean up the snow that had been saturated by the chemical. And to date, from Friday when this expert was referred to the Minister in charge, nothing has been done in that area. We hear the Minister reporting at a press conference yesterday that they are removing the chemical from the intact cars into other cars. Well, Mr. Speaker, what does that do for the area that has already been saturated with this contaminated chemical?

And, Mr. Speaker, the expert who visited the Minister gave him this advice in good faith, and advised him that he did not have to refer only to her for advice. In fact, Mr. Speaker, she gave him a list, I believe, of names of people that he could refer to, to check with to ensure that the advice she was giving him was the accurate advice to follow. And, Mr. Speaker, the information is on the record. She called this procedure that the government was following insane. And the fact that this government has not taken any action on this advice in the last three days is the most irresponsible incompetence that anyone could see.

Mr. Speaker, we listened with interest to the Minister's statement today when we see that his main advisors in this whole affair have been Dow Chemical people. He says right in his statement that throughout this incident there has been very close liaison between Dow Chemical experts and our environmental staff. And, Mr. Speaker, not even the head office of Dow, as we learned.

Mr. Speaker, as late as Friday last week, or the three days after the spill, four days after the spill, the Minister had still not instructed his staff to contact experts who had dealt with this kind of situation before. He had still not done that, Mr. Speaker, even after being warned by the visiting US expert of the consequences of his action and the danger to the workers who were on site, the potential dangers to the residents in the nearby community; the government has still not taken action.

And we learned today, Mr. Speaker, that they have set up an information centre. The Minister would lead us to believe that this was there all the time. The mayor of that town indicated late last week that he hadn't heard anything from the government since the Minister visited there on Wednesday, and we learned also that they just set up this information office after Dr. Stellman raised this matter on Friday with the Minister. In other words, before that, they had no information office which was advising the town's people of McGregor in this affair.

He also refers to Environment Canada doing monitoring on the site. Well, Mr. Speaker, our information from Environment Canada as of today is that the environmental perception service of Environment Canada is still setting up their testing service. And furthermore, they have considerable doubts as to the adequacy of the Dow testing procedures, and it's the Dow testing procedures that this government

Monday, 17 March, 1980

seems to be relying on. Mr. Speaker, this is incredible, that the government would rely on the company, in this case, when it's in the company's best interests to downplay this situation as much as possible, since they are going to be legally liable for any problems that result from this spill. And this government is relying on them. In fact they are relying on Dow Chemical to provide the environmental protection for the people of Manitoba. That is in essence what they are doing. They are selling out the environmental protection of Manitoba to the Dow Chemical Company.

Mr. Speaker, I can remind you that the Dow Chemical Company, and the type of morality that this company has - they are the company that produced napalm during the sixties, and no one has to be reminded, I don't think, what napalm was used for. The virtually only use of napalm was to drop from airplanes to burn people, to kill people, and this is the morality and this is the company.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please. The member's ten minutes has expired. The Honourable Minister of Transportation.

HON. DON ORCHARD (Pembina): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I want to enter this debate for several reasons. Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that I'd like to do is to correct some of the glaring errors that members in the opposition have made to date in debating this resolution.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, several of them have made reference to the fact that the Minister responsible for the environment has set a new safety limit where none is safe. What in fact the Minister of the Environment said, quite responsibly so, is that the safest possible level is no exposure at all, and that can be taken exactly as it is said. He did not state that that was the safe limit. The safe limit, Mr. Speaker, has been established by various agencies on this side of the border and on the other side of the border at the five parts per million exposure over an eight-hour day for a five-day work week. Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have heard already from that side, and I don't blame them, because they are attempting to justify the reason for this debate this afternoon, they are indicating that our Minister has set a new standard. Well that's not quite so.

The last speaker indicated a derailment in the United States involving the same kind of chemical and, Mr. Speaker, by his statement and the reading of the press report, he would leave members on this side of the House, the press, and the general public of Manitoba to believe that we should have done as was done in that US town. Well, Mr. Speaker, as is usual with members of the opposition, they did not quite fill us in on all the details. First of all, they let us know that advice was given to evacuate all people within one half of a mile of the spill. Now, Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker, the Member for Rupertsland, did not indicate whether in fact the derailment occurred within the corporate limits of the town that was evacuated. I would suspect, Mr. Speaker, that is indeed the case.

So let us compare that derailment situation with the one we are dealing with in this province. We are three quarters of a mile minimum from the village of McGregor, Mr. Speaker. Pardon me, I stand corrected, Mr. Speaker, it is a mile and a quarter from the village of McGregor. It is not within the limits of the village of McGregor, as has been glossed over by everyone to date including members on our side, it is a mile and a quarter from the village of McGregor. That, Mr. Speaker, I am not saying detaches one bit from the seriousness of the situation, but, Mr. Speaker, let us not misconstrue the facts of the situation as they are before this House. It is recommended in that newspaper article that the Member for Rupertsland quoted from, that evacuation take place from anybody resident within one half mile.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the logical conclusion is that this Minister with this government acted responsibly in not calling for the evacuation of the residents of McGregor, because it is outside of the one-half mile limit. That is one error, Mr. Speaker, that they are trying to promote the feeling, the fear, that we have done something amiss on this side of the House. Not so, Mr. Speaker, not so at all! Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the closest farm yard is not within one-half mile of the spill site. Therefore, not even a farm yard, according to the stipulations laid down by the Member for Rupertsland in his newspaper clip reading, says that we acted responsibly and that we did not evacuate that farm yard.

The second thing that the Member for Rupertsland so blatantly puts on the re-

Monday, 17 March, 1980

cord, is that he finds it incredible, and I quote him, incredible that this government would rely on Dow Chemical, the manufacturer of that product, to provide us advice when in fact they are legally responsible for the outcome of this whole spill. Now, Mr. Speaker, what the Member for Rupertsland is telling this House and the people of Manitoba, is that we should not contact a company which has been manufacturing this product for 35 years and has the experience with that product, we should not rely on them for any advice whatsoever. Mr. Speaker, I find that an incredibly inept and stupid statement from the member from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if you want to carry his argument to the natural conclusion, Dow Chemical is legally responsible, according to what he says, for the consequences of this spill. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would find them to be amongst the most responsible people in assuring that no harm come to anyone as a result of this spill, to protect the legal responsibility that their company may have as a result of this spill. And he would suggest that we don't take their advice, Mr. Speaker? I find that hard, hard to believe, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to lay a time sequence down for the House, because we have all of a sudden detached ourselves from what has happened since the derailment took place in this province. The derailment occurred on Monday. We were notified of it, and the Minister for the environment, the Honourable Member for Morris, was out on the scene at shortly past noon on Tuesday. Hardly a non-caring attitude, Mr. Speaker. He was out there within a day of the derailment and the spill. Mr. Speaker, at that point in time it was deemed that a small amount - an amount, I won't say a small amount - of the chemical was leaking from the cars, but it was stopped within another day. That particular leak was fixed by people of Dow Chemical, who repaired the leaking valve and, at that point in time, Mr. Speaker, it was assumed, I believe, by all involved, that there were no further leaks. It wasn't until, coincidentally, Friday morning, when Dr. Stellman appeared on the scene with some advice, that a leak was discovered in the second car, which was much larger than the leak in the valve in the first car. At that point in time, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Environment for this government mobilized many many people to make sure that the integrity of the environment was protected at that instance, uncovering a major new leakage of vinyl chloride from a second car previously unknown.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members in the opposition are trying to say that he has acted incompetently, etc., etc., etc. Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the Minister for Environment has acted totally responsibly in the carrying-out of his duties in protecting the environment and insuring the safety of all Manitobans in this particular derailment and accident and spillage. Any allegations by the opposition that he has acted anything but responsibly, Mr. Speaker, is showing us where the responsibility is and where the irresponsibility is, Mr. Speaker, and I needn't clarify which side has which.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to dwell on this subject too much longer, because I don't particularly enjoy the fact that we have a potentially dangerous carcinogenic chemical released to the atmosphere in Manitoba. But members of the opposition have said, why didn't we act more quickly? Why didn't we contain all of the chemical? At the time that the spill occurred, Mr. Speaker, all that could be done at that point in time was being done. People were kept away. They were kept beyond the radius, beyond which the level of chemical was less than five parts per million, considered to be a safe level of contamination in the atmosphere. Mr. Speaker, qualified personnel only were allowed into that scene. Qualified personnel were only allowed to work on the leak on the car.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't like to see that kind of a chemical released to the atmosphere, but I don't want to see the people of Manitoba left with the false impression that this Minister of Environment has acted irresponsibly in handling this situation. He deserves to be commended for the efforts that he has undertaken in protecting the people of Manitoba in this particular situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't have to go through the sequence of events again. Naturally news' statements are issued to the House when new leakages are discovered, as they were on Friday and, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for the Environment has worked the whole weekend through to assure that that situation is under control. Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost confidence in his performance in the past, and I have the utmost confidence that he as Minister of the Environment will protect the integrity of the people of Manitoba in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. BRIAN CORRIN (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place, not as a person authoritative or expert in the question of environmental management, ecology, scientific biology relative to the question of environmental contaminants, but rather, Mr. Speaker, I would submit, as many other members have in their participation, simply as a layman who has a deep concern for the well-being and welfare of the people whom we all represent.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that there is good cause for very deep and grave concern relative to this matter. I would indicate, notwithstanding some of the platitudes, notwithstanding some of the vitriol expressed by members opposite, that although they may wish - and I would suggest that only one member has actually suggested this to be something akin to what he called Jane Fondaism - they may wish to stigmatise it as something of that nature, I would remind that member and all those other members on that side who take that point of view, that Jane Fondaism as expressed in the United States was relative to Three Mile Island, and we all know the tremendous hazard, the jeopardy that was involved in the Three Mile Island incident. And, Mr. Speaker, this of course, I think, brings us to the substance of our debate.

Mr. Speaker, we are living, as the Minister of Resources has indicated, in a very complex and technological world. In many respects our life indeed has been truly bettered as a result of these innovations and inventions, but, Mr. Speaker, there are certain degrees of peril that they have precipitated that were hitherto unknown to citizens on this planet. And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that it is that that we must address ourselves to today. As legislators, Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility to concern ourselves with ways and means to redress these obvious inadequacies within the system. Perhaps it's a good example of a situation where legislation, governmental regulation has not kept step, has not been able to keep the measure of technological innovation and invention.

But, Mr. Speaker, in saying this I would remind you that what has happened in MacGregor is but the second major incident of this sort in but a very few short months. It wasn't too long ago, Mr. Speaker, when we were all made aware of a very precarious and endangering situation in the city of Mississauga, in Ontario; an unprecedented situation where a city, I believe of over 1/2 million people were evacuated. Mr. Speaker, I say to you as a member from an urban constituency - a constituency, I should add, that is contiguous in some areas to a main railway line - that I am deeply concerned about the risk that is being put upon citizens as a result of modern technological innovation.

Mr. Speaker, every day I am advised that rolling stock passes through the main lines of this city, carrying thousands of gallons of materials that are as toxic, if not more toxic, than vinyl chloride. So, Mr. Speaker, it behooves us not just to deal with this particular subject in a vacuum. But rather, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest respectfully to you and other members, that it is time for all of us to address ourselves to the very serious problems that present as a result of this. If this sort of situation had arisen, Mr. Speaker, in the main line yard in Winnipeg, we would be talking about a situation that might well be jeopardizing tens of thousands of lives. Mr. Speaker, if, as I've now discovered in contacting the railway union representative of the rail workers on the site, if one of the cigarettes that the workers had been smoking - and Mr. Speaker, I'm informed that they were smoking up till 2:30 or 3:30 in the afternoon on Friday of last week, some two full days after the incident took place, working people on the site were --(Interjection)-- between two and four days, Mr. Speaker, I have obtained the counsel of several members.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of that, we know that this was a highly flammable substance, and we know that workers at the site were not informed that they should extinguish their cigarettes. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I was advised, and I will not certify the reliability of this statement, but I was advised by a person from the union just this afternoon that it was only when the Dow Chemical representative, properly uniformed and wearing his respirator unit, came on the site - and I should add, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, that none of the other men had been advised to wear respirator units - it was only when he came on the site and mentioned to one of the CN officials that an airplane passing high above could,

Monday, 17 March, 1980

through its exhaust system, ignite the flammable substance in the cars and on the ground, that they were told to extinguish their cigarettes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what concerns me is that even though we have alarming incidents of these sorts of disasters, and the potential for this sort of disaster is now so obvious, nothing is being done. Mr. Speaker, it is time that we take measures to redress this situation. In the United States, Mr. Speaker, we are advised - and I have here an article in the Christian Science Monitor of March 12th of this year - we are advised that in the United States some 4 billion tons of hazardous chemicals are transported yearly. Four billion tons. An agency in 1971 was created there called ChemTrec, the Chemical Transportation Emergency Centre is full disclosure of the acronym. This is a program that works in conjunction with the government and the private sector. And they have already, since 1971, handled more than 104,000 incidents, dealing with the transportation of hazardous chemical products. Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that anything we can do to mitigate or forestall the tragic effects, the potentially tragic effects, of this sort of potential tragedy or accident, will be time well spent.

Mr. Speaker, let us look whether or not some of the charges that have been made on this side of the House are indeed justified. I have suggested, other members have suggested, that there is a policy vacuum, an administrative regulatory vacuum, with respect to this sort of situation. Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect, that has been corroborated by authorities, notwithstanding what the Member for Lakeside suggests to be the case about partisan participation. Dr. Jeanne Stellman indicated when she came into the city, she said to reporters, and I quote from the Tribune article of last week, "It's a very serious situation. What strikes me is how unprepared everyone here is. No one seems to know what to do." She had just met, Mr. Speaker, with the Honourable Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, there's further documentation. It's been indicated that initially they were going to disperse the materials that had spilled from the tank cars in the snow. Well, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Stellman indicated, and I quote again, "What is perhaps more serious is how unprepared you are to deal with this, all sitting around and talking while it is evaporating. There are vacuum tank cars which vacuum up the stuff, and when that is done, then have the debate." Well, Mr. Speaker, that stuff is still lying on the ground. The Minister has no regulatory framework, there is no policy, so he is still vacillating. He is still considering whether he should suck it up and pump it away, or whether he should let it disperse into the atmosphere.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, and I say this with respect to members opposite, that there must be more done in order to provide the ways and means to deal on an activist basis with this sort of potential disaster when it occurs. In these days, Mr. Speaker, it is simply untenable that members opposite can stand up and say, well what did you do about it, or there's a difference of opinion, or we're going to let Dow Chemical make policy for the people of Manitoba. The Honourable Member for Rupertsland is right. Dow Chemical does have a vested interest, Mr. Speaker. They are the party that will be liable for the effects of this disaster if it occurs. And you can't really expect them to inculcate themselves at this particular juncture and suggest that they're not giving sound advice, or that the Minister is not dealing with this matter in anything less than a reasonable basis.

So Mr. Speaker, I would suggest, with respect, that there is more to be done in this regard. Government must take a much more activist position, must affirm the right of people to have adequate representation in the face of this sort of situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, not only was it the case, as I indicated earlier, that people were smoking on the site - and I would indicate, Mr. Speaker that that in itself could have jeopardized goodness knows how many people's lives - but, Mr. Speaker, the workers, as we have been told, were not outfitted with proper equipment. As I indicated, I am advised by people who were on the site that it was only when the Dow Chemical representative came on site with his equipment, and his respirator mask, that workers began to question the propriety of their remaining . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The honourable member's time is up.  
The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

MR. LLOYD G. HYDE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words in regard

Monday, 17 March, 1980

to the debate of this issue, which involves members of my constituency. My involvement and concern started last Tuesday when I journeyed to MacGregor, along with the Minister. When we flew to the town of MacGregor and witnessed the wreckage of that chemical train, we visited with the local officials, discussed the issues with members of both the Dow Chemical Company and the CNR officials, the Environmental Management Branch and the EMO organization, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that the actions taken by our government and the Ministers involved - these Ministers have carried out their duties, I am sure, to the satisfaction of most people in the vicinity of MacGregor and district. They carried out their duties in a manner, Mr. Speaker, that didn't let the people find themselves panicking with their concerns. I'm afraid that this is what is happening too often. Statements are being made, not only by government officials, statements are being made by people of the press who possibly have been - I say possibly - have been ill-informed of the actual facts. This, in turn, is creating panic amongst people of MacGregor and district, to the point where - well I must interject here and say that up until this morning, and that hour was at 20 minutes to six this morning, I got a phone call, and I have to admit that I probably was a little hazy and fuzzy at that hour. But however, this concerned woman phoned me, she said, "Is it right that the village of MacGregor and districts is going to be totally evacuated?" And I had to say, I was not aware of that. And I had to say that I was sure if that had happened, I would have been notified.

This is what I mean. This woman was out in the company of other people last evening. She was told by someone - I don't know who, someone - that the town was going to be evacuated, and her children were going to be taken to school this morning, and she was so concerned. Now, Mr. Speaker, this was the only call that I received other than those who were satisfied, as I said earlier, satisfied with the actions and the control measures taken up to now.

The statement that was made by the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge about pregnant women, that I think is ridiculous to come from a woman in her position, when it has never been mentioned up to now, never until she uttered those words, never was it mentioned that there was danger to pregnant women. --(Interjection)-- It is statements such as this that get the people of the area so uptight.

Mr. Speaker, we were quite aware, and I know the Minister was quite aware of the fact that the danger was there, should there have been a fire ignited at some time. This could have been, and would have been, very disastrous. However, the precautionary measures were taken, both by the railroad people and myself. In sitting with the Minister, when we spoke with the representatives of the companies, they assured us that these precautionary measures were going to be taken.

Mr. Speaker, my knowledge, as I said, my knowledge of the chemistry of this particular vinyl chloride is limited. But I do want to go on record as saying that I am satisfied with the actions of our government, and that our government carried out their duties to the best degree of knowledge that they had at that time. The Minister today has made another statement which has certainly cleared the air considerably, as far as I am concerned. My concern though, Mr. Speaker, is with the possibility of similar situations happening in the future and that our government will continue in pursuit of policies and practices to ensure that the movement of dangerous chemicals is carried out with the highest degree of safety. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George.

MR. BILLIE URUSKI (St. George): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In taking part in this debate today we've heard some certainly wild, what one would consider wild statements and misrepresentations, that have come in this matter of great concern to Manitobans, I'm sure.

Mr. Speaker, we've had the Minister of Highways and we've had the Minister of Public Works, in order to detract from the seriousness of this situation, try and throw a little red herring this way and that way and say, well look, that doctor that came to Manitoba, she was a consultant to the New Democratic Party, as if, Mr. Speaker, to say that anyone who consults the New Democratic Party, his worth is not worth the powder to blow to heck. Mr. Speaker that is the intention that the Minister of Highways tried to cast on the situation.

Mr. Speaker, not only the misrepresentation or the suggestion of the Minister

Monday, 17 March, 1980

of Highways as being inaccurate, but, Mr. Speaker, even if that doctor was a consultant to the New Democratic Party, that shows how concerned this side of the House is with the situation in hand, that we would go to that length to bring in that type of an individual to at least advise us. But, Mr. Speaker, what happens when members on this side bring this doctor into the Legislature and introduce her to the Minister of the Environment . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. May I suggest to the honourable member that we do have a resolution before us; it's fairly clear in its terms. He only has a very few minutes in his address, and I would hope that he sticks to the subject matter of the resolution.

MR. URUSKI: Mr. Speaker, this has been the general thrust of this government to try and wash and sweep this issue under the carpet. We've had the Minister of the Environment, when members of the opposite side brought this individual to the Legislature and then being accused by the Attorney-General, the House Leader, of saying this is a cheap political shot. If you've got information, I demand you bring it to the House. Little do they realize that information was brought to the Minister of the Environment last week. And what did he do when members on this side asked him for a meeting, to sit on the meeting and discuss this situation with him. He said no, no, no, you guys go out of my office because I just want to deal with the doctor myself. That is how the people of Manitoba are being treated in this issue. We are being treated and kept in the dark. If it was not, Mr. Speaker, for the actions of the Member for Churchill to bring this matter forward and bring this individual forward, do you think we would have had an information service set up by the government? They didn't set it up last week; they just set it up this week, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Highways, would his organization have been involved in this? No, Mr. Speaker, no. We have a situation that the Minister of the Environment is treating the situation by showing his concern by going out to the site, but he also shows his lack of knowledge. He handled this situation like the saying goes, that ignorance is bliss, Mr. Speaker. This Minister has handled this situation very blissfully, Mr. Speaker, until the information and the seriousness of the situation was brought to him last week by members on this opposite side.

We have said that the information gathering has not been adequate, and now we have an information system that has just finally been set up to tell the people of Manitoba and the area, especially the area, how serious this situation is.

Mr. Speaker, this Minister and this government, to say the least, has been neglectful. Not only has he been incompetent but, Mr. Speaker, had the opposition not brought the information to light, I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, that had it gone on any longer, he could be accused of his actions being criminal. Had he not at least taken the advice that was brought to him and moved on it, he could have been accused of this.

Mr. Speaker, has the province done the probings that the environmental lab had to undertake? Have they done those necessary tests, or has he continually relied on the PR people of Dow Chemical? That appears what has happened. I venture to say that Dow Chemical will probably send more PR people into Manitoba, because the heat is on. The heat is on in this situation. I venture to say that they will bring more of their PR people to try and take the government off the hook, but it won't work, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier who sits in his chair, Mr. Speaker, should now stand up and take matters into his hands. We know that the government has botched this very serious situation by really what one can say turning over the responsibility of environmental matters to the corporate sector, by solely relying on the information provided to them by Dow Chemical, by failing to protect the workers and the nearby residents. I said, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier should take matters into his own hands. He should set up an independent public investigation and inquiry into this situation, to say the very least, Mr. Speaker.

We've had the Minister of Highways today get up and give us another rambling sequence of events almost like the sequence that we had with his computer, that he didn't know what caused it, and I'm sure that he still today doesn't know what has caused this situation in trying to give the sequence of events in this matter, Mr. Speaker. Let's get all the sequence of events. If the government is so sure of

Monday, 17 March, 1980

their position, let's put all the sequence of events in order. Let's see what communications have taken place. Let's see what actions have been taken by the government. Let's see what information has been made to the public and when, and let the people of Manitoba judge for themselves.

We know what has happened to date, Mr. Speaker. Then the First Minister should act without haste, Mr. Speaker, without any delay in this matter whatsoever, if he is as concerned as he thinks - with haste, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. He has been acting without haste. And I urge - maybe a challenge to the government will bring them to their feet and bring them to their senses that they have to act in this matter, and I challenge the First Minister to act.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable First Minister.

MR. LYON: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my honourable friend, the Member for St. George, that I'm not responding to his last challenge. I had intended to speak at this hour in any case, just to make him feel good. But I want to remind him of what he said during the course of his remarks, because it rather typifies what we've been hearing from our friends in the opposition today. He said he wanted the First Minister to act without haste but without delay and, Mr. Speaker, I think that better typifies everything that we've been hearing today in the course of this debate.

I want to say a very few things in the few minutes that are allotted to me on this topic, most of which, I think, have already been said, and been said quite well from this side of the House, and some, Mr. Speaker, even acknowledged from the far side of the House from those few speakers over there who have apparently some understanding of what has been going on.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have been treating this matter of the spillage and of the train wreck as a serious matter from Day One. I don't think it would be regarded as being undue flattery on our part if we say that this government happens to know something about the handling of emergencies, that we were through a rather severe one last spring when we had to evacuate some five to seven thousand people on fairly short notice. And we know, with the help of the staff that is available, the same staff in large measure that my honourable friends had available to them, that these things are not done easily but that careful consideration has to be given before you order serious or large scale evacuations for the protection of the people in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we know as well, that with respect to this particular derailment we are not out of the woods yet, because the material still has to be cleaned up; the site has to be cleaned; the material has to be now transferred by pump into other cars. And we know, that as we stand here talking this afternoon about the situation, that work is going on at that site to render that site as safe as possible for the future use of the site by the people of that area and by nature and so on.

I repeat very briefly, Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Highways said, because my honourable friends seem to lack direction when they get outside of the city of Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, the site of the derailment is on the Canadian National Railway, which happens to run north of the village of McGregor. There are maps available. My honourable friends can consult the road maps to see what we are talking about. And as was indicated by the Minister of Highways, the locus of the accident is about a mile and a quarter, roughly as the crow flies, north and slightly to the west of the village of McGregor. My honourable friend the Leader of the Opposition says they all know that. Mr. Speaker, they might just as well be talking about Transylvania; I don't think there is one of them who has ever set foot in McGregor.

Mr. Speaker, so it is not within the confines of the town, and we're still not out of the woods, because the situation has to be treated very very carefully in terms of the recovery to be done and the danger that is implicit in this material, that the Minister has had some knowledge of from Dr. Bowen, the Assistant Deputy Minister in the department. Dr. Bowen is well known to the Member for Inkster, who was the Minister of that department for some time, regarded, even if not by my honourable friends opposite, now that they are in opposition, regarded certainly highly by one of their Ministers when he was in government, and there is certainly ample testimony to that. We are fortunate, if I may say so, to have people of Dr.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

Bowen's calibre giving advice on an hourly basis to the Minister. And if my honourable friends would only re-read the statement, Mr. Speaker, and I realize that causes particular difficulty for some of them, but if they would only re-read the statement that the Minister gave to the House this afternoon with respect to Dr. Bowen, with respect to the agent itself, with respect to the people who have been consulted, with respect to the best advice that is being made available, then they would have some more balanced view. I suggest with the greatest of respect, that we all have to have a balanced view, because there is a danger of under-estimating this, which has never been the case on this side of the House. There is also a danger, Mr. Speaker, of over-estimating and overexciting the people of Manitoba for narrow partisan purposes, which I regret has been done to some extent by some of the speakers opposite.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we have to do is maintain a balance, and I say to my honourable friends opposite, as I've said on many occasions before, we welcome the quality of advice that can be given by them from time to time, but not one speaker this afternoon has stood in his place and offered any advice that would ameliorate the situation beyond the advice that we are already getting from the experts who are being widely consulted on this continent. No advice whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, from my honourable friends.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you myself, because the question has been asked in my hearing, what is the best thing, the safest action to be done with the material that has escaped on the site right now, and the safest action, I've been told by the best advice available to us, is to leave it alone for the time being until it is determined finally whether there are a third or a fourth, pray God there won't be, cars that have been breached and leakage is occurring. We now know, and we found out only last Friday, and this is well known to honourable members opposite, although they conveniently like to overlook it, that a second car was breached and more of the material has escaped than was thought to be the case in the first place. We only knew of the first car up until Friday, and that accounts, Mr. Speaker, in large measure for the change that has been recommended by all of the parties concerned with respect to the disposal of the matter, and that is where we stand at the present time.

The CNR and Dow Chemical are the mover and are the owner, presumably, or the manufacturer of the material in question. They have made a determination, and if my honourable friends say they want to second-guess the CNR, that's their business. But they happen to know something about their cars. The CNR have made a determination that it would be better, rather than following their first procedure that they had thought of using, it would be better now to pump out the tanks into waiting tanks on the railway and get the material out of the province. That, Mr. Speaker, is going to take a longer period of time than anyone anticipated prior to that decision being made this weekend. That accounts in large measure, Mr. Speaker, for the elongation of this process that I'm sure most thought would be cleaned up faster than this. There's no attempt on the part of anyone to dissimulate, there's no attempt on the part of anyone to hide information, those are merely the chronological facts of the situation as they have occurred.

So, we're still in the midst of this. We are still, as a government, seeking the best advice that we can get, Mr. Speaker, as to the clean-up methodology that should be used. But, as the Minister has indicated time and again, there was to be no clean-up, even under the first procedure that was recommended, until the cars had been lifted out and moved from the site. When the second breach was found, it was determined then to abandon that method of disposal of the material.

Now, on top of all of that, Mr. Speaker, continuous monitoring has been taking place, and as again, the Minister mentioned in his statement this afternoon, when you get 40 feet distant from this spill area, there is nothing being recorded on the monitors at all. Now, if I heard her right, the Member for Fort Rouge, and others by implication this afternoon, were suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that people should be evacuated. Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, we can't accept that kind of panic advice, because the best information available to us - and that's all we can take, Mr. Speaker, including Dr. Stellman's advice - the best information available to us from all sources is to do precisely what is being done at the present time. And the CNR, Dow Chemical, Environment Canada, outside advice that Dr. Bowen has sought from other agencies in Canada and in the United States, backs up what the Minister and what the department are doing in these circumstances.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

So it may sound very good for my honourable friends opposite to say, why aren't you doing something? Why don't you take an activist posture, and so on? Mr. Speaker, we're acting on the best advice, and the Minister is acting on the best advice that is available to him at the present time. And, if my honourable friends have any further advice, we would welcome it, because we don't claim to have a monopoly on all of the best advice at all. If they have other people who want to advise the Minister, by all means come forward and say so. But, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that it is not the kind of a situation where the kind of, shall we say, narrow partisan advantage should be attempted to be taken as we witnessed this afternoon.

One thing in closing, and I think it perhaps represents some of the knee-jerk reaction we're seeing from across the way. Dow Chemical, we're not here to defend or to do anything about Dow Chemical at all. They happen to be the manufacturer of the product. It should not go without mention, however, that my honourable friends across, with their usual left-wing demonology, have to indicate, of course, something about napalm, thereby indicating that they are more worried about multinationals than they are about cleaning up the mess in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to clean up the mess in Manitoba. We welcome their advice in cleaning it up and we hope, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to get some constructive advice from them, rather than what we've heard.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

MR. SAUL CHERNIACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't take long for the Honourable First Minister to get involved in insults and to get involved in accusations about his mania, his peculiar attitude that everyone who is across the aisle from him is a left-wing demonologist, is a person whom he can accuse. You know, Mr. Speaker, the member who just sat down in his seat today, called three members of the opposition "liar" from his seat. And when I suggested he stand up and say it, he, from the cowardice of his seat, sat there and said nothing. Until he stood up. Now . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. May I suggest to the honourable member that he is treading on very dangerous ground in the use of unparliamentary language, and suggest he choose his language carefully.

MR. CHERNIACK: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate your drawing to my attention the rules which the First Minister knows not of. I said he called three members liars from his seat. And never had the courage to stand up and do it. Now, I'm surprised, Mr. Speaker, he didn't decide that that derailment was some left-wing activity designed to test his government. I'm surprised he didn't do that. He did as much as he could when he referred to narrow partisan speaker. Now he wants somebody to speak about napalm for him. Because, Mr. Speaker, he is a diversionist who is, well I suppose, the red herring fits very well to Red Lyon.

Mr. Speaker, it is not he alone, but several other of the members of his side, who want to accuse us on this side of political opportunism. And I want to deal with that, Mr. Speaker, and I will have time to do so, because I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there are some dangerous minds across the way from us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Honourable Minister of Government Services that Dr. Stellman is a paid-for consultant by the NDP. He may know whereof he speaks, Mr. Speaker, but we also know that he has not hesitated to speak when he knew that what he was saying was not true. And, on that basis, I have to say to him, if he knows it's true, let him prove it; if he cannot prove it, let him backtrack. Because Mr. Speaker, it does not lend to the dignity of the debate to have him make accusations such as he does.

Mr. Speaker, when the Honourable Attorney-General accuses a member on this side of political opportunism . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. May I suggest to the honourable member, there is a Resolution before him. I suggest he stick to the subject matter of the debate.

The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

Monday, 17 March, 1980

MR. CHERNIACK: Mr. Speaker, I want only to draw to your attention the third paragraph of the Resolution,

"WHEREAS actions of the provincial government have created serious doubts in the minds of many as to the prudence and appropriateness of government action" - it is the actions of this afternoon that have concerned me and created considerable doubt in my mind as to the appropriateness of what they are doing. It is their attempt to make accusations here that indicate to me the embarrassment they must feel about the way they have handled, or have failed to handle, the situation that we are discussing today.

And the fact that the Minister of Government Services finds it necessary to challenge a person who was introduced to members opposite on Friday by making accusations about paid consultant, is an indication of the weakness that they must feel in their case. And that's why I refer to it.

Mr. Speaker, we heard the First Minister say we're not out of the woods yet. And he's scared. And he should be. And so are we all about what may happen, Mr. Speaker. What may happen is something we must be concerned about, and I refer back, Mr. Speaker, to what was said by the Minister of Natural Resources, who gave the only reasoned speech I heard from that side. And he talked about his hope that we will learn from what has gone on in this last week, so that in the future we may deal more competently - and these are my words, not his necessarily, but it was his intent to say that clearly - that we should benefit from what we have learned. And I would hope so. --(Interjection)-- Now, the First Minister, in defence, saying, what would you have done? And I'll refer to that. Mr. Speaker, usually the First Minister says nothing but insults and accusations and is not worth listening to. --(Interjection)-- But now he wants to know what we would have done. Well, one thing I would have done was to make sure that my Ministers were prepared to deal with the situation. And to say that he was on the site in half-an-hour means very little to anyone, because he is no expert. What is he supposed to know about being on the site? Does that make a big difference? No. What he has to have known is the people he'll deal with.

So, Mr. Speaker, we find that when the First Minister, when the Minister of Environment, say that on Friday we consulted someone or other, when we found the second leak, the truth is that the consultant that they heard first that made them concerned was Dr. Stelman, who was introduced to them. And isn't it peculiar that when the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Churchill came to the Minister and said, here is a person who is an expert in this field, has something to say, may we stay with you, or do you want us out? And he apparently said, get out. Do you know what he said right after that, according to the information - he may correct that statement. He said to her, first question, according to her, how long have you known Jay Cowan? I wonder if that's true, because we were told. How long have you known Jay Cowan? That is a suspicious mind.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hour being 5:30, I am leaving the Chair, to return at 8:00 o'clock.