



Second Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS  
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Fifth Legislature**

LIB - Liberal; ND - New Democrat; PC - Progressive Conservative

| NAME                       | CONSTITUENCY       | PARTY |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| ALCOCK, Reg                | Osborne            | LIB   |
| ASHTON, Steve              | Thompson           | ND    |
| BARRETT, Becky             | Wellington         | ND    |
| CARR, James                | Crescentwood       | LIB   |
| CARSTAIRS, Sharon          | River Heights      | LIB   |
| CERILLI, Marianne          | Radisson           | ND    |
| CHEEMA, Gulzar             | The Maples         | LIB   |
| CHOMIAK, Dave              | Kildonan           | ND    |
| CONNERY, Edward            | Portage la Prairie | PC    |
| CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.       | Ste. Rose          | PC    |
| DACQUAY, Louise            | Seine River        | PC    |
| DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.     | Roblin-Russell     | PC    |
| DEWAR, Gregory             | Selkirk            | ND    |
| DOER, Gary                 | Concordia          | ND    |
| DOWNEY, James, Hon.        | Arthur-Virden      | PC    |
| DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.     | Steinbach          | PC    |
| DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.      | Riel               | PC    |
| EDWARDS, Paul              | St. James          | LIB   |
| ENNS, Harry, Hon.          | Lakeside           | PC    |
| ERNST, Jim, Hon.           | Charleswood        | PC    |
| EVANS, Clif                | Interlake          | ND    |
| EVANS, Leonard S.          | Brandon East       | ND    |
| FILMON, Gary, Hon.         | Tuxedo             | PC    |
| FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.        | Springfield        | PC    |
| FRIESEN, Jean              | Wolseley           | ND    |
| GAUDRY, Neil               | St. Boniface       | LIB   |
| GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon. | Minnedosa          | PC    |
| HARPER, Elijah             | Rupertsland        | ND    |
| HELWER, Edward R.          | Gimli              | PC    |
| HICKES, George             | Point Douglas      | ND    |
| LAMOUREUX, Kevin           | Inkster            | LIB   |
| LATHLIN, Oscar             | The Pas            | ND    |
| LAURENDEAU, Marcel         | St. Norbert        | PC    |
| MALOWAY, Jim               | Elmwood            | ND    |
| MANNES, Clayton, Hon.      | Morris             | PC    |
| MARTINDALE, Doug           | Burrows            | ND    |
| McALPINE, Gerry            | Sturgeon Creek     | PC    |
| McCRAE, James, Hon.        | Brandon West       | PC    |
| McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.      | Assiniboia         | PC    |
| MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.   | River East         | PC    |
| NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.      | Rossmere           | PC    |
| ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.      | Pembina            | PC    |
| PENNER, Jack               | Emerson            | PC    |
| PLOHMAN, John              | Dauphin            | ND    |
| PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.      | Lac du Bonnet      | PC    |
| REID, Daryl                | Transcona          | ND    |
| REIMER, Jack               | Niakwa             | PC    |
| RENDER, Shirley            | St. Vital          | PC    |
| ROCAN, Denis, Hon.         | Gladstone          | PC    |
| ROSE, Bob                  | Turtle Mountain    | PC    |
| SANTOS, Conrad             | Broadway           | ND    |
| STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.      | Kirkfield Park     | PC    |
| STORIE, Jerry              | Flin Flon          | ND    |
| SVEINSON, Ben              | La Verendrye       | PC    |
| VODREY, Rosemary           | Fort Garry         | PC    |
| WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy       | St. Johns          | ND    |
| WOWCHUK, Rosann            | Swan River         | ND    |

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 19, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYERS

#### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

**Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairman of Committees):** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

#### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the 2nd Annual Report of the Crown Corporations Council for the period January 1, 1990, to December 31, 1990.

I would also like to table a Supplement of the Report of the Provincial Auditor to the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1990.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I indicated yesterday that, although this should not be considered precedent setting, I was going to table a copy of a legal opinion with respect to Bill 70.

\* (1335)

#### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon from the Stonewall Centennial School eighty-seven Grade 5 students, and they are under the direction of Nancy Orleski. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

Also this afternoon, we have 40 senior visitors from the Gwen Sexter Creative Living Centre. They are under the direction of Tamar Barr. This centre is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

#### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

#### Judicial System Videotaped Evidence

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** I am sure all Manitobans are digesting the Court of Appeal decision yesterday, Mr. Speaker, a decision that will preclude the use of videotapes in court for alleged victims of sexual abuse.

This, of course, arises out of a pilot project that was established in 1986 and that has been used by the Province of Manitoba to allow for the videotape evidence to be gathered and to be used primarily to arrive at convictions and to save children the trauma of appearing in court and appearing before the persons charged with sexual abuse.

Mr. Speaker, there are about 600 videos now that have been taken since the time the program was established, and as the Attorney General and Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has stated, this court decision appears to give the accused rights that have been judged to be more precedent setting than the rights of the sexual abuse victims.

I would ask the Minister of Justice, and I thank him for his comments yesterday: Will the Province of Manitoba be appealing this decision to the Supreme Court of Canada?

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** That same question was asked of me yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and as I answered yesterday, I will say that our Constitutional Law branch is reviewing the decision in the case with a view to finding if there are reasonable grounds for us to make an appeal.

It is very much a matter of concern to me and the government I represent when we are talking about youngsters who are already in a vulnerable position by virtue of their size, by virtue of their age, and very often these kinds of cases involve people in positions of trust, and that kind of trust is breached all too often in our society.

I appreciate the honourable member's question, and we are looking very carefully at this decision.

**Mr. Doer:** I thank the minister for the answer to the question.

### **Child Abuse Prevention Programs Funding**

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the Premier.

I had the opportunity to attend a NEW FACCESS Board of Directors' annual public meeting last week and was able to hear the real stories that were going on in our communities and in our province about vulnerable children, vulnerable families, families dealing with the recession, agencies and volunteers trying to deal with the many challenges that are presented to them.

Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely astounded to read in the financial statement that was presented to the community, the northeast community, and I understand it is consistent with what is happening in other agencies across the province, that there was close to a 25 percent reduction in the preventative programs and preventative spending for the agency with the most vulnerable children.

I asked further to the volunteer members of the board of directors, and they informed me that this was due in part to a reduction in the money from the Province of Manitoba in their funding for preventative programs.

I would ask the Premier: Has he analyzed all the cutbacks or reductions in spending that are going for preventative programs in Child and Family Services programs across the province, and how much greater pressure is that placing on vulnerable children and vulnerable families in our province?

\*(1340)

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, in the area of Child and Family Services spending, I believe that in the course of the last three to three and a half years that we have been in government, spending has increased in excess of 40 percent to those agencies. Obviously, there is a continuing demand for services to the vulnerable, particularly the children and the families.

I cannot give him a specific answer with respect to the control of the decision on prevention programs. It has been my impression that individual

budgetary decisions within the agencies are within their purview, that we do not have normally earmarked funding for that sort of thing for the agencies, that they have control of decisions within the global budgets that they strike in accordance with the independence that they are given.

I will certainly look into the matter and have the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) report back on that matter when he returns.

### **Child and Family Services Mediation Services**

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** I refer the Premier to the annual reports that are being presented by volunteer boards across the province, looking at parenting programs, at prevention programs. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier to review those, because I think they would be very important about what is really going on in those agencies on the street level.

I was further alarmed to hear that, for the first time ever, in the NEW FACCESS agency in northeast Winnipeg, five staff dealing with mediation services—those are the services dealing with the conflict between children and parents, a conflict group that resolves 80 percent of the cases instead of kids coming into care when there is a tremendous conflict, a very cost-effective program. Five staff in the mediation services of the same agency are being laid off for the first time ever this summer. The caseloads will double and triple over the summer period of time, children of families in a vulnerable situation, and they are not sure whether they can maintain those staff, even back in the fall, at the same level as they had them this spring.

Is the Premier aware of those kinds of services that are being reduced in Child and Family Services? Has the Premier or the government done any cost-effective study that shows why we would have a reduction in mediation, keeping kids out of costly services, besides the whole integrity and dignity of the family? Have they done any study of the reductions in staff of those vulnerable children and families—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The question has been put.

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, this administration has been responsible for very major increases in funding to the Child and Family Services Agencies. One would have to, if

one wanted to do that, take over the administration and decide whether or not the priorities that are being chosen by those agencies are the appropriate ones, whether or not there is room within their budgets to be doing as is being done throughout the public service, reduce administration, reduce overhead costs, reduce the costs of perhaps, in some cases, expensive space and other items that do not provide direct services to the children, and look and examine very closely as to whether or not those dollars are being properly spent, or whether the priority decisions are the right decisions.

Because those agencies have independence to make these decisions, I would suggest to you that, if they choose not to reduce their own administration and choose instead to reduce services to vulnerable people, those are areas then that the agency should be called to attention on, Mr. Speaker, not the government. The government provides  
-(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker, I will look into the matter, have it discussed with the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) and have him report back to the House.

### **Veterinary Drug Centre Privatization**

**Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin):** Yesterday, I questioned the Minister of Agriculture on his privatization rationale and priorities, and the minister again tried to paint the scenario that it is really the taxpayers' dollars that are his primary concern, not implementing a Tory patronage agenda aimed at turning over lucrative business opportunities to his private-sector friends. I want to tell the minister that the public will see right through this minister's patronage agenda.

In view of the fact that on March 14 the minister said, in reference to the Veterinarian Drug Centre, that the member talks about public interest and being concerned about saving taxpayers' money—and that is exactly why we are acting the way we are, he says. He also said that it is costing the taxpayers over a million dollars a year to do that, to keep the Veterinarian Drug Centre operating.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister now admit that on March 14, in this House, he misled the House to conceal the true intentions of this government's agenda for privatizing those services?

\* (1345)

**Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, this government was faced with an economic situation that was foisted on it by a former administration that made us pay \$550 million a year in interest costs. We have to cut back our expenses, and within the delivery mode of our department, we decided we could amalgamate some services, we could privatize some services and still have those services delivered to the farmers of Manitoba in a more cost-efficient manner, but we intend to see those services continue to be delivered by another administrative unit.

**Mr. Plohman:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that I have in my hands a document which shows that, in 1990, the Veterinarian Drug Centre made nearly \$200,000 and, in 1989, made \$234,000—I will table that for the House today, for the minister's information—will the minister now set the record straight and apologize for misleading this House and providing misinformation to the House and to the people of Manitoba?

**Mr. Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, in Estimates, we spent considerable time trying to make the member understand that there are certain costs that are not included in the direct cost of running those kind of centres. There is space cost; there is administration cost; there is overhead cost.

The drug centre is a unit that is running very well, and it is a service to the farmers and the veterinarians of the province of Manitoba. We are in the process of discussing with the veterinarians of Manitoba their ability to run that centre. The centre's administrative process has been set up. It can be run more efficiently by the veterinarians of the province of Manitoba, and they have been very active in getting that process going.

**Mr. Plohman:** Mr. Speaker, this document from the department shows completely all expenses, including operating expenses, and I ask for this minister one more time—he has an opportunity to correct the record with the misinformation he provided on the record in this Legislature. I ask for him to withdraw those remarks and apologize to the—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

### **Point of Order**

**Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, there is some propriety that

the member has to use with respect to the way he puts a question to a minister.

He has been badgering this minister now on three cases, asking him, because of a dispute over the facts, to withdraw what he wants to have withdrawn. The minister has put hard facts on the record, stands by those facts. A dispute over the facts should not allow that member to rise to his feet and call for any type of an apology.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised, I would remind the honourable member that his question is repeating in substance a question which was previously asked. I would therefore ask the honourable member for Dauphin to rephrase his question.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Plohman:** Mr. Speaker, I have provided documented information that there was a profit made. Will the Minister of Agriculture today admit that saving taxpayers' dollars is not the major consideration in this privatization scheme and that it is indeed providing lucrative profit-making opportunities for his friends in the private sector, not saving taxpayers' dollars that drives this minister?

**Mr. Flndlay:** Mr. Speaker, in the course of Estimates, I gave him the figures that on the feed analysis lab there was a loss of \$152,000 a year, the soil test lab \$182,000 a year, and we have not even talked about the drug centre. We offered to give him all those facts and figures, the factual figures, and when we are in Estimates, we will do that.

Mr. Speaker, the producers of the province of Manitoba want the delivery of those services privatized and we have asked for proposals. There is no selective process. We have asked for proposals from all interested parties, and that process is ongoing because the farmers of the province of Manitoba want it that way.

### Judicial System Videotaped Evidence

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne):** Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting day. Last night I was very pleased to see the statements by the Minister of Justice about the impact on the child abuse program as a result of a recent court decision. I empathize very much with the statements that he made.

Today I am delighted to hear the commitment the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has given that he is going to

go back and review the funding of these agencies, because I know when he does, he is going to be surprised by what he finds out. I am delighted to hear that commitment was made today.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice: Has he been in contact with his federal counterparts to discuss the impact of this change, given that they have made the commitment to see that there are services available for children in these circumstances and given there was a section of the Criminal Code that was affected? Has he been in contact with his federal counterparts to see if we can restore a service that allows children some measure of protection when they are testifying in abuse cases?

\* (1350)

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** To this moment I have not done that, but I can assure the honourable member that from where I sit, I view his suggestion as one that is obviously a useful one. This is a law that is Canada-wide which affords protection for young people who are victims of sexual abuse some level of protection, a better level of protection, and you only have to have known a child, Mr. Speaker, which I know you have, to know that these matters are very, very difficult matters to deal with.

If people who commit these kinds of crimes can walk free after abusing children in such a way because of a court decision that strikes down a law that is in our national criminal law, that is a pretty sorry statement about our country, I think.

We ought to work together, as the honourable member—it sounds to me like he is willing to do, but I certainly take his suggestion. We will take that forward as well to express my concern to the federal government and the federal minister.

### Child Abuse Victims

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne):** One of the interim solutions that we provided in Manitoba is a court room with a special one-way system of mirrors that allows the child to be heard and seen but the child does not have to face directly their accusers.

Given that we are no longer going to be able to use videotaping, at least in the interim, can the minister assure that this court room will be available for these cases or that there will be additional services such as is provided so that cases can be handled in this manner?

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I have had lengthy discussions about how we deal with young victims of this kind of offence, and I can assure the honourable member that every possible sensitive method will be used in the interim while we find out what happens to this section of the Criminal Code.

It is true that the actual videotape evidence has not been used in the court nearly so often, as it has been a useful tool nonetheless, but I think that the statement that the decision makes is wrong. It just needs to be corrected, and I think society needs to speak and say that our children are our greatest resource, and we ought not to destroy their lives by allowing them to feel that the society at large is not behind them in these kinds of situations.

### Victim Impact Statements

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne):** Mr. Speaker, another tool that can be used is victim impact statements. They allow a victim to make some statements to the court as to what they have gone through as a result of the offence that has been committed. We did have a pilot project here that I think proved to be rather useful.

I am wondering if the Minister of Justice could consider restoring funding to the Victims' Impact Program until such time as we have found a solution to this other problem.

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I would have to try to get my mind around the proposition the honourable member is putting forward, that a victim impact statement is something that is precisely the same thing as a videotape situation.

The victim impact statement has been found to be a satisfactory and successful experiment from the point of view of victims and, in my opinion, from the point of view of the administration of justice. It does, in the minds of some people, create some problems, but I will be happy to take the honourable member's suggestion as a representation to my department.

### CFB Shilo

#### Marcel Masse Meeting

**Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East):** I have a question to the Minister of Justice.

I realize that efforts have been made for some time now by the minister and his office staff to arrange for a meeting with the Honourable Marcel

Masse, Minister of National Defence in Ottawa, to help save CFB Shilo.

Can the minister advise the House whether he has yet been able to set up a meeting with the Minister of National Defence?

\* (1355)

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, that sounds like a question that maybe the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) could have asked me today, or somebody like that. I do appreciate the question from the honourable member. I appreciate also the courtesy he extended in giving me notice that he was going to ask me some questions about this today.

While I am offering appreciation, I will say thank you also to the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr) representing the Liberal Party in this House in the arrangements we have been trying to make to arrange some meaningful meetings in Ottawa.

As the situation stands right now, after a very lengthy conversation with a number of people in Minister Masse's office in Ottawa, none of whom were Minister Masse, I can say though we have set up a meeting with the Progressive Conservative Manitoba caucus and others of the Progressive Conservative caucus who may be able to be there for one o'clock tomorrow in Ottawa, and the honourable member for Brandon East and the member for Crescentwood are invited to be with us on that occasion.

I understand from the honourable member for Crescentwood that the federal Liberal caucus representatives, a number of them Manitobans, and their defence critic Mr. Rompkey will meet with us at 11 a.m. tomorrow in Ottawa. I will be speaking later with the honourable member for Brandon East to finalize arrangements for any member of the New Democratic Party in Ottawa that we might meet.

All of this, Mr. Speaker, could be avoided. All these people need not be gathering in caucus rooms in Ottawa if Mr. Masse would simply even return my call. That would be very much appreciated, or even be there when I do call, or come out of whatever busy meeting it is that he is in when I call.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. McCrae:** I do wonder if the Shilo base was near the city of Thompson, if the honourable member for Thompson would be so cute about this. I think this is pretty important. I know the honourable member for Brandon East thinks it is pretty important. We are trying to give a report to the honourable members, but the honourable member for Thompson wants to heckle and show cat calls, and he does not want to hear the answer.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the minister ought not from his feet make comments involving my comments. I merely said that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) should pick up the phone and phone the Prime Minister, because it is indeed important enough for him to phone.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Leonard Evans:** I thank the minister for that. Arrangements have been made to meet with the NDP caucus and hopefully Audrey McLaughlin as well.

#### CFB Shilo Marcel Masse Meeting

**Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question, and I did not consult the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). I am asking this in a truly nonpartisan spirit.

My question is: Will the Premier help the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) and all of us by phoning the Prime Minister, who I believe is now back in Canada, and ask the Prime Minister if he would request, at least request Mr. Masse, the Minister of National Defence, to meet with the all-party delegation tomorrow in Ottawa? I ask that in a nonpartisan spirit.

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to support the people of Shilo and the continuance of the base there.

The Minister of Justice has my full support. We have staff members and others who are working very, very diligently on this issue, and subject to the results of the trip of the members, as well as other interested parties, to Ottawa, I will be prepared to

take this to whatever lengths necessary to ensure that everybody in Ottawa knows of our concerns to ensure that this base continues to operate.

#### CFB Shilo Public Rally

**Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East):** I have a final question for the Minister of Justice.

Can the Minister of Justice tell the House, because I am sure all members should be interested in this, what arrangements have been made for a public rally to be held on Saturday at the City Hall in Brandon and what is expected of the MLAs?

\*(1400)

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** The organization known as Friends of -(interjection)- I do again thank the honourable member for that question, Mr. Speaker.

The organization known as Friends of Shilo, part of that organization being represented by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) through one of his top assistants, is planning a rally for Saturday morning between Victoria Avenue and Lorne Avenue in Brandon on 9th Street. That is right in the vicinity of City Hall. Apparently they are going to put a great big yellow ribbon all the way around City Hall, and the city of Brandon and district is going to be virtually draped with yellow ribbons to let the military know just how very welcome they are in our community and in our region.

I would imagine any MLA who would like to be there to support that would be most welcome. We expect, Mr. Speaker, to see thousands and thousands of people there. We know there is plenty of support in the city of Brandon.

My recollection is that the time of that rally will be at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning. The people of Brandon and district feel very strongly about the continued existence of that base. I promised somebody that I would say a word about those business establishments in the immediate vicinity of the Shilo base in the Spruce Woods community, that I would say a word for them. Those businesses are finished if this kind of thing goes forward.

You know, on behalf of people like Wendy McLean, a mother, wife and resident in that area whose family has depended on that base for a long, long time and will for a long, long time, I plead again today with Marcel Masse to make some time



available for this delegation that is going to be in Ottawa anyway. He should meet with us and hear our concerns.

### Oak Hammock Marsh Development Delay Request

**Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) often talks about consultation on sustainable development. On November 1, 1990, the Premier said, and I quote: Public involvement will be the key to success in the development of a sustainable development strategy. We need public involvement now.

**An Honourable Member:** That was during the election.

**Ms. Cerlill:** That was during the election, yes. Mr. Speaker, the Premier is now getting public involvement on Bill 38 and there have been concerns raised by many members of the public, as well as the Secretary-General of Ramsar, Daniel Navid, in a letter that I am willing to table.

Given these concerns raised by the international organization Ramsar, which is now demanding clarification on the project, will the minister delay further action, at least until Ramsar has clarified the matter, since the project may be in contravention of an international treaty and Ramsar may not support the project at Ducks Unlimited, as the Minister of Natural Resources thought and said it would?

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Speaker, to the honourable member, if I were involved with the Ramsar organization and heard of some of the fairy tale stories emanating out of the hearings currently on Bill 38 I, too, would be concerned and would write that kind of a letter.

I am satisfied that, as the letter goes on to state, they will re-examine the position—as you would expect them to do—and be satisfied, as any credible biologist is satisfied, that there is no appreciable damage being done to the wildlife marsh at Oak Hammock, and that is the concern of the Ramsar convention. We are extremely proud that our Oak Hammock Marsh has been cited among the worldwide marshes to be included in that catalogue, and that will be confirmed.

I am delighted that she raised that issue because I can understand the concern of not only the Ramsar people, but indeed of many other people, about the

kind of fairy tale reporting by the media and the kind of irresponsible statements that have been made with respect to something that has absolutely nothing to do with a plan, that has absolutely no status, was never before examined by anybody, and is not part of the plan, as was made plain by the proponents of the plan, Mr. Speaker.

### Funding Agreements

**Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radisson):** Not only is the plan that was referred to—the alligators included—part of the proposal, but I understand that it is also part of the Western Diversification Fund Agreement which includes the contract.

Will the minister now confirm that the possibility of having alligators and all the other tourist attractions in the marsh is part of the legal contract that was signed to ensure the funding between this government, Ducks Unlimited and the Western Diversification Fund?

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I really fail to see why responsible members of this Chamber would want to deliberately malign the good name of the premier conservationist organization in Canada, an organization that brings some \$6 million to \$7 million every year to the preservation and the rehabilitation of wetlands in the province of Manitoba, an organization that has undertaken an exciting 15-year, long-term development program to restore waterfowl populations to earlier levels.

Why would she do that when I yesterday gave her a copy of a contract that was signed with Ducks Unlimited and this province that contains none of those fairy tale descriptions that she keeps on speaking about, when she was told directly by the senior person representing Ducks Unlimited yesterday in committee, that this was the case in fact?

Mr. Speaker, I simply ask that there be some understanding on the part of those who are examining this project to, in fact, examine it on its merits and nothing else.

**Ms. Cerlill:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has not answered the question. The question is simple. Is the Wrigley Report of July 1990, with reference to alligators and a number of other things including caged animals, part of the agreement signed by his department in the Western Diversification Fund?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Speaker, rules of this House prevent me from calling what the honourable member is doing by its accurate description. I appeal to you, Sir, and to the honourable member, and she will once again have the opportunity to examine officials at the continuing hearing on Bill 38, no such material forms any part of the plan that is currently being considered by Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Department of Natural Resources—absolutely none.

### Environmental Concerns Intervener Funding

**Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

In January of this year, the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), in the course of the Bill 24 committee hearings, committed himself to a fully funded and generous intervener funding program for the interjurisdictional projects which this province is facing, the first of which is Conawapa. That commitment was given as the reason that the government did not need to put intervener funding in place in the act.

At our peril, Mr. Speaker, we took the minister at his word. Now we have learned that the minister proposes to only actually pay out 30 percent of the intervener funding up front, holding back 70 percent to be paid if and when a committee appointed by the minister decides that the intervener funding has made a significant contribution to the hearing process.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister proposing to financially blackmail interveners by holding back 70 percent of the money that they will have already spent until he and his committee judge the acceptability of their presentation?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, regardless of the fact that the Liberals would prefer to just throw money out, regardless of any contributions, regardless of any work done, just on demand throw the money out on the floor by the shovelful, government does not work that way. Government works on checks and balances and proper scrutiny of accounts and services rendered.

Now, as a lawyer and a potential intervener, I know that the member for St. James would rather get his money, as much as possible, as quickly as possible, but there are, indeed, requirements on the part of government, and they would be the first to

jump on us if we paid out money inappropriately to people for services not necessarily rendered.

**Mr. Edwards:** Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer I know blackmail when I see it. The fact is—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, if the member claims he is a lawyer, he knows the strength of the word "blackmail." He is imputing very strong motives. I ask him to stand and state specifically what is on his mind or to withdraw that statement completely.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, the member did not point out an individual who was—a minister who is forcing blackmail. On numerous occasions, we have seen the Premier of this province stand up and take cheap shots at the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema)—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable government House leader did not have a point of order.

Beauchesne's 490 has ruled that the word "blackmail" is parliamentary.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for St. James, kindly put your question, please.

**Mr. Edwards:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier will know, if he has taken the time to read the regulations, that there is an extensive process prior to the funding actually being committed. There is an extensive process of determining whether or not the group is credible and can do the job.

Given this government's financial commitment to this project already and the millions of dollars that they will have committed should the project be turned down for environmental reasons down the road, why then does this minister and this government still hold unto itself not just the right to hold back 70 percent but the right to sue personally the interveners for the 30 percent they paid up front? What kind of game is he playing with interveners—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The question has been put.

\* (1410)

**Mr. Filmon:** Mr. Speaker, interveners obviously have to deliver the goods that they propose to deliver, and they have to be held accountable for providing the services they suggest that they will under the intervention. That is a matter of accountability. Despite the fact it is taxpayers' money that the member for St. James would like to just simply freely throw out without any checks and balances, we, as a responsible government, cannot do that. We do not believe any responsible government in future should do that without having proper scrutiny and analysis to make sure that what is proposed is what is delivered.

**Mr. Edwards:** Mr. Speaker, under this regulation, a committee is appointed to make exactly that judgment. Yet, five sections later this minister reserves unto himself—not the committee, he reserves unto himself—the right to judge whether or not a significant contribution has been made.

My final question for the Premier: Why has he not just allowed the minister the right to hold back 70 percent, but allowed the right to go personally after members of these intervener groups, members of the board of directors, volunteer board of directors, why has he allowed himself the right to personally sue them under this act for the 30 percent he has paid up front for their participation in a process which is supposed to be, according to this government, making this project a better project—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Filmon:** Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings).

### **Gwen Sector Creative Living Centre Funding Commitment**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister responsible for Seniors.

This minister has been to the Gwen Sector Creative Living Centre, and he knows first-hand what an important resource this centre is for our senior citizens. The minister should also know that his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) made a promise to that centre on January 12, 1990, to establish an appropriate level of base-line funding. Well, the Minister of Health broke that promise in a letter of

May 3 of this year, basically saying, tough luck, these are tough times.

We want to ask the Minister responsible for Seniors if he will stand up for north end seniors and ensure that the word of this government is kept and appropriate base-line funding is found for this fiscal year?

**Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister responsible for Seniors):** Mr. Speaker, yes, I have had the opportunity of visiting the facility, along with the member across the way, and I have discussed many things with the Minister of Health. I will take the information and the question back that the member has brought forward.

However, Mr. Speaker, we do stand up for seniors in this province, unlike the previous administration, but through a 2 percent tax on all seniors across the province.

**Ms. Wasylycia-Lels:** Mr. Speaker, while this minister is pursuing this matter, will he come back to this House with an answer to the question: Why does this government have money for the Pines to subsidize high-income seniors, but it has no money for north end seniors for a valuable community resource centre?

**Mr. Ducharme:** I wish the member would probably visit her riding once in a while and see the seniors homes that have been developed throughout not only her riding, throughout the city of Winnipeg. We do not pick spots in this city for our seniors, Mr. Speaker. We represent all the seniors, unlike the previous government did in their six-and-one-half years of government.

**Ms. Wasylycia-Lels:** The minister for seniors should know that this centre has worked for three years on a co-operative basis to achieve neutral agreement over base-line funding.

Will this minister commit today to meeting as soon as possible with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and get for us, and for the seniors in the north end, an assurance that an appropriate level of base-line funding will be found for this fiscal year?

**Mr. Ducharme:** Unfortunately, the member across the way does not understand. In 1988, this particular government established a Seniors Directorate that does those type of communications, unlike the previous government. All they did was go around and talk, talk, talk, talk, do nothing for the seniors of this province.

### Oak Hammock Marsh Development Department of Highway Expenditures

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, it has been repeatedly stated by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) that the only expense to be borne by the province for the Ducks Unlimited office complex development at Oak Hammock is a one-time grant of \$250,000.

Since the province is undertaking to develop the Provincial Road 220 from Provincial Road 67 to the Ducks Unlimited site, will the Minister of Highways and Transportation tell the House what monies his department is expending for the survey and design of this road, as well as the cost of acquisition of right-of-way and utility revisions?

**Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, I will take the specifics of that question as notice and return with the information.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, Oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have the information for all the province's survey and design costs throughout the whole province. I will get that information.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the minister does not have that because it was tabled in his 1990-91 projects, and it is unfortunate he would not have that information available.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please; order, please. The honourable member for Transcona, kindly put your—

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has actually expired, but I have recognized the honourable member for Transcona. Will you kindly put your question now, please.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Can the Minister of Highways and Transportation tell this House what the costs are and what the project will include as far as the development in the Oak Hammock Marsh area? Will the project development of the highways or the roads into that area include development to the far north side of the marsh area?

**Mr. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, let me first of all indicate and proudly state to the House that we have a capital program of \$102.5 million for construction this year. In the two documents that the member has in his hands, there are endless pages of information in there.

I do not have all the details in my mind in terms of what is in the documents that I have tabled. The information is there. If he wants the specifics of it, I have indicated before that I will return with that information to the member in the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

### Speaker's Rulings

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have two rulings for the House.

On Friday, June 7, 1991, I took under advisement a matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak): "That the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach) be requested to apologize to the House for repeatedly misleading the House, both in the Estimates process and Oral Questions on the effects of his budget cuts to high school bursaries on adult high school students."

The honourable member's case was based on the fact that on May 16 in Committee of Supply, the minister said: ". . . we have had some discussions with Family Services, and those students whose families are on social allowance, or the students who are, will be able to gain assistance through that department," while in an item of the Winnipeg Free Press of June 5, the minister is quoted as admitting he had not checked with Family Services, contrary to what he had said in the Committee of Supply on May 16 and in the House on June 3.

I am satisfied that the member raised his matter of privilege at the earliest opportunity. Regarding the establishment of a prima facie case of privilege, I would reiterate my ruling of June 13, "a motion of privilege should be worded in such a way that another member is alleged to have deliberately or intentionally misled the House" and a member "must support his or her charge with proof of intent." The motion of the honourable member for Kildonan did not charge that the minister deliberately misled the House, nor did he, in my estimation, furnish evidence of deliberate intent on the part of the minister to mislead the House.

Also, Citation 31(3) of the 6th Edition of Beauchesne's states that "statements made outside the House by a member may not be used as the basis for privilege." The case of the honourable member for Kildonan is based on an item which appeared in a local newspaper. In my ruling of January 17, 1990, I indicated that a statement made outside the House and quoted in the media was not a basis of a matter of privilege.

Although the member may have a grievance or a complaint against the government, I must rule that the honourable member has failed to establish a prima facie case of privilege and therefore rule his motion out of order.

\* \* \*

On Friday, June 7, 1991, the honourable Leader of the second opposition party (Mrs. Carstairs) raised a matter of privilege "... that the Minister of Northern Affairs, and Rural Development (Mr. Downey) be requested to apologize to the House for providing information to the House in the Estimates process of Decentralization, on June 3, 1991, which was repudiated in a press release from his department on June 6, 1991."

The honourable member's matter of privilege was based on the fact that in the Committee of Supply on June 3 the minister indicated that most of the budget for leasehold improvements would be used for the cost of moving people, with little to be used for construction. However, on June 6 a press release was issued indicating that the budget in question would be used for leasing and office renovation costs. This, argued the honourable Leader of the second opposition party, was a direct contradiction.

I am satisfied that the member raised her matter of privilege at the earliest opportunity. Regarding the establishment of a prima facie case of privilege, I would reiterate my ruling again of June 13, "a motion of privilege should be worded in such a way that another member is alleged to have deliberately or intentionally misled the House" and a member "must support his or her charge with proof of intent."

The motion of the honourable Leader of the second opposition party did not charge that the minister deliberately misled the House. While the minister may well have contradicted himself, she did not, in my opinion, furnish proof that the minister deliberately set out to mislead the House or the Committee of Supply.

Also Citation 31(3) of the 6th Edition of Beauchesne's states that: "Statements made outside the House by a Member may not be used as the basis for a question of privilege." The case of the honourable Leader of the second opposition party is based on a press release. In my ruling of January 17, 1990, I indicated that a statement made outside the House and quoted in the media was not a basis of a matter of privilege, and I would equate the issuing of a press release with a statement made outside the House.

Although the member may have a grievance or a complaint against the government, I must therefore rule that the honourable member has failed to establish a prima facie case of privilege and rule her motion out of order.

### Nonpolitical Statement

**Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek):** Mr. Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? Leave? Agreed.

**Mr. McAlpine:** Mr. Speaker, I come bearing good news today, and it is news that I share with all members of the House. It is news of congratulations to a major employer in the constituency of Sturgeon Creek and also to all parts of Winnipeg and Manitoba.

Bristol Aerospace was successful, and I congratulate them as a major employer, to recently have won two significant contracts in the international F-5 marketing efforts, one of them a three-year contract valued at \$40 million and to perform structural repair work on 23 of the F-5 Freedom Fighters flown by the Spanish air force. They were successful in a further contract in the amount of \$2 million for the manufacture of 15 dorsal longeron replacement kits for the Norwegian air force F-5s.

I congratulate the company of Bristol Aerospace and their employees for making a major contribution to the economy and to the welfare of so many employees in the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

### House Business

**Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you call the bills in the

following order: Debate on Second Readings, Bills 5, 44, 18 and then 70.

**Mr. Speaker,** I understand there is a desire to waive private members' hour today.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to waive private members' hour today?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is agreed? Agreed. There will be no private members' hour today.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, on House business, I just want to respond. The government had suggested that we, the Liberal Party, would not give four o'clock. We would be more than happy to adjourn at four o'clock if that is the government's will.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, our party is willing to, in consideration of a person, no matter what political party they are from, who was a Premier of this province; we would be willing to work with the Government House Leader (Mr. Manness) to call four o'clock six o'clock and give the government back the time that they are giving to the House for debate on legislation next Wednesday.

**Mr. Speaker:** I can appreciate the comments of the honourable Leader of the Opposition, but at this time we have simply waived private members' hour.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 5—The Mental Health Amendment Act

**Mr. Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), Bill 5, The Mental Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave? No, there is none. Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 5, The Mental Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

#### Bill 44—The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act

**Mr. Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill 44, The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Régie des services publics, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave?

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave. Agreed.

**Mr. Edward Connery (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on Bill 44. Bill 44 is a bill that should have seen the light of day as far back as 1987. I think it was in 1987 when it was struck down by the courts, and since that time the gas utility has not had the capability of locking off service to ensure payments.

**Mr. Speaker,** all other utilities have the capability of shutting off service to customers who do not pay their bills in a proper timely fashion. In fact, all other provinces have legislation allowing for the gas to be shut off to their customers. In fact, most provinces have legislation that is much harsher than what the Manitoba legislation really is.

**Mr. Speaker,** I took the opportunity to read the speech put in by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). The member for Wolseley—I really have some difficulty in wondering where she is coming at, but then of course she comes from the New Democratic side. When you look at the philosophy and the business acumen of the members of the New Democratic Party, then you can start to understand some of the silliness and crazy things, I think, that are said.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was listening to Peter Warren this morning, and one young person phoned in and was commenting on the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), because he was critical of business. This young fellow considered the member for Flin Flon to be a moron for his political sense of how to treat and deal with business.

While I want to make some comments on the member for Wolseley—not Wolseley—Wellington, pardon me, it is the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), I apologize for that error. When you read

through, at one point she says Centra Gas is not short of cash flow. It has operating revenues in excess of \$200 million a year. That from this side the House, which is that side the House, which I am glad that they are on, it appears to be a fairly substantial amount of money in and out in one year. Now, compared to what? Two hundred million. I ask the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), would \$200 million keep one of the railroads functioning?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, in Transcona, yes.

**Mr. Connery:** Not in Transcona, for Canada. One of the railroads in Canada, would they function on \$200 million for the year, in all of Canada?

**An Honourable Member:** They could if they eliminated the shops.

**Mr. Connery:** If they eliminated the shops—now there are conditions. The amount of cash flow is relative to the size of the company, the number of customers they have, the amount of gas they sell. Right off the bat it is a ludicrous comment on the part of the member. Does she understand even what cash flow means, money in and out? Has she ever done a cash flow statement? Has she ever looked at a cash flow statement to understand what a cash flow statement is? Yes, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) says he has, and I believe him. I think he has a little more business acumen and probably has as much as all the rest on his side put together. That is the last comment I will make on his behalf today.

\* (1430)

She goes on to talk about the amount of increase of profit they make. Of course, it is easy to talk in percentages, because if you have had a terrible return and then all of a sudden you have something better and you have a 30 percent increase, it is quite easy to say, wow, they had a 30 percent increase in profits when in real terms that company is still a long way short of making a reasonable return.

Mr. Speaker, she also mentions at one point the amount of return that Inter-City Gas, or now Centra, should be receiving. They have the legal ability through the Public Utilities Board to have a 13 percent return on their investment, but they have not achieved that return on investment for some time because of the way the structure is set up. Thirteen percent return is not a very high return in the real world of business. She refers to HydroBonds at 9.25 percent as being an excellent return. When you have a guaranteed bond that is maybe an

excellent return, but in the real sense, those members who have investments in Centra have no guarantee of 9.25 percent. They have the permissible allowance of achieving 13 percent, but they have to make it.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, and we hear it time and again, such as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) commenting on the small business, are so antibusiness that that is why this province is still recovering from those NDP years, six and a half years at one stretch, and I think about eight years before with only a short brief span of sanity of four years under Sterling Lyon that they drove business out of here. They drove business out of the province of Manitoba.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Now they are going to drive business out of the province of Ontario. Maybe politically we can look at that and say, well, that is okay, that is Ontario, but Ontario is probably the major source of our equalization funds, and if Ontario is not making money, then you can be assured that we are not going to get any of it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, she talks about the poorest people having to pay the most money. She talks about Centra not having to go on social assistance. Well, it is kind of ludicrous that a company would have to go on social assistance. They do not; they go bankrupt. Of course, I just read that there were some 12,000 firms in Ontario that were about to go bankrupt or were in extreme financial difficulties, besides the ones that are going.

She talks about the poor. That is the member, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) who was opposed to the coalition going in against Iraq to free Kuwait when Kuwait was being ravaged by the armies of Iraq, babies being killed in hospitals. That was the member who did not want to go and protect the poor of Kuwait.

One of the strange things that the member for Wellington talked about was a monopoly, and she was very, very critical of Centra being a monopoly. Well, then why in the world did the NDP want to buy ICG back in—was it '87? I think it was '87 where they offered—and I am going by memory—I think \$175 million. It was a lot of money. They wanted to buy Inter-City Gas as a monopoly. They were not going to buy it and then give it to the people; they were going to buy it as a monopoly.

She is criticizing the fact that Centra is a monopoly. Naturally, it is a monopoly, and the rates charged by Centra are regulated by the Public Utilities Board. The Public Utilities Board has public hearings, allows for intervenor funding. We know that the Society of Seniors and the Consumers' Association get tremendous funding so that they can intervene on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba and therefore to ensure that the rates being charged by Centra are adequate. Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Wellington is very critical of the whole process.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what is happening today is that a lot of people are paying their accounts and are paying the price of the delinquent accounts of those people who can probably afford to pay for their gas bills. There are something like 48,000, almost 49,000, business and residential consumers that are not paying their bill. It is maybe higher than that now, because that figure is a few weeks old. It was approaching \$20 million in arrears, and it is probably somewhat over that.

I am sure if we did an analysis of those accounts in arrears, we would find that most of them could afford to pay for their gas bill, but it is people who are taking advantage of the very fact that Centra cannot lock off their service. They are just refusing to pay. That means the seniors in this province, the low-income earners in this province, students that are renting their own facilities—we can go on and on of the people who are having difficulty paying their own bills—are now paying for people who can afford to pay those gas bills.

They say that they are the party for the common people, the average person, the low income, and yet they are holding up this bill, and they say they are going to talk on it for some time. As the member for Wellington said, she does not understand why there is such an urgency for it. Well, let me tell you the urgency. The only time the legislation and regulations allow them to cut off service is from the 15th of May to the end of September, so there is a very limited time for this year for Centra Gas to ensure that those accounts are paid.

I agree with the policy. Bad debts are part of doing business, and when they go to the Public Utilities Board, bad debts or unpaid accounts is a cost of doing business, so that goes on and is added into the rate. The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) said, why should they have legislation and

a rate increase at the same time? My gosh, how ludicrous of a statement could you make? Why would you have to have legislation and a rate increase at the same time?

The legislation or lack of it affects the rate increase. If we have legislation and those people who can afford to pay their bills are forced to pay their bills, Centra does not need as high a rate increase so that the seniors and the low income and the students do not have to pay for the wealthy to just take advantage of it.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we see the members opposite just—I do not know if they do not understand, and I can see that being a possibility; if they just do not care, and I know that is a reality; or if they are just trying to fool the public for votes and to say that this is a government that is being harsh on people. The ones that it is being harsh on with this legislation are the people who can afford to pay their gas bills. What the members opposite, and especially the NDP party, are being harsh on are those who are paying their bills but can hardly afford to pay them and are being forced to pay somebody else's bill.

I would like to pay some comment and some homage to my friend the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry). I read—it was not a long speech on this bill, but I can tell you that it was a bill and the discussion was in sincerity. He had a couple of concerns that he hoped would be addressed. I think those concerns will be addressed, or maybe with more dialogue he will understand it and will be satisfied, but the member for St. Boniface was acting in the interests of the people of Manitoba, all of the people of Manitoba, not the biased, selfish, one-sided work of the NDP who will raise any issue if it is going to get them a vote. If there is a vote in it, they will raise it, they will run after it. They absolutely do not care about the people of Manitoba.

**An Honourable Member:** Contradiction. What hypocrisy. Stop talking about yourself like that.

**Mr. Connery:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the member across there speaks from hypocrisy. Mirrors usually show hypocrisy, and I would suggest the member look in a mirror and he would see a large dose of it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the member for Wolseley's discussion, she talks about discounts to large users of natural gas and is being very critical—



\* (1440)

### Point of Order

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Pardon me, Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I am the member for Wolseley and I have not yet spoken on this issue. This is the second, I think, or third time that the member has mentioned this in his speech. I wonder if he would take the time now to correct that.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Wolseley does not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Connery:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I accept the criticism of the member for Wolseley. It is the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). They are very close and I do get them confused. I apologize, the member for Wolseley has not spoken yet.

When we look at her comments on the large users of gas, she is very critical. She says another area where ICG-Centra has made some interesting philosophical decisions that flow directly from their close alignment with federal and provincial Conservative thinking, which is you charge large volume customers, i.e., large profit-making corporations less than small volume customers, i.e., residential users, many who are on fixed and low incomes, more per unit.

I am sure that the odd person, and I know the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) can verify that when you are shipping goods on a railway car, if you want to ship 200 pounds of product or if you are going to ship 2 million tons, there is a different rate. I am sure the member for Transcona is well aware of rates. When you are using large volumes, there is the economy of large pipes and the one billing and all of the things that go with the economies of large-scale delivery.

Can you imagine the Simplot fertilizer plant at Brandon, one of the largest users of natural gas in Manitoba—the cost of delivering gas—and I was told the figures, but I think it is something like 12 percent of Centra's gas consumption in Manitoba—how much cheaper it is to sell that volume of gas to one user as it is to distribute that gas to all of the residential or small businesses? Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a given in the business world, that large users of anything get a cheaper rate.

I am sure that members of the NDP party must tender out some of the things that they buy. I am sure that they do not pay the same price for 100,000 sheets of paper as they would pay for one sheet, would you? I do not think they are that dumb. -(interjection)- Well, I am sorry. I am sure that they look at volume amounts too when they are buying. They do not pay the same per sheet as they would buy by the boxful.

Naturally, large users—but also, let us understand companies like Simplot fertilizer have to compete with other companies selling fertilizer in Manitoba, in Canada and even into the United States. We know that Simplot at Brandon is having a very difficult time. The Saskatchewan government built a large fertilizer plant in Saskatchewan almost all at government money, which I am very critical of, but they have, and Simplot at Brandon has to compete. They are going to get gas at a lower rate which is going to make them more economical.

I would like the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) to stand up in this Legislature and tell us that he is opposed to Simplot getting gas at a lower rate than residential users are. I do not see—and I am sure, I would like to have him if he was around to verify whether he is opposed to that happening. He knows that if Simplot does not get its gas at a realistic rate they will not be competitive. What will happen, all of those jobs at Simplot, which are very, very vital to the city of Brandon and the region around it, to the farmers of Manitoba and to the Manitoba economy, will be gone.

Yet, in here, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) is very critical of that very, very thing. The Leader of the NDP (Mr. Doer) looks up and frowns. I think he should read some of the lunacy that some of his members put on the record, because this speech from the member for Wellington is absolute trash. The NDP, in spite of their—whatever—are against business because they do their best to drive it out. That means they are against jobs and they are against employers in spite of what all they say.

We saw, Madam Deputy Speaker, when the NDP were in power, how the rates were sort of manipulated around. There was no basis for the rates that they put in. This was including the natural gas. A better example, I guess, would be MPIC where, once again, they had a monopoly that the

member for Wellington is very critical of, but MPIC is a monopoly.

How did the NDP treat monopolies that they had control of? They had very low MPIC rates just prior to the election. I forget the amount, it was zero percent to 2 percent—very low. Then after the election, they were forced to come in with the real rates which were around 30 percent.

I will never forget the day that there was a demonstration at the Legislature. I stood at the front doors on top of the steps and watched the civil servants—their supposed supporters, some of them, that they say are, which we know now are not—flocking out of the buildings to demonstrate against the NDP and what they were doing with the MPIC rates. So that is the sort of way that the NDP look after, control, manipulate, whenever they have a monopoly.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) points out that unpaid bills are tax deductible. I wonder if the member for Wellington understands what tax deductible means. You just do not pay tax on it. I think she honestly believes that it is a dollar saved, rather than it is the income tax portion that you save. I am sure the member for Wellington does not understand that, but here she says those unpaid bills are tax deductible, another fact that Centra Gas would like the people of Manitoba to forget. Do not forget, those unpaid bills are also part of the rate applications that seniors, low income, students, people of all walks of life have to pay.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** I did not say we were not going to vote against the bill. Relax.

**Mr. Connery:** The Leader of the Opposition says it does not mean they are going to vote against the bill, relax; but I read what one of their members says. Now either they have no control or they do not discuss in caucus particular bills and how they are going to speak on them or what their strategy is; or they go off, as the Leader of the Opposition likes to call me, like a loose cannon. Well, he has a whole bevy of loose cannons over there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Wellington was also quoting from Stittco in the North. Stittco is a propane company that distributes propane in the North. Stittco, at this point, has been able to disconnect in the winter months, and they

are now complaining that this bill would only allow them to disconnect in the summer months.

At the same time, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) says now there are other people. I just want to put that on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker, to show that it is not only New Democrats who have some serious concerns and reservations about the impact of this bill, but also other utility companies. Did she criticize them for wanting to cut off in the wintertime? No, that is fine. So then she is supporting that we should be cutting off in the wintertime. -(interjection)- Well, she put it on the record here. Not once did she criticize Stittco. She is saying now Stittco and us think alike. That is exactly what she says.

Now what does she mean? Does she mean they are wrong so there should be no legislation, they should not be able to cut off? You know, Stittco points out one statistic is that they had 113 people disconnected and—I have to review that—in March of 1981, the Thompson office sent out 113 shut-off notices. Of this number, only five were disconnected and those have subsequently been reconnected, which indicates when there is the power and the authority to disconnect and notices are sent out, the customers come in and pay their bills. I guess they are not paying them because they say, why should I? I will leave the money in the bank and I will draw interest on it.

\* (1450)

Madam Deputy Speaker, it appears to me that members of the NDP party are more concerned with Bill 70 and the support of their union leader friends than they are of a very important bill to all of the people of Manitoba. We see the \$57,000 that Bernie Christophe gave to the NDP. We see, I think it is \$20,000 that the MFL gave. So naturally they owe their souls to the union leadership -(interjection)- union leadership, because that is exactly where it is at. Not the union members, be very clear, because there are many union members out there who are not very dedicated NDPers, in fact, are very critical of them because of their actions.

I am talking about the union leadership, Peter Olfert, and all of his friends. Quite interesting—Peter Olfert drove out to Portage to demonstrate in front of my house. In fact they phoned here to see if I would be home, and I said, well, home? The Legislature is sitting. Oh, we did

not know that. Well, how did you think the bill was going to be introduced if it is not sitting? I mean, that is how interested some of the union leaders are in what is going on in this province and legislation.

Anyway, I told them that if they would wait a day or so I would buy them coffee because I get along well with them. I did meet with them and we had a good discussion, and I think—

**An Honourable Member:** You know what he told me? He said, what is Ed doing?

**Mr. Connery:** What is Ed doing? Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, members opposite make fun. That is fine, I do not mind. They are saying, when am I in the House? I did miss Monday and Tuesday of this week, and when I came here today I wondered why anybody would want to come here. It was such a—you know, I might as well stay away the rest of the week because I do not see anything productive happening during Question Period. I was quite disappointed in the regurgitation of Question Period because there really was nothing new. The same questions. You can almost go on a cycle. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) always used to ask a question on Fridays so he hit the Saturday paper. He has moved his cycle up a couple of days, but you can see these things being regurgitated. I was quite disappointed, really, that in this Legislature where there are some good issues that should be discussed, we really are not discussing them. Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe sincerely that—

**Mr. Doer:** I am wondering why the bill was so late?

**Mr. Connery:** The Leader of the Opposition asks the question, why was the bill so late? The bill is late, as I said in my opening remarks. This bill should have been introduced in 1987, should have been introduced in 1988, should have been introduced in 1989, should have been introduced in 1990. It is finally introduced in 1991, so I think everybody in this Chamber or all parties, at least, can take some responsibility. I take my share of the responsibility for this bill being late, and it is late. It is far too late, and I would ask all members of this Chamber to at least use some discretion. Make their comments if they will, but then let us get on with it so that—truly there are so many people out there who are picking up the extra cost of unpaid gas bills that they cannot afford to do.

We know that Centra will not collect 100 percent of those bills, so that means some of them are going

to go into the bad debt account, and it is going to show up on the rates that are charged to people. The sooner we get it in to allow Centra to get on with the job, then the less that will be charged to those seniors, low income, students, and people of all levels of income in this province.

It has been around long enough now. It is called today, and I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) along with our House leader or the House leader of the NDP party and the Leader of the Liberals have the appropriate numbers of speakers speak on the bill, send it to committee, so that at least we can get on to allow it to—since it is only from the middle of May to the end of September that they can actually lock off, the time frame is slipping away quickly.

It might not be \$20 million next year. It might be \$30 million, if we do not do the job. That means a portion of the \$30 million will be paid by seniors and whatever. So I would ask all members of this Legislature, please, let us try to put the legislation through as quickly as we can.

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity of rising in this particular debate relating to Bill 44, and I have to comment to a certain extent on the comments of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) in respect to this particular bill, because I think some of his comments should not go unchallenged. Perhaps, by virtue of my comments, I can set the record straight with respect to the actual factual nature of the situation dealing with this particular bill.

In my initial observations, I might make a recommendation to the honourable member for Portage la Prairie that if he should find occasion to leave this Chamber and seek employment elsewhere, he might consider the PR department of Centra Gas, insofar as in his comments he took the position that was lockstep in tune with that presented by Centra Gas.

In there, I find the seeds of our difficulty with the comments of the member, because it is not the role of government to be the spokesperson for one segment of society or the other. They were elected for all of society. This member has adopted in every single conceivable aspect, every single argument forwarded by Centra Gas in their campaign, and he reads like an apologist for this monopoly. Let me add, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a monopoly

and this particular member has adopted it in lockstep—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Chomlak:** I find it passing strange that the members of the Liberal Party are joining in with the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) in defending completely and totally the arguments as raised by Centra Gas, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is only fitting given the philosophical disposition of the Liberal Party. That is what I find very strange in terms of this debate.

The member for Portage la Prairie should stand up and totally adopt the position of Centra Gas, totally act as an apologist for this monopoly in the city of Winnipeg and every single argument put forward by it with respect to this bill and the particular ramifications of the rate application.

That is what is dangerous. That is what I find some difficulty accepting, because the role of members on that side of the House should be to question, should take a basic objective approach, and to discuss, and to protect the consumers that the member says in his comments they are purporting to protect, but in fact were there any comments in terms of the member for Portage la Prairie or any members from that side of the House questioning the \$90 increase that was put forward by Centra Gas?

Why did it take the New Democratic Party to appear before the public hearings to question the company to see if, in fact, the \$90 was a justified rate increase, Madam Deputy Speaker? That is because they are adopting the position of Centra Gas lockstep. What Centra Gas says they will agree with, with no questioning.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not saying that we will not support the bill, but I am saying the role of government and the role of opposition is to govern for all people, to examine and to review all sides of the issue. That is something the member for Portage la Prairie has clearly failed to do in his remarks as he adopted the position of the company.

\* (1500)

### Point of Order

**Mr. Connery:** Madam Deputy Speaker, obviously, when the member is not concerned about the gas rate increases, unlike the people on this side of the

House. We are concerned about the seniors, the children, the students, and the low-income—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Portage does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over facts.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chomlak:** With one or two exceptions, I was relatively quiet from my seat during the comments of the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery). I would appreciate likewise from him during the course of my discussions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to cite—in fact, I find it ironic that the member should refer to the fact that we are not referring to the bill and not referring to the increases when, in fact, he spent most of his speech attacking the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) in terms of her comments dealing with the bill.

It turns to some of the comments of the minister with the bill. I find it passing strange that he should say that he is defending—he is saying the wealthy are the ones who are not paying the bills, and he said that. I would very much have liked to see him back it up in terms of some sort of statistical data, but I know he has not and I know he cannot because he is adopting the Centra line. I know that they cannot and that they will not back it up in terms of citing statistics. How does he know? How does he purport to come before this House, Madam Deputy Speaker, and, in fact, suggest that it is the wealthy who are not paying and these are the ones that could be got. There is no data on which to base that, and I find that very strange.

I guess what I find very strange is the member talks about the business acumen of members on this side of the House in a, shall I say, highly negative sense. I question his basic fundamental understanding of what we are talking about. I mention again to the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) and to all members on that side of the House, we are dealing with a monopoly. We are not dealing with a competitive situation in terms of the city of Winnipeg. We are dealing with a monopoly situation. When you are dealing with a monopoly situation it calls for government to be vigilant and to stand ready to protect not just the interests of the monopoly, but the interests of all consumers and all citizens that participate in that. That is something in terms of the member's analysis that he fails, he

completely and totally disregards, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I would remind all honourable members that the debate on second readings should be directly relevant to the bill.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate those comments, and as I discuss—the issue that we are dealing with is legislation dealing with a monopoly, a business that has a monopoly in the city of Winnipeg, province of Manitoba, and the failure on the part of members opposite to realize that affects their judgement, affects obviously the judgement of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) when he purported to discuss the acumen and the business sense of the members on this side of the House had in dealing with business and dealing with the bill in general.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Portage la Prairie also stated that the members on this side of the House had been holding up this bill, and we take great exception to that. In fact, I am appalled that the member would even have the gall to mention that particular comment in his statements, because the bill had only been introduced—the bill was only introduced on May 15, after much public clamour after an intensive and incredible propaganda campaign on the part of Centra Gas. The bill was only introduced on May 15.

If members are pointing fingers, and I hesitate to do this, the finger should be pointed at themselves, for it is obviously—for lack of a better word, I have to say—incompetence on that side of the House and their inability to deal with this issue that has meant we are into something of a delay that the member for Portage la Prairie has pointed out in terms of completing the process of this bill prior to the period to allow for cutoffs.

If the minister and the members of that side of the House had acted judiciously then—expeditiously I should say—then perhaps, Madam Deputy Speaker, we would not be in such a state, but it was the inability of members of that side of the House to get their House in order that prevented this bill coming forward. In fact, it took a question from the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) raised to his own minister in order to get some kind of action on this bill.

I agree the member for Portage la Prairie indicated that there had been inaction on the part of many individuals and many governments perhaps in bringing forward legislation of this kind. I in fact had the occasion to reference a newspaper article when I believe the member for Portage la Prairie, the then minister, indicated that in August '89 they were considering legislation at the cabinet level to do this.

I ask him, and I ask of this House, what took so long? Why are we now in a situation where we are forced, where members on the opposite side have their spin doctors spinning around the province of Manitoba, that it is the opposition somehow holding up this bill? Why are we in this position? In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, I had an individual phone me on Thursday who indicated that the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) had indicated in an interview, a radio interview on CFAM, southern Manitoba, that it was the opposition holding up the bill.

I was appalled to hear that, but that is what that individual told me, and I take it to be the case. Again, I can only reiterate that it is not members on this side of this House who have held up this bill. In fact, it is the failure of members on that side of the House, it is the failure of the minister to introduce the bill after there had been much public clamour and much public demand for a bill of this kind.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have before us a bill, an authorizing bill, to amend The Public Utilities Board Act, to allow for a—for lack of a better word I will use the term “seasonal cutoff”—for Centra Gas, as a result of its campaign and its public clamour to introduce legislation to deal with delinquent accounts.

I indicated earlier in my comments that we were concerned that the government members had so quickly jumped on board with Centra Gas. I divert for a second, but I was a former employee of Inter-City Gas when it was a—and I have worked at that institution. I do have some experience in terms of—albeit at the ground level quite literally—dealing with the natural gas utility. I am concerned in the situation of a monopoly, of a government jumping on a bandwagon and adopting every single line of this monopoly's argument.

I want to say that our concerns and the concerns of the New Democratic Party are for fairness for all members of the public. I recognize and we recognize the concerns expressed by Centra Gas

and by all individuals with respect to delinquent accounts. It is quite understandable that those who pay their bills properly are shouldering some of the burden of the cost of these delinquent accounts, and there is no question that is unfair and should not be allowed to happen. It should not be the case that those who are delinquent get off from their requirements to pay while others are paying.

We in the New Democratic Party do not jump into the debate lockstep and say, oh, yes, Centra Gas, it is \$90 per person; yes, Centra Gas, we accept that totally; oh, sure, we will allow it, when in fact information came out at the public hearing process that in fact it was not \$90 per person. That is part of the dilemma, when members on that side of the House do not do their job and do not question a situation objectively, particularly in the case of a monopoly.

Secondly, Madam Deputy Speaker, I find it curious that—and frankly, I have a difficulty with this. I look forward to an opportunity of perhaps dealing with this in committee. I have a difficulty with the question of the delinquent accounts. Centra Gas purchased the ICG utility.

\* (1510)

Presumably, it had an opportunity to look at the books; presumably, it had an opportunity to view what the delinquent accounts were. They bought it notwithstanding those liabilities on the books and now, notwithstanding that, they bought it but they, as a result of the purchase price—there is no doubt that the purchase price was adjusted accordingly based on the liabilities of that particular utility. They bought it on the basis of, shall we say, for purposes of making it more simplistic—they reduced the value of the asset based on those delinquent accounts, those liabilities. Now they are coming back to us and saying, oh, by the way, we now want to recover those delinquent accounts, because they want to recover delinquent accounts back for several years, and that concerns me, particularly when you are dealing in the case of a monopoly who have come in with their eyes open. We know very well that these individuals have very high-priced legal and accounting assistance.

They come in with their eyes open. They buy a company. They know what the liabilities are. Then they go to the consumers, whom the government is supposed to protect as much as the government is supposed to protect its monopoly, and say, oh, by

the way, we are now going to charge you for our past delinquent accounts. From the way I understand it, Madam Deputy Speaker, they are as far back as two years old, and I have a concern about that.

That is one of my concerns with the questions being asked by this government. That is where the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) is totally off base in terms of his arguments, in terms of somehow basing—if he wants to base this on a business decision, Madam Deputy Speaker, why was that not considered? Why was that analysis not made? Why was that presentation not made by members of that opposite side of the House? No, it has not. It took members of the New Democratic Party to raise the questions of fairness, to raise the issue of the fairness to the consumer whom we all in this Chamber were elected to protect, not just the large utility monopoly that members opposite seem to be so lockstep in tune with.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we can indicate on this side of the House that we feel this bill must be examined very, very carefully in order to determine what the ramifications are for the public, not just for the company; what the real ramifications are for the consumers. That is why we are so pleased that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), at the Public Utility hearings into the rate increases, was able to ascertain from the company that, in fact, it was not a \$90 increase. It was not, in fact, \$90; it was something like—as I recall, \$35 was the actual cost of the delinquent accounts. So what we were able to ascertain was that the increase proposed by Centra Gas, the increase proposed by that monopoly, was beyond that which they could justify by virtue of delinquent accounts. It took us to raise that because, obviously, it was not going to come from the other side.

There is one other aspect of this that I find curious and passing strange, Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to Bill 44, and the whole issue was that members opposite talk about saving money. The fact remains that the propaganda campaign undertaken by Centra Gas with respect to this particular bill probably cost all of us many dollars on our natural gas bills, and I find that, particularly in a case of monopoly, rather distasteful that I have to pay through my gas utility bills for the cost of Centra Gas telling me that they needed a certain amount of money to take care of delinquent accounts. Subsequently, we found out that certain amount of

money was beyond what they in fact needed, and I find that rather strange. I again state, that thank goodness the New Democratic Party was here to assess and to question those kinds of issues. Otherwise, members opposite, from the comments of the Liberal Party earlier, would probably just have passed the entire matter unquestioningly.

While we agree, while I certainly am very much in favour of protecting the interest of all of those, particularly those who have difficulty—and it is becoming increasingly larger in our province, those individuals who have difficulty meeting their expenses—we do not want them to bear the cost of delinquent accounts. We certainly favour any proposal that would lessen the burden on the average consumer, but we are wary of a monopoly situation versus that of a—frankly, if it was a competitive business situation it might be a little bit different. I am concerned when I see members opposite jump up and with closed eyes champion the cause of this kind of a company when they proposed the bill.

I am pleased that there is provision in the bill to deal with questions of situations where lock-off—the bill itself, we will have more to say. Obviously, we will have to deal with it on a clause-by-clause basis, and I am sure we will have useful suggestions for members opposite with respect to the bill. It appears to me to have been drafted taking into account most exigencies and has reviewed most of the situations. I am pleased to see that we have an agency like the Public Utilities Board examining the questions of lock-off.

I do have some question as to the appropriate means and whether they have the horses—I do not mean that literally, I mean that figuratively—whether they have the individuals and the capacity to deal with appeals and all of the ramifications of cutoffs and individuals proceeding. We hope that all of that can be dealt with expeditiously, because we will deal with the situation.

As the Court of Appeal indicated in its 1987 decision, heat, in fact, in this province is a necessity of life. One would hope the Public Utilities Board will have the resources to deal with this issue in an expeditious manner and fashion when the process is put in place.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I can indicate that it is very important that our consumers and all of those individuals, be it seniors, all Manitobans have

access to not only a reasonable utility which delivers natural gas, but one which deals with the consumer fairly. While there is no doubt in my mind that ordinary consumers should not bear the brunt of paying for delinquent accounts, the concerns that we have raised, I think, make it a better bill and will make the government more aware and wary of the circumstances that might arise. Namely, a process must be put in place that is fair to those individuals who may be inadvertently or even advertently cut off or discontinued, that a fair process is in place to review the very reason for the rate increases and for the payment required by Centra Gas for those delinquent accounts.

I am glad that members on this side of the House raised that issue to show to the public of Manitoba what the actual cost of delinquent accounts were and that they are raising the issue of the whole question of the monopolistic nature of Centra Gas to ensure that government is vigilant of this particular monopoly to ensure that it is done fairly, and that they do not run one by.

Finally, in point of fact, we have demonstrated that if government wants to point blame as to why the bill is before us at this late date, they only have to look in the mirror, as the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) indicated. He initially indicated in August of '89 that the bill was going to be considered by cabinet. Here we are in June 1991 debating a bill that was only introduced May 15, 1991, and which has been called not very frequently in this Chamber. If members opposite wish to take umbrage with the fact that the bill has been delayed, I am afraid that the reason the bill has been delayed and the reason this is not in effect right now is their responsibility. I think members only have to take a look at themselves with respect to this particular bill.

I will close on those comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, just indicating that we hope that members of that side of the House will be vigilant of our concerns and that our overall concern is fairness, that all of those citizens and consumers get a fair break from this particular gas company and that this government be wary and be vigilant to protect all interests of all consumers. Thank you.

**Ms. Frlesen:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

\* (1520)

**Ms. Friesen:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am glad to rise to say a few words on this particular bill. It is, I think, a good occasion to have the opportunity to speak on it. As the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) has said, it is a bill that he raised two years ago, I think, and I am glad to see that he takes his full share of the responsibility for the delays that we have seen in bringing forward this type of legislation.

It seems to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that one of the reasons that the member for Portage la Prairie might have encountered some difficulties in bringing this before the government is that we are now faced with a government that has a very—an extreme right-wing agenda. It is a particularly antiunion government that we are facing and that they had more important considerations on their mind. The kind of legislation that we are seeing in Bill 70 and other bills that I think will be sure to follow—we are seeing the real agenda and the real right-wing nature of this particular government.

The member for Portage la Prairie made a number of, I thought, intemperate attacks on the opposition and I take exception to them, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish that he would expand his vocabulary a bit. Words like, absolute trash, that the NDP is against Manitoba business, that we are biased and selfish, really do not belong in this particular Legislature. I found them quite irrelevant and I had hoped for more from the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), a man who pertains to have had a great deal of interest in this area. I looked for reasoned argument and for examples and for a sense of the common public interest. Unfortunately, what we saw was simply invective. Very unfortunate and very, I thought, unbecoming to a member of this House.

There has been a great deal of interest in this particular issue, particularly in the spring when Centra Gas chose to send out its advertising on this particular issue. I think I found in my riding that opinion is divided. I would like to represent that opinion fairly.

There were many people in my constituency of Wolseley who were offended by the kind of advertising campaign that Centra Gas undertook. It was an advertising campaign which my colleague, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), has said that we also paid for. Under a monopoly situation

we had no choice but to pay for that extremely offensive piece of advertising.

It was not only offensive, it was also fearmongering. There were many senior citizens, I think in all our constituencies, who found that it raised anxieties, that it put neighbour against neighbour in a way which I think was not appropriate for a major corporation in this city.

I was offended by that kind of fearmongering legislation, the idea put to individuals that they were paying for their neighbours' so-called delinquency, that it was an individual rather than a business issue and that \$90, that specific amount which they charge, was being placed on the bill of every Manitoban. I was very glad that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) was able to correct this or at least ensure that the corporation itself cleared this up and that in fact they were making an error of at least \$55.

I think the role of the opposition there was responsible and at least served to put some check upon the rampant and discriminatory kind of advertising that the company chose to indulge in.

It is particularly difficult to accept that kind of advertising campaign, Madam Deputy Speaker, from a company which has a monopoly. There was no way we could turn off that advertising. There was no way we could prevent Canada Post Corporation from delivering it into every single house of those people who receive Centra Gas. You could not turn it off as you could turn off a television ad, or refuse to buy the newspaper as you could with newspaper advertising. It came as part of your bill and it was something which could not be avoided, and it was a very unpleasant piece of literature to receive.

This from a company which bought its holdings more cheaply because it argued that they were buying a company with liabilities. This from a company which in 1989 had a 70 percent increase in its operating profit, in a year when many other corporations found that their profits were at a standstill or in some cases declining. This kind of advertising campaign from a company which doubled its net income between '88 and '89 from \$3.2 million to \$7.3 million. This offensive piece of literature from a company which has \$29 million in deferred tax.

At the same time Centra Gas asked for a rate increase. It asked for a rate increase on those same people whose bills it was now decorating with its



propaganda, a 12.5 rate increase. They wanted, as they said at the hearings, a 14.5 percent increase return on their investment. The member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld) agreed with them. He felt that was not unreasonable.

Yet, this is from a minister and from a government who says that there is no more room to tax Manitoba corporations, when they have that rate of deferred tax, when they have those rates of returns, when they have that kind of increase in their net income and in their operating profits. I believe that this government is simply shirking its responsibilities when it argues on the one hand that 14.5 rate increase is acceptable, a return on investment, and that there is no room to tax these kinds of corporations.

I would like for those people to look in the eye the people that I talked to last night, the public health nurses who have no more money to deal with the kind of child abuse and the physical and social conditions that they find every day in the constituency of Wolseley.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is room and there is a broader tax base than this government is prepared to use, and I would like them to say that when they look in the eye to the homeowner who is faced with his tax increases on behalf of the education, the school district and the property tax—in my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, people are faced with that increasing tax bill on the one hand and their layoff notice in the other hand, the pink slip and the bill for taxation increase from a government which says time after time in this Legislature that they have not increased taxes.

What hypocrisy. The sheer hypocrisy of this government, time after time on the taxation issue, is just unbelievable. They say it in this House, I do not know if they get away with it outside of this House, but you would think they would need some kind of parliamentary protection to get away with those kinds of defences of their policy.

This is a government which has taxed over and over and over again, it is taxing the homeowners of Winnipeg. It is a question of fairness, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think the Centra Gas issue addresses that particular approach to government which we see in Manitoba, an unfair government which is taking the tax burden out of people who are facing tremendous social pressures and who are

also, at the same time, many of them facing unemployment.

This bill, Bill 44, gives similar powers to a monopoly that public utilities have elsewhere in Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada, and it may be, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is a reasonable case to be made for giving the powers of cutoff to Centra Gas that Hydro and other utilities have. There may be a reasonable argument.

\* (1530)

I look forward to hearing it from the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery). I heard invective and name calling and antiunion kind of sentiment from someone of whom I expect more. I did not hear reasonable argument for this particular case. Perhaps when the minister speaks at a later date we will hear reasonable argument on this particular issue.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Particularly, I would like to see the minister address the issue of those businesses who refuse to pay their bill to Centra Gas. I believe if you look at the list of those outstanding debts that there was a far greater proportion of the total amount of the debt owed by businesses rather than individuals, something which that offensive advertising campaign of Centra Gas chose to ignore and misled the people of Manitoba into assuming that it was their neighbours and not the corporations who were not paying their bills. So I would like to see the minister address that particularly. I think it is something which has not been made clear in the public domain and something which I think she has a responsibility to offer us in her reasonable arguments for this bill.

On our side of the House, we are, the member for Portage's (Mr. Connery) message notwithstanding, concerned that this bill not affect the people who are at risk in our society.

We are particularly concerned that the decision of the courts that the season and cold are a health threat in Manitoba be taken into account, and that we ensure in the regulations and in the bill that we are not going to put people out on the street, essentially, or at least at risk at seasons of the year when it is not possible to survive without gas; so that concern for temperature, for the cold, for the essential service that Centra Gas has been deemed to be, is properly attended to in this particular bill.

We want to ensure, when we get to the committee stage, that family and social and economic circumstances are part of the considerations of this monopoly corporation. It is important that government regulation be used to ensure that those who are in the weakest circumstances, who are facing as a result of the policies that we have seen at the federal and provincial level over the last three or four years; that those people who are facing unemployment, welfare, food banks, who have lost their social allowances, who have lost their student bursaries, who are increasingly finding it difficult to find the very basic necessities of life are not adversely affected by this bill.

We will be looking at that in committee, and we will be ensuring that the regulations and that the power of government is used to protect those who cannot protect themselves against these monopoly corporations. I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that I am not necessarily speaking for a minority anymore, that the unemployment rolls in Manitoba are growing. The number of people using food banks took an enormous jump in the beginning of June, particularly from those people who are on provincial social welfare. Forty percent of the people using food banks are children under the age of 12 years old. Something is happening in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, which the government is either aware of and prepared to ignore or is simply not aware of at all. It is those people who are going to be affected by the regulations and the changes in this particular bill, and we want to ensure that those interests of a growing proportion of Manitobans are looked after.

So when we come to committee, Mr. Speaker, our party will be looking at the protection of those who are condemned by the policies of this government to live in poverty. We will be looking for the rights of review, for the rights of appeal. We will be looking for a bill and for regulations and for a government policy which puts the public interest first, not that of the private corporation. We will be looking for one which will protect those who are beset on so many sides by the policies of this government. We will be looking to protect the interests of those who bear the brunt of Tory policies.

We look forward, Mr. Speaker, to dealing with all of these when the bill comes to committee, and to putting forward the kinds of helpful comments, the clarification of the record that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has done on a number of

occasions, and to setting the record straight on our approach to public utilities and the use of government powers of regulation.

Thank you.

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise to speak on Bill 44, The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act which talks about the process which will allow Centra Gas to discontinue service to customers in the province of Manitoba.

There have been many issues that have been raised since this became more of an issue in this province, Mr. Speaker. Since Centra Gas themselves started an advertising campaign to inform their consumers in the province of Manitoba of their intent to raise the price of the residential gas bill by some \$90 a year, that, of course, created a great flurry of activity in the province of Manitoba to, I am sure, most MLAs and in the number of phone calls they received with respect to this issue.

A lot of the calls that I received were from concerned constituents of mine in the community of Transcona. What they were concerned about was that their bill was going to rise the \$90 a year, without them having the opportunity to have any input into the process. They raised their concerns with me to the fact that, as the government had stated many times and the company itself, Centra Gas, had stated, the cause or the reason for them having to increase the bills to the consumers by \$90 per year was the number of delinquent accounts that the company had to deal with.

In that respect there were a number of delinquent accounts in the province that Centra Gas had to deal with, but Centra Gas also knew that fact when they purchased that company from ICG utilities. They should have taken that into consideration in their purchase price. That does not mean to say that there should be that number of delinquent accounts in the province of Manitoba.

There is a great list of delinquent accounts that should not be delinquent accounts. In the cases where there are businesses that are fully able to pay and should have paid, these business establishments should have been required to pay. I believe this bill is a natural progression or a logical progression of the way things should move in that particular direction. That is not to say there are not some concerns I have with respect to what this bill is calling for or its intended regulations.

My concern in these cases is for the residents in the community of Transcona and how they will be impacted by this particular piece of legislation. I believe seniors groups—of course, they are the largest numbers of calls that I have had in my constituency of Transcona—are concerned because they are on fixed incomes, and they have no way to recover their costs, because in many cases they are not on indexed pensions and that \$90 per year was going to create or inflict quite a hardship upon them.

I received many, many calls from seniors, but it was not only seniors, Mr. Speaker, that I received calls from. It was families who were on social assistance, who were, through no fault of their own, because of the economic climate in this country and in this province, were unemployed, and were unable to meet the full payments of their utilities. They had offered to pay to the utilities a portion of the bill and to arrange for payments.

If I might give you one example, it occurred with a constituent of mine in Transcona, where the family was on social assistance. They received notice that one of their utilities was going to have its service terminated within a fixed period of time and it spelled out the number of days. They attempted to make some payment arrangements with the utility. The utility itself failed to agree to this payment arrangement which the family felt they could comfortably afford to pay. This family then received notification from the utility that their service would be terminated the next day. That was when they became very upset, Mr. Speaker, and they contacted my office. They also contacted the office of the city councillor to get us both involved to try and assist this family.

What we found is the bureaucracy that was involved in the process allowed this to take place without having any heart for the condition or the plight of this family. That, Mr. Speaker, is an unfortunate situation and that is one of the situations I am afraid could occur as a result of the allowance through regulations of this Bill 44 that will allow the company to disconnect services to residents in the province of Manitoba.

The regulations themselves, I believe, that may be coming into play call for—the restoration of service will be made as soon as it is reasonably possible after payment arrangements suitable, and I stress, suitable to the company, are made and that

there may be a reconnection charge which will have to be settled with the company.

This does not in any way spell out what would be suitable to the company. There has to be some reasonable limitations that are built into this process, Mr. Speaker, and also the reconnection charge. That is a wide open, general statement. Anyone can make a reconnection charge or a statement of what they are going to charge, but it is reasonable? I think that we have to have some restriction on the regulations as to what the company can charge for those particular types of services.

\* (1540)

One of the other areas that causes me concern with this bill is the fact, not so much that it allows the gas services to be disconnected between the period of May 14 to October 1 which are the warmer months of the year—it stands to reason that would be the period of time you may allow something—it is the fact that when you get to the point of October 1, say it was the 29th of September, the gas company was allowed to terminate the service for a residential consumer in the city of Winnipeg or elsewhere in the province of Manitoba. What reasonable process is there built in that will allow an appeal to take place before the family is put in a position of jeopardy? That is the point that I do not see any explanation of in the intended regulations. There are no safeguards -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) says that we should move this to committee. If the government was intent or serious on listening to recommendations, it is not only the public that they should be listening to recommendations of, although those are very important, but members opposite that also have strong viewpoints they raise to the government's attention, so that the government may take action on these and hopefully initiate some of the necessary amendments themselves, not just rely on other sources of information.

My concern is that there is no appeal process that is built in here that will act, or in any way spells out that they will act, within a reasonable period of time. If the service is terminated on September 29, when can the Public Utilities Board sit down and hear an appeal that will allow services to be restored?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the members opposite, the government members do not take this matter seriously. If these members took seriously the concerns that were brought to my attention by my constituents of Transcona, they would now be working on amendments to solve these problems which I am bringing to their attention.

The committee is not the be-all and the end-all. I am raising these matters, these issues, with the government and with the minister responsible for this bill so that the minister may introduce the necessary amendments that will solve these problems and not create hardships for the families and communities of Manitoba.

I am concerned for these families because in a lot of cases, as the previous speaker had indicated, these are families who through economic conditions in the province of Manitoba have been forced off the employment roles in this province and have been forced, after the unemployment insurance has run out, onto the social assistance programs. Mr. Speaker—

**An Honourable Member:** Tory times are tough times.

**Mr. Reid:** Tory times are tough times indeed, there is no doubt about that. These families, and I have seen many of these families because I have attended and worked at the food banks in my community of Transcona. I am very appalled to see the number of families who have to make use of those food banks.

The last time I was there was a week ago, I believe, and there were 111 families in my community making use of those food banks. I find that deplorable in the province of Manitoba where we are supposed to have conditions that will support all of the people. The government likes to tell us how well they are looking after the people of this province. It goes to show that they are not doing their job in helping the people of this province; they are only going to help their friends in this province.

Mr. Speaker, at this food bank the people who make use of this food bank are young families. Families who are coming in there with young children, they have no means of support for themselves other than social assistance and these people want to have employment. They want to be able to pay their utility bills. They want to be able to

provide for their own families, but through conditions beyond their control, they are unable to.

That is why I think amendments are necessary to this particular Bill 44 that will allow an appeal process to be put into place so that a reasonable period of time for the Public Utilities Board to hear the appeal so that reconnection services can be put into place so that the families do not have to suffer as a result of this government's action.

In the intended regulations, Steps 1, 2 and 3, in Step 3 they talk about a reconnection charge, Mr. Speaker. The reconnection charge does not spell out the dollar value. What type of reconnection charge? Do we just give them carte blanche and they can charge whatever fee they want? Is it going to be the same for a corporation as it is going to be for a residence? I do not think the government really knows what they are doing here. They are just leaving it wide open at the discretion of the company.

There are many other areas I can talk and go through the regulations and discuss that, but I would like to refer, for a moment, to the government's own news release that came out in January of this year. It says here, the existing legislation is unfair to consumers who dutifully pay their bills; as well it provides Centra Gas with no recourse in pursuing delinquent accounts. I cannot believe that statement that the government made. No recourse—they have been pursuing these delinquent accounts through the courts for a number of years when it was ICG and then Centra Gas after that. How could they not have any recourse for pursuing delinquent accounts? I cannot understand how this government can make that statement.

**An Honourable Member:** Dishonesty.

**Mr. Reid:** It is a dishonest statement, and then they release this for public consumption, Mr. Speaker. They also state in here that the amendment will prevent Centra Gas from locking off service to residential customers between October 1 and May 14 of each year after adequate notice. There is that adequate notice. It does not spell out what adequate notice is.

The minister indicated that there were going to be some steps in there, and there are steps in here, the normal process to follow, but there are so many carte blanche areas that the government gives the corporation, the company, to set their own policy,

**Mr. Speaker.** They can do pretty well as they please with this matter.

The seniors who were calling, Mr. Speaker, were concerned about the \$90 increase on their utility bill, their gas bill, and I can appreciate, I heard their concerns, I talked with all of them. As I have been going door to door in my community, the concerns still come up about the increases in their utilities, which are beyond their control, and they are still concerned about the possibility of their gas bills increasing. With that, I had to agree with them because, as I indicated earlier, these seniors are on fixed income. Their pensions are fixed, and they have no means to recover these costs by having an indexed pension.

I had constituents who were calling me and wanting to know where they can go to public hearings, Mr. Speaker, so that they might have some input into this process. I can assure the minister that when it goes to committee that I will be contacting these people and informing them that they have the opportunity to come forward with their viewpoints.

Mr. Speaker, what the government members here are proposing today is that we have closure on this bill, and they were the same government that not a week and a half ago were accusing this side of the House of invoking closure on debate on a bill, and yet this same government right now is sitting in their places and telling us that they want closure on this portion of the bill to allow it to go to committee. I cannot believe the hypocrisy of this government.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge no one on this side of the House has called closure on Bill 44. I think the record should be made correct—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order. Order, please. It is a dispute over the facts.

\*\*\*

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Transcona has been

suggesting, as was raised by my colleague the Minister of Consumer Affairs, the question of the government calling for closure—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. Order, please.

\* (1550)

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**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting to note that there were several members who stood up and spoke on this point of order.

This government has been delaying this bill, Mr. Speaker, on their own incompetence. With the discussions that have been ongoing in this Chamber, we have seen where if this bill was that important to this government that they would have put this bill as the lead bill for discussion in this Chamber. We see time after time in this Chamber where this bill is put at the end of the list for discussion instead of at the beginning where it should have been.

Mr. Speaker, if this minister was so interested in assuring that her bill moved through this Chamber at a speedy rate, then I suggest that she approach her government House leader and indicate her interest in having this bill at the top of the debating order and not at the end of the list as it has been noted to be for the last several weeks.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member for Transcona that the question before the House is Bill 44, The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act and not the sequence that the bills are called.

**Mr. Reid:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. With greatest respect to you, Mr. Speaker, I was just trying to indicate that this bill, which is very important to this side of the House, should have been moved forward for debate so that we might have had the opportunity. I will move, Mr. Speaker, with my remarks and concentrate more on the bill.

With the contacts that I have had with my constituents, they are concerned about the deadbeats who were delinquent in paying their gas bills, and there has been information that has been released, there are several thousand people in the province and some deadbeats who do not pay their bills who are able to pay.

Many of those were businesses, and I have a list here that shows the list of the businesses—many thousands of dollars—that have not paid their gas bills. I think, as the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) has just suggested a few moments ago, that we should cut them off. I do not think I can find any fault with that statement. I think if these businesses were in a position where they could operate a business and they could pay their salaries and their other bills, that they should be forced to pay for their gas bills, their natural gas consumption—

**An Honourable Member:** You are speaking on behalf of the corporation. Is that not against your policy?

**Mr. Reid:** No, I am not speaking on behalf of the corporation, Mr. Speaker, what I am saying here is that they should be forced to pay their bills. I think that just looking at the amounts, the dollar values that were involved in this, it is very important that this bill would go towards allowing Centra Gas to recover the delinquent amounts outstanding from these businesses. I can support that because it is important that these corporations or companies pay their bills.

Let me talk about the people now. If there are people who are able to pay, they should be put into position where they have to pay. Okay? Where there are families—because we have to be very careful here, there is a fine line now—that are in a position where they may not be able to pay all or a portion of the bill, they should be given the opportunity to have a reasonable method of repayment.

Since this government has frozen the social assistance allowances in this province, or reduced it, and they have frozen the 55-Plus program that put the seniors of this province—and the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) was up on his hind legs a few moments ago talking about seniors in this Chamber here. If he was concerned about seniors, he would talk to his other caucus colleagues and index that 55-Plus program for the seniors of this province, so that they could afford to pay their gas bills.

This one I find very interesting, Mr. Speaker. A senior whom I spoke to in my constituency in Transcona says that she is a disgusted consumer of Centra Gas and she is tired of supporting corporations. That is one statement that I have to

agree with. As I have indicated earlier, I will make a special phone call to her to make sure that she has the opportunity to come down and make her presentation at the committee meetings along with the other members of my constituency who have called.

I wonder how many of the members opposite have had phone calls from their constituents complaining about the corporations having the special breaks and asking that this government give them more breaks. I do not think that would be the case.

I will read a couple of comments, Mr. Speaker. There are four points that were raised in this letter that was sent to me by one of my constituents. It says here -(interjection)- I can read, even though I did only go just slightly past Grade 12. I do pride myself in being able to stand in this Chamber and represent my constituents of Transcona. I do not think that the level of education has anything to do with the ability of a member of the community to represent their constituents.

It says here in one of the points: Under no circumstances should a business receive gas services with an unpaid account.

I have to agree with that, Mr. Speaker. It says here: Individual gas accounts that are delinquent should be reviewed every three to four months.

Now that is somewhat ambiguous, but there is room for expansion on that. There is some sense in the statements that are there.

Individuals who are financially able, but do not pay their bills, should receive proper notice and, subsequently, if their bill remains unpaid, gas service should be discontinued.

That makes sense. I agree with that.

The final point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that individuals who are financially unable to pay their bill should pay some portion of it where able, even if it is a small percentage, and maybe the rest could be paid through the aid of social assistance vouchers.

As I indicated a few moments ago, social assistance has been frozen or decreased in this province, and it is very difficult for these families to raise the necessary funds to pay these bills that will allow Centra Gas to get off the hook, and that is exactly what we want to do.

That is the point that I want to raise. That final point is one of the statements that was made in the proposed regulations, that the company shall notify the customers of those social agencies which may be in a position to offer assistance. What this company is doing is saying, you cannot pay your bills; you do not have a job; go to the social agencies and see if you can get more money; get more money from government, so you can pay the corporation. That is what is being said here.

Mr. Speaker, they talked about the corporation having—this corporation, Centra Gas, has \$29 million in deferred income taxes.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** I am not interrupting in terms of the member's speech, but I do believe there may be willingness to call it six o'clock to allow honourable members to attend the unveiling of the portrait of former Premier Howard Pawley, and I am sure the member would be able to continue with his speech when we next meet.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? That is agreed. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) will have 15 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 19, 1991

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