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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
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3:00 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.
WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 1979

The House met at 3:00 P.M.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

Order, please!

MR. NEARY:

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if

this is a point of order or a point of privilege or a point of information. On yesterday's Order Paper, Sir, there appeared a question that I put on there and there is something left out, the typist left something out of the question. I want to find out if I have to resubmit the question to the minister or will the minister just take now what I am going to say, take note of it, and then in providing the answer I think he will probably feel more at ease. What was left out of the question, what I wanted on question number two, Sir, was a progress report: (a) whether the case was completed, whether it is continuing or whether the case is closed. That is all the information I was asking the hon. gentleman and I am sure the hon. gentleman realizes that the question, as it stands now, the hon. gentleman could not give me an answer, but now I believe he will be able to give me an answer.

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

Is that agreed?

MR. OTTENHEIMER:

Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Mr. SPEAKER:

The hon. minister for Rural,

Agricultural and Northern Development.

MR. GOUDIE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Mr. Terry Healey has been appointed Assistant Deputy Minister of Rural Development in my department. As Director of Rural Development, Mr Healey has had a very close association with rural Newfoundland and Labrador and was instrumental in the formulation and implementation of many of our Rural Development programmes. He is forty-one years of age, born and raised in Grand Falls. Before coming to the Department of

MR. GOUDIE: Rural Development he was Director of Field Services with the Department of Community and Social Development and, prior to that, Director of Community and Leadership Development in the Department of Education. He came to government from the teaching profession. Over the past ten years he has had a very direct involvement in the Regional Development Association Movement. This provided him with an insight into the desires and aspirations of the people of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The position of Assistant Deputy Minister of Rural Development is a key position within government. This position will be responsible for the formulation of programmes and implementation of policies that this government will be encouraging in the future.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

The hon. member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present

a petition from 875 residents of Trout River, Woody Point, Shoal Brook, Birchy Head and Glenburnie. The prayer of the petition is that Route 431 be upgraded and paved.

MR. BENNETT: The prayer reads: "We, the voters of Trout River, Woody Point, Shoal Brook, Birchy Head, Glenburnie, do strongly protest the continued lack of response to our refused requests since early 1970 for the upgrading and paving of Route 431." That is from Wiltondale to Trout River. "In view of the importance of this road to the local residents as well as to tourists, we demand immediate action by both provincial and federal governments. As citizens, we insist on our rights to good roads."

Mr. Speaker, I know this area.

I have evidence of requests having been made for the last ten years. It is one of the oldest roads in the Province. New roads have been built all around; old roads have been paved and upgraded. My predecessor, the then member for the district, made statements saying that tenders were being called. It is one of the most beautiful areas of Newfoundland, famous for tourist traffic. It is part of the Gros Morne National Park, Mr. Speaker. Why? We continually ask, why? And we ask again.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this petition be laid on the table of the House and referred to the department to which it is related.

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)
Bay de Verde.

The hon. the member for Trinity -

MR. F. ROWE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to support the petition so ably presented by my colleague representing the district of St. Barbe on behalf of 875 residents of Trout River, Woody Point, Shoal Brook, Birchy Head and Glenburnie for the complete and immediate upgrading and paving of the Route 431 from Wiltondale to Trout River. Sir, I have travelled that road many a time myself when I represented the original district of St. Barbe North. I had the pleasure-and danger, I guess-of really travelling that road and I might say that that particular area of the Province, Mr. Speaker, has tremendous tourist potential and I am sure that many tourist dollars are lost to that part of the Province each year simply because of the fact that tourists - Newfoundland and Labradorian tourists and Canadian tourists and American tourists-realize that they have to travel over a

MR. F. ROWE: very dusty road. As I repeat, Sir, the road must represent many millions of dollars in potential tourist dollars to this Province. And it seems to me, Sir, as well that during many federal and provincial election campaigns that that particular road seems to have some sort of a tender call during every election, yet we never see the contract coming forth. And so I would hope that the Minister responsible for Transportation and Communications (Mr. C. Brett) will see fit to support this particular petition because the residents of these communities certainly deserve to have this road paved. I seem to remember even before Confederation, Sir, having taken a train to Deer Lake and taking that road to Woody Point myself, so it must represent a very old road in this Province and it is about time that it becomes paved. And I whole-heartedly endorse and support the petition as presented by the member for St. Barbe (Mr. T. Bennett) in the hope that the Minister of Transportation and Communications will do the same thing.

AN HON. MEMBER: hear, hear.

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms) The hon. member for the Strait of Bella Isle.

MR. E. ROBERTS: Sir, I will not be long - does the minister wish to -

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. E. ROBERTS: O.K. The minister, I gather, does not wish to speak.

MR. S. NEARY: No repondez-vous.

MR. E. ROBERTS: I will be quite brief, Sir, but I do want to say a word in support of the petition, partially on its own merits which I think are substantial as has been well advanced by the member who presented the petition, my friend from the district of St. Barbe, and partially because, of course, my own district is contiguous to his and, in fact, to drive to my district I have the pleasure of driving the entire length of the district of St. Barbe

MR. E. ROBERTS: from wherever it begins North of Deer Lake to where my own district begins at the community of Blue Cove and the community of Pond Cove.

One of the real problems of this Province today, Sir, is the inequities which exist between one portion or another. Here, for example, in this part of the Province—and I do not say this critically—the Minister of Transportation and Communications (Mr. C. Brett) has let a contract to pave the witch-hazel Road which is a very short stretch of road that runs from no community to no community, it simply links two roads. It links the Old Broad Cove Road to Beachy Cove. There are maybe three or four houses along the three-fourths of a mile that the Witchhazel Road runs, one of which I am happy to say, I believe, is occupied by the former Premier of this Province, and that road and others are being paved and I do not complain at all about that. I think that is good. Funny, when you get North of Deer Lake the pavement begins to thin out and when you go North of Blue Cove the pavement becomes just about non-existent, just about non-existent, for some reason. And there you have got communities of two and three and four and five thousand people, that many people living within an area, Mr. Speaker, who have no pavement at all.

MR. E. ROBERTS: Now I do not speculate as to why that is so, I simply note that it is so, Sir, and I say that it is inequitable and I say that people are more and more coming to realize it, people are coming to ascribe, in their own mind, motives and speculation as to why this is so. And I would in supporting the prayer of the petition presented to the House from my friend from St. Barbe (Mr. Bennett) that the merits of the petition should alone command it to the attention of the government and to a favourable response. But, Sir, even if the petition had no merit I would say that the problem of inequity, the problem of the fact that the benefits of public services are not being made available equally to every part of this Province, that factor alone, Sir, in itself is enough that I would hope the Minister of Transportation and Communications (Mr. Brett) in due course will respond, as he ought to, by announcing that the work as prayed for in this petition is to go ahead and to go ahead in full steam. Thank you, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): I would like to take this opportunity, before moving on, to welcome on behalf of all hon. members in this House a distinguished visitor in the galleries in the persons of Mr. & Mrs. Reverend Donald Leslie, the Anglican Minister from Fortune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. President of the Council.

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move amendments to the Standing Orders of this hon. House and specifically Standing Orders 2, 4 (c), 7, Standing Order 14, Standing Order 49, Standing Order 53, 82, 84, 87, 92; the revocation of Standing Order 116 and replacement by Standing Orders 116 to 122. Mr. Speaker, it is normal to read out the full text of a resolution but I do not presume to take the House's time. I think we can deal with this more effectively at another time. I do not want to transgress on Private Member's Day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: (SIMMS) The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. JAMIESON: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. the Premier. I understand that he had meetings this day with a delegation from Buchans and I am wondering if he is in a position at this time to give us any indication as to just how those meetings went or if he was able to give any measures of reassurance to the people who are so justifiably concerned about the pending lay-offs and other unemployment problems in that area?

MR. SPEAKER (Simms):

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for asking the question. Yes, this morning I met with a five man delegation from the Buchans community, a young five man delegation, young men, single men and young married men, who are concerned about the unemployment situation in their area. I think the five of them represent about forty or forty-two young men in Buchans who have worked on various things both on the Mainland and around the Province and who are now unemployed and who add to an unemployment situation which will grow in Buchans as miners are laid off there. Accompanying the five man delegation from Buchans was their member for Windsor-Buchans (Mr. Flight) and we had a frank discussion about the concerns that they have for employment opportunities in the Province.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is a very, very special case. The young men are all in their twenties and early thirties. They were not miners there in the mine but quite a few of them have grown up there and have gotten trades and so on. So what we have done, Mr. Speaker, is I have designated an individual who works with the Department of Labour and Manpower to meet with the delegation and to go to Buchans with them tomorrow and to sit down and identify the trades and the education and the age and so on of all the forty or forty-two, to get a full identification of their trades and of their labour preference, to talk to McNamara and other people on the Hinds Lake site and see whether in fact we can have some of the people who have trades which are appropriate to the operation that is going on at Hinds Lake, to get some of them on there, as a special case, number one. Number two, to review all other government programmes that are in existence, especially the forestry programme because there are some of the young men from Buchans who have forestry trades, and see if we can get them involved in some of the forestry programmes that are on-

PREMIER PECKFORD: going and any other activities around the Province where we might be able to help.

So we have taken action, I think the delegation were pleased with the meeting and we hope that we can pursue this now over the next twenty-four or thirty-six hours and to make an earnest attempt to assist these young men in providing employment opportunities for them around the Province.

MR. SPEAKER (Simms): The hon. member for Windsor-Buchans.

MR. FLIGHT: Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate a couple of supplementaries on that particular issue raised by the hon. the Leader of the Opposition, as it is very topical and obviously very important to one of the towns I represent. And I want to say that as the Premier indicated I did attend that meeting this morning and I would say to the House that the meeting was held in a spirit of co-operation and

Mr. Flight: I am appreciative and so are the fellows from Buchans.

But I wonder if the Premier would indicate as he knows that the problem we are looking at right now, the forty to fifty young men unemployed in Buchans comes as a result of - this is not the main work force of Buchans, this is not part of the people who will lose their jobs in the next three weeks, these are the sons of miners, young men who could not get work on Hinds Lake. On one hand it is perceived in Buchans and the area that the reason that there is only one man from the town of Buchans working in Hinds Lake comes as a result of discrimination, total discrimination by the contractors, the prime contractor being McNamara and then passing down the subcontractors. I am wondering if the Premier has indicated to the contractors that that is indeed the feeling, and it is very easily perceived as such and that that kind of an attitude by major contractors in this Province does not set well with the people of Buchans, Central Newfoundland or this House of Assembly?

MR. SPEAKER (MR. SIMMS): The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD: Two points arising out of that question, Mr. Speaker; one, I fully appreciate that the unemployment situation in Buchans is not merely the question of forty or forty-two young men who are the sons of miners who are looking for work. The problem in Buchans is much larger than that and will affect miners who will be laid off. The saving grace, I guess, Mr. Speaker, on that is simply - and it is not a pleasant one, but I guess it is some saving grace - that we have some time to work on that because we have a Manpower officer on staff full-time to try to help these miners as they get laid off permanently, and they are getting severance pay and UIC. So they do have some revenue coming in and that gives us an opportunity, a little few weeks and months to work on their problems, with the young men we do not; they are about to run out of their UIC and they are in a much more desperate kind of situation in the time frame of six months or a year, number one. So I am sensitive towards that and I understand that the problem is much larger than forty young men.

Premier Peckford: Secondly, as I indicated to the young men this morning, that we would have people in the Department of Labour and Manpower contact Newfoundland Hydro and McNamara and indicate to them the feeling that the people of Buchans and that these young men have towards the hiring practices of McNamara and the other contractors on site and see whether we can, and this is a very special kind of situation that we have of forty or forty-two young men which in one community like that on top of hundreds coming off the employment rolls very shortly, if there is some way we cannot have a relaxation of the kind of hiring practices that have been in practice up there now for the last year and a half.

So we will indicate to the main

PREMIER PECKFORD:

contractor the concern that both the hon. member has and the people from Buchans, who expressed it to me in no uncertain terms this morning.

MR. NEARY:

A supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: (SIMMS)

The hon. member for

LaPoile.

MR. FLIGHT:

A further supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary. The

hon. member yields.

The hon. member for

Windsor-Buchans.

MR. FLIGHT:

I thank the Premier for

his answer but, as he indicated, the problem this morning, the one discussed at the meeting just simply begs the main question that in two to three weeks there will be 166 men permanently laid off, which constitutes half of the Buchans work force, and the rest not knowing what is in store for them after the start of 1980. I would ask the Premier if he would be prepared to indicate to the House in view of the Dyer Commission in the first place, and then in view of the Buchans Task Force Report and in view of all of the recommendations made and commitments made by past governments, would the Premier be prepared to indicate in the House just what continuity plans or what plans the government have to alleviate the kind of a crisis situation that we are going to be looking at in Buchans both economically and socially in the next - well, certainly in the next three weeks with the loss of 166 permanent jobs? The age group of those people will go from sixty down. Just what plans have this government got in store, having had five year's notice as to what would happen in Buchans, to alleviate the kind of problems that we are going to face with the shut-down of that particular mine?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the

Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I would be

less than honest and less than frank with this hon. House or with the Province or with the people of the Province if I said I had all the answers to the unemployment situation in Buchans, Bay D'Espoir or Roddickton, Happy Valley - Goose Bay or any other depressed areas of the Province of which we have many over the last number of years for a whole bunch of different reasons, some of which we can take some responsibility and the others of which are outside of our control. Suffice it to say right now that, as I indicated in my previous answer, we are aware of the problem, that we have a manpower officer on site trying to identify the skills of all the people as they become unemployed and to try and seek out aggressively more or additional or other employment opportunities for these people. That is number one. So we are doing all we can on that front, albeit it might not seem to be as promising as one would like in the sense that we cannot take the man as he retires or as he gets laid off in Buchans and give him another job the next day. That is pretty difficult to do. It is a very, very complex problem and not an easy one for governments to solve. We have a public responsibility and we will try to discharge it as well as we can. Secondly, of course, as the hon. member knows and as most people in this hon. House recognize, we are working very hard to try to assist Abitibi Price, or Price Minerals really, a division of the large company, in seeing whether in fact additional ore reserves can be brought on stream in a commercial way. This might tie in with the Upper Salmon development if it goes ahead and it might not. My own personal view is that the Buchans area is not dead from an employment point of view but there is going to be a gap in between the phase down of one and the start up of another. That gap is really

PREMIER PECKFORD: a dangerous one because we do not want to lose those people from the Buchans area, because they might be extremely essential components of any start up of another ore reserve if and when we can bring it onstream. So there is a lot of future in the Buchans area from a mining point of view, I believe, and also as it relates to the Upper Salmon development in which we hope the people of the Buchans area can participate in a real way. But it is not an easy answer. There is no easy answer to it. We have a Manpower officer on site. We will diligently assist in trying to find additional jobs for these miners as they come off. We do have a tiny bit of breathing space as opposed to the forty or forty-two young people who are about to lose their unemployment insurance in the sense that the miners will be getting some revenue over the next number of months to keep body and soul alive, and hopefully we will be able to, on a gradual basis, accommodate them within the labour force of the Province.

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms) The hon. the member for LaPoile.

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on a question that I asked the Premier the day before yesterday and the hon. gentleman was so kind as to provide me with the answer within twenty-four hours. But we were all surprised to learn that the hon. gentleman has set up another committee. Now I want to ask the hon. gentleman - in connection with C.N., this is, the C.N. closure of twenty-six railway stations and the eventual phasing out of the three branch lines that I referred to - could the hon. gentleman tell me if his government endorses or subscribes or is co-operating in any way, shape or form with the Government of Canada in carrying out a recommendation of the Sullivan Royal Commission that a federal/provincial committee be set up to be known as the Newfoundland Transportation Commission, if the hon. gentleman's government has made any appointment to that commission, is endorsing that particular recommendation of the Sullivan Commission? Just what is the position of the government on that particular recommendation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry and I apologize if the hon. the member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary), first of all, Mr. Speaker, in response to the preamble to his question, is saddened to hear that the Government of Newfoundland is attempting to grapple with the railway situation by the establishment of a committee. You know, one committee and another committee and the millions of committees that are ongoing, I suppose, in Canada or anywhere else can all be condemned out of hand. By the same token, if we can isolate two or three individuals to do some work for the government and to report to me and to the respective ministers, I think it is a step in the right direction.

I am very concerned, as the hon. member is, no doubt, representing an area which has a large railway component, about the future of the railway. And that recommendation - I have about an hour ago instructed individuals to contact Mr. Messenger and ask him would he be available tomorrow to meet with me and the Minister of Transportation and Communications (Mr. Brett) to discuss the whole situation with the railway and the liaison between the provincial government and the local C.N. people so that we are totally plugged into what their feelings are. We are, as a Cabinet and as a government, developing our own particular provincial policy as it relates to the railway and we will be taking a firm and clear stand on it in due course. But, you know, I am in favour - whether it is that recommendation - I am in favour of the concept that there must be representation from the Government of Newfoundland on a committee or a group so that we have full information on C.N.'s plans day by day, if you will, or week by week, as it relates to the ongoing operation of the railway.

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms) A supplementary, the hon. the member for LaPoile.

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the hon. gentleman that I did not express any sadness at all about this committee. The hon. gentleman must have been reading something in it that was not there. But, what I

MR. S. NEARY: really want to know from the hon. gentleman, has anybody been appointed by his government or by his predecessor to this Newfoundland Transportation Commission and, if so, who is representing the Provincial Government on that commission?

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD: I do not know if there is on that commission, there is a committee - I do not know what it is called; we are dealing with words again - which has met from time to time in which Mr. Ed. O'Brien has been involved, who is the Director of Transportation in the Department of Transportation and Communications, on information flow and decisions in which the union and the company and the government are involved. -I do not know if that is the committee or the group that the hon. member refers to or not because there are several different ones around, consultative committees, they are called, of the union and the company, for example. So I am not sure if that is the body that the hon. member is referring to. The long and short of it is right now is that I want to establish better lines of communication with CN as it relates to their operation in Newfoundland and to that end we will be meeting with them tomorrow, number one. And number two is that the government itself wishes to obtain independent information as it relates to the whole question of railways and the viability, or lack thereof, of continuing one in Newfoundland and to get some information other than from CN as it relates to that. This committee is formed in charge of the responsibility to start amassing that kind of information.

MR. S. NEARY: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member for LaPoile.

MR. S. NEARY: I am not quite sure if I follow what the hon. gentleman said, Sir. The hon. gentleman has now confirmed that his government has a representative on the Newfoundland Transportation Commission which was set up under one of the major recommendations made by the Sullivan Royal Commission.

Now what I want to ask the hon. gentleman is: is he aware that Mr. Messenger yesterday made a public statement that

MR. S. NEARY: these matters of the lay-off and the closing down of these branch lines had been the subject of discussion with the Newfoundland Transportation Commission of which the Provincial Director of Transportation is a member? Is the hon. gentlemen aware of that fact?

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is called the Newfoundland Transportation Commission, I am not going to get involved in words, and if the hon. member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) wants to say that it has been confirmed that there was a member on the Newfoundland Transportation he can. I have not confirmed that because I am not sure of the exact wording or the name of that agency. All I can tell the hon. gentleman is that Mr. Ed. O'Brien has been in touch with and communicating with the authorities in CN on matters dealing with the railway in Newfoundland. The specific matters of this lay-off and whether somebody in the Government of Newfoundland were aware of it before yesterday is something that I will have to check out for the hon. member.

MR. S. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, final supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, the hon. member for LaPoile.

MR. S. NEARY: Mr. Messinger has already made the statement. Would the hon. gentleman find out if there was a break-down in communications? The hon. gentleman is aware that the machinery is there for this government to have liaison with the Government of Canada and CN provided

MR. NEARY: in this committee, or commission, whatever the hon. gentleman wants to call it, so would the hon. gentleman find out why there was a breakdown in communications? And I do not understand, perhaps the hon. gentleman can straighten me out, on what this new committee is going to do. The committee is already there, the hon. gentleman has a representative on that committee. What will the new committee do? Will they keep a watch on the Director of Transportation who represents the Province on this other committee?

MR. SPEAKER (Simms): The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD: Mr. Speaker, the poor people of LaPoile.

MR. NEARY: The poor people of the Province I would say.

PREMIER PECKFORD: I thought I had explained to the hon. member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) that the purpose of the committee that was established yesterday is to obtain independent information -

MR. NEARY: You have a man there to do it.

PREMIER PECKFORD: - independent information, separate from what CN will provide, as to - not on the operation of CN but upon how - to get expertise on the railway in Newfoundland to see what position - Right now, I do not know if the hon. gentleman knows or not, he has not or very few people in Newfoundland have seen information dealing with the future of railways in Newfoundland or in Canada and that kind of expertise, not from CN but from some independent group who know, who have railway expertise, so that we will be in a position to assess what CN is saying and the kind of future and plans they have. That is number one.

MR. NEARY: What is your Director of Transportation doing down there?

PREMIER PECKFORD: The Director of Transportation for the Government of Newfoundland is on a committee with CN and with the union or whatever the committee is about which is involved in getting information flow on the whole question of CN.

MR. NEARY: It is not a union committee.

MR. SPEAKER (Simms): The hon. member for Burgeo-Bay d'Espoir.

MR. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Mines and Energy (Mr. Barry); it relates to the Upper Salmon or the proposed Upper Salmon project. I wonder, in the first instance, if the minister would indicate to the House whether a decision has been made to proceed with the Upper Salmon project at this point in time?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Mines and Energy.

MR. BARRY: No, Mr. Speaker, no decision has been made yet.

MR. SIMMONS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: A supplementary, the hon. member for Burgeo-Bay d'Espoir.

MR. SIMMONS: Could the minister indicate whether or not it is still likely the project might proceed this year. The last thing I heard from the President of Hydro on the subject a month or so ago indicated that the possibility is still there that the project might well begin this year. Is that still a likelihood?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Mines and Energy.

MR. BARRY: Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro Corporation is proposing that an early start be taken on the Upper Salmon Hydro Development but my position is that myself and Cabinet must first be fully briefed on all aspects of that proposal, including environmental aspects, before any decision will be made to proceed.

MR. SIMMONS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: A supplementary, the hon. member for Burgeo-Bay d'Espoir.

MR. SIMMONS: I wonder would the minister indicate whether or not any decision has been made insofar as the access to the Upper Salmon site is concerned. I understand

Mr. Simmons:

that in the report of the consultants there were three and then latterly four routes suggested, one through Bay D'Espoir, one through Millertown, and one through the Bay D'Espoir Highway near Bishop's Falls, and I think another somewhere near Millertown as well, but four altogether.

I wonder would the minister indicate whether any decision has been made by government insofar as the road access to the Salmon site is concerned?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Mines and Energy.

MR. BARRY: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge it was not made earlier, but I cannot be absolutely certain on that. I will check into it.

MR. SIMMONS: Well, a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: One final supplementary.

MR. SIMMONS: Could I redirect my question to the hon. the Premier? The minister has just indicated that there is the possibility such a decision was made before his re-entry into the Cabinet. I wonder would the hon. Premier indicate whether any decision has been made insofar as the route or the road access to the Upper Salmon site is concerned?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD: You will have to refer to the Minister of Mines and Energy (Mr. Barry) on that.

MR. SIMMONS: I know. Perhaps the Premier did not understand or did not follow the sequence -

MR. NEARY: He was reading the newspaper.

MR. SIMMONS: Yes. He probably did not follow the sequence of events in the last minute or so. The Minister of Mines had indicated that not during his time in the Cabinet had a decision been made, but he allowed the possibility that it might have been made before he came back into Cabinet. I am asking the Premier whether a decision on the road access, whether through Millertown or Bay D'Espoir or wherever, whether that decision has been made by government insofar as the Upper Salmon project is concerned?

MR. SPEAKER (MR. SIMMS): The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD: I will note this, Mr. Speaker, and check it out. I do not know off the top of my head whether there has been a decision-or whether a decision was made during my tenure of office or not. I just do not remember and I will have to check it out for the hon. member to be sure.

MR. SIMMONS: A supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe I said I would allow one more supplementary, the last question.

The hon. member for Port au Port.

MR. HODDER: Mr. Speaker, a question for the Minister of Education (Mrs. Verge). As a preamble, I think I must give this, some of the bus routes in the Province have not been tendered for as long as ten years, and this has come about because in order for a bus driver to get a raise he must tender, otherwise he works on the same rate as he first did when he got the tender ten years ago. And this has caused school bus fleets to deteriorate and the school bus driver is often in the position whereby he cannot, he is afraid to tender his bus but at the same time he realizes that he cannot buy new equipment or do perhaps necessary repairs because someone from outside or someone with a cheaper bus or someone with a better situation may come in and tender, and this has given rise to a sort of deterioration of the buses in the Province. I wonder if the minister has taken this particular situation into account and whether she plans to look into this particular situation that is presently occurring in the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Education.

MRS. VERGE: In reply to the member for Port au Port (Mr. Hodder), I will take this matter into consideration. The matter, as it stands is the choice of the school bus operators; however, it is something that I will have looked into as it relates to school bus safety.

MR. HODDER: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): A supplementary, the hon. member for Port
au Port.

MR. HODDER: Mr. Speaker, as a supplementary to that
question, there is another situation which occurs with school bus
drivers in the Province that very often, and in all cases where a
contract is entered into

MR. HODDER:

between a school board and the school bus company or the owner of the school bus, there is nothing that is written into most of the contracts or there is nothing required to be written into those contracts by the provincial government that would submit the school bus owners to have their drivers take driver education. Now I understand in some cases where the schools own the buses directly, they submit their drivers to driver safety programmes, but where the contracts are there is nothing to require the school bus drivers to submit to this training. I wonder would the minister comment on this and whether she will be looking into this as well?

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

The hon. the Minister of Education.

MRS. VERGE:

Mr. Speaker, yes, I will look into this as well. The whole area of school bus safety is now under review by the people in my department.

MR. HODDER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

One final supplementary, the hon. the member for Port au Port.

MR. HODDER:

Mr. Speaker, there is one further point on school bus safety. The present inspectors of school buses in the Province are either government officials, who presently do not have specialized training in the inspection of school buses, and as well, I understand that the RCMP must inspect the buses three times a year, and, of course, RCMP officers are not mechanics. As well, the school bus drivers are allowed to fill every seat on school buses and allow 15 per cent of the school students to stand on those buses in many circumstances. I wonder would the minister look into this particular fact?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. minister.

MRS. VERGE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will be looking into that as well. I understand that there are school bus inspectors although I am not in a position to give the details of their training. The question of standees on school buses is one of the questions being examined as part of the general examination of school bus safety.

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. W. Carter). I understand that the Department of Fisheries has two fish plants operating in Makkovik and Nain in Labrador and for large salmon they are paying \$1.80 per pound. Throughout the Island, I understand that the price of large salmon is somewhere between \$2.00 and \$2.30 per pound. Could the minister advise this House if his department will be paying the fishermen more than \$1.80 per pound for the salmon?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I will have to take it as notice and provide an answer at a later date, probably tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Trinity - Bay de Verde.

MR. F. ROWE:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Fisheries. I guess the Minister of Fisheries is aware of reports that the \$46 million Arctic Vessel and Marine Research Institute at Memorial University is under the freeze at the present time. There have been a number of reports. I wonder if the minister could confirm or deny that?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. W. CARTER:

The hon. member is talking about a federal freeze. If it is I would suggest -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. W. CARTER:

- I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member direct that question to another source, that is, to the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. R. SIMMONS:

He disowns them already!

MR. F. ROWE:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Trinity - Bay de Verde.

MR. F. ROWE:

Could the minister, Sir, indicate to the House whether he has had any consultations with his friends in Ottawa regarding whether or not there is a freeze on this particular project?

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, unlike the period prior to the new dawning in Ottawa, the new era -

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear!

MR. W. CARTER:

- we have constant consultation on pretty well all matters pertaining to the fisheries in the Province. And I must say, I have found the present minister to be - I have spent more time, Mr. Speaker, with the present minister in the past three and a half weeks and had more consultation, than with the previous minister for three and a half years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. F. ROWE:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Trinity - Bay de Verde on a supplementary.

MR. F. ROWE:

Mr. Speaker, the minister still has not indicated whether or not there is a freeze and he does not obviously know the answer, But what I would like to know, if that particular report is true, Sir,

MR. F. ROWE:

how does he rationalize that with a statement in the Throne Speech that, "My Government will, in particular, build a strong marine research and development capability to ensure that marine resource developments have a better chance of creating related secondary manufacturing opportunities in the Province."

AN HON. MEMBER:

A good start.

MR. F. ROWE:

How does the minister reconcile these two situations?

How does the minister reconcile

MR. LUSH:

Five years. Five years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Simms):

The hon. Minister of Fisheries.

MR. W. CARTER:

Any promises made by us with respect to fishery development will be carried out. That is all I can say.

Any promises made by us with respect

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member for LaPoile.

MR. NEARY:

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance, Sir. Would the minister indicate whether all the agreements have been signed with Abitibi Price for the takeover of Labrador Linerboard and if the \$43.5 million has been deposited in the public treasury?

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Minister of Finance.

DR. J. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, I was not, as the hon. member knows, directly involved in the negotiations or the culmination of those negotiations over the Linerboard mill. At the present time I am perhaps a little distracted with other matters and I cannot recall now having heard whether or not they are completed. But I certainly will undertake to get the answer for the hon. member. I will not say tomorrow but I will say at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I was not, as the hon.

MR. NEARY:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Would the hon. gentleman also undertake

MR. NEARY: Sir, to get me the answer as to whether or not the annual audits that were done by Peat, Marwick and Mitchell, which the hon. House knows are world wide, if their annual audits indicate that it was impossible for them to audit the accounts of Labrador Linerboard because sufficient information was not made available to them and this is stated in the annual reports that they presented? Could the hon. gentleman find out also if there was any follow up on the statements made in the annual report by Peat, Marwick that they could not audit the reports of Labrador Linerboard on the information that was made available to them? Would the hon. gentleman undertake to get me that information too?

MR. SPEAKER (Simms): The hon. Minister of Finance.

DR. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, yes.

MR. NEARY: A supplementary, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please! Time has expired for Oral Questions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY:

MR. SPEAKER: This being Private Members' Day we will deal with motion number four.

The hon. President of the Council.

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, if we could just before we get to Orders of the Day. I wonder in order to facilitate the hon. Minister of Finance in parting his good news to the people of the Province tomorrow, whether we could move - I move that we dispense with the ordinary daily routine of the public business tomorrow so that the minister can get right into the Budget Speech. And at the same time, since tomorrow would be inappropriate to make the motion, I move that the House when it rises tomorrow stand adjourned until ten o'clock on Friday morning and that the hours from ten to one on Friday morning be substituted for the normal hours of three to six.

MR. SPEAKER: Has it been moved and seconded?

MR. ROBERTS: If it is up to me to second it I will second it but I am sure one of the hon. gentleman's colleagues will do that. Well, there are two motions, Mr. Speaker. One, I think requires our acquiescence, that is the question of moving tomorrow. We do accept that. We have no problem with that, and we have no problem with the sitting hours either, that does not require our acquiescence but we do agree to it in any event.

MR. SPEAKER (Simms): Then it is agreed.

Motion number four.

The hon. member for LaPoile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, I humbly thank my hon. colleagues, Sir, and this is the first opportunity I have had to congratulate Your Honour on his appointment to the Chair and the Deputy Speaker. I would like to wish Your Honour well in his onerous and heavy responsibilities in this House and from what we have seen of Your Honour so far I have no doubt that Your Honour will carry out these arduous duties in a fair way. I would also like to congratulate the young lady who is now a page in the House and I must say that I was rather impressed with the item that appeared in yesterday's newspaper, or this morning I believe it was.

MR. LUSH: The Telegram last night.

MR. NEARY: The Telegram last night, and I was rather surprised to see that the young lady would divulge her age. She certainly does not look eighteen, a very attractive addition to the House of Assembly indeed. And I would also, Mr. Speaker, while I am at it like to congratulate one of the gentlemen who is seated at the Table of the House on just being appointed today as Legal Adviser to the City Solicitor.

AN HON. MEMBER: City solicitor.

MR. S. NEARY: - city solicitor, appointed city solicitor in the City of St. John's. I must say that the hon. gentleman, Sir, is a dog for punishment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. NEARY: If the hon. gentleman thinks that the decorum of this House is bad he has not seen anything yet. Just wait until the hon. gentleman gets down at City Hall. But I am sure after the hon. gentleman is finished with his on the job training, both in the House and in City Hall, that the hon. gentleman will be well equipped to become Premier of Newfoundland or Prime Minister of Canada.

MR. E. ROBERTS: Or keeper of an insane asylum.

MR. S. NEARY: That is right, Sir. And I would also, Sir, like to congratulate all those who have been elected to this House, both for the first time on either side of the House and those who have been re-elected. And I might just say to hon. gentlemen who have been elected the first time that the real key to your success is not getting elected the first time but it is getting re-elected. And I would like -

MR. E. ROBERTS: The member for Mount Scio (Mr. L. Barry) should remember that.

MR. S. NEARY: That is right.

MR. SIMMONS: 'Barry' found that out the hard way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. NEARY: I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that hon. gentlemen are very conscious of that and from what I have seen so far, Sir, will do a good job for their districts and for the Province

MR. S. NEARY: as a whole. Now, Mr. Speaker, the new members of the House probably have fallen into the trap. And I would think that the government managed to do this with a certain degree of success of blaming everything on the decorum of the House, of accusing the Opposition of being negative and obstructionists. Now this has been the strategy and the tactics, Sir, over the past several years, the past six or seven years, and that is why, Mr. Speaker, they have been successful in conning the Newfoundland people and diverting their attention from the high cost of living in this Province, diverting their attention from the bread and butter issues. The government have been successful to a certain degree and have managed to continue to con the Newfoundland people into thinking, for instance, that we have to change the rules of the House in order to get anything done in this House when in actual fact, Sir, hon. members, especially the new members, will realize very quickly that it is the government that calls the order of business in the House, and the government have not seen fit in the last six or seven years, to my knowledge, to raise the matters that are tearing the hearts out of our Newfoundland people today, namely: record unemployment, inflation and the high cost of living.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear.

MR. S. NEARY: And that is why, Mr. Speaker, that I had to put down a Private Members' Resolution.

MR. SIMMONS: Right.

MR. S. NEARY: Because, Mr. Speaker, Your Honour knows that when the Lieutenant-Governor sat in the Chair that Your Honour now occupies and read the Speech from the Throne outlining the government's policy for the next year or two, there was not a syllable, not a paragraph, not a word about inflation or the high cost of living, not a syllable. Mr. Speaker, we were all astounded on this side of the House not to hear one word about the high cost of living in this Province which is the number one problem in our

MR. S. NEARY:

Newfoundland society today.

AN HON. MEMBER:

By every survey.

MR. S. NEARY:

I beg your pardon.

AN HON. MEMBER:

By every survey.

MR. S. NEARY:

By every survey, by every report, by everything that has been done in this Province for the last several years, the number one problem that is always turned up as being the cost of living. And I doubt, Mr. Speaker, if any member of this hon. House will disagree with me that this is the most troublesome problem in our Newfoundland society. The problem that is nagging and tormenting people in our Province today more than anything else, more than any other single item, is inflation and the cost of living. And I have put down a resolution. I was hoping, Mr. Speaker, that it would not be necessary, necessary for me to go through all the rigamarole and to take up the time of the House trying to justify putting down this resolution.

I thought the Government House Leader (Mr. W. Marshall) or the Premier would rise in their place and say,

Mr. Neary: Well, we are going to go along with this. We are going to show the people of this Province that we intend to come to grips with this problem that people are finding it very difficult to cope with today.

So I put down a Resolution, Sir, that a Special Committee of the House of Assembly be appointed immediately to lay down guidelines for the setting up of a Provincial Fair Prices Review Council with backup legislation, with the necessary legislation to allow the Council to handle grievances and complaints from consumer groups and individuals who feel that they are the victims of unfair pricing, price gouging, profiteering, unethical procedures and practices in wholesale and the retail trade, false advertising, questionable procedures in stocking shelves at the big supermarket chains, and unfair competition in price fixing in connection with the gasoline, heating fuel, electricity rates and so on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated the Throne Speech that was read in this House last week by His Honour, did not have a paragraph or a syllable devoted to this problem which was a great disappointment to the people of this Province. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, that is an indication that the government have given up trying to cope with the high cost of living and inflation, have given up any hope of ever doing anything about this problem other than the attitude that they have displayed in the past six or seven years that they cannot do anything about inflation or the rising cost of living, that this is a worldwide problem created by the Arab countries or by Mr. Carter down in the United States, and that nothing can be done about it. Why should poor old Newfoundland try to do anything about the high cost of food and the high cost of drugs and the high cost of eyeglasses and the high cost of gasoline and the high cost of heating fuel and the high cost of electricity and the high cost of clothing and footwear? Why should poor old Newfoundland try to do anything about that when this is all started over in Iran or in Venezuela somewhere or down in the United States? So let us throw

Mr. Neary: up our arms in defeat and do nothing about it, Sir. Because it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, since the Tories took over the government in this Province in 1972, this has been their policy. And in previous Throne Speeches and in Budget Speeches the government have cleverly blamed the high cost of living and inflation on factors outside of this Province, and let themselves off the hook for not doing anything about inflation and the high cost of living by persuading Newfoundlanders that this was outside of their control.

That is very amusing, Mr. Speaker, for the government to try to weasel out of its responsibilities by accusing the Arabs or the Carter Administration in the United States for our inflation and for our high cost of food here in Newfoundland. Mr. Speaker, it may be amusing but it is not very funny for consumers in this Province who are being ripped off because of inefficient and inadequate transportation and limited specialized storage -

MR. J. CARTER: Is the member reading this?

MR. NEARY: No I am not. I have a few notes in front of me, Sir. The hon. gentleman knows full well that I can make a speech, ten a day in this House without a note. I am almost as good as the hon. Leader of the Opposition who has a very good memory, who can speak for hours without a note. And I might say for the benefit of new members, Sir, that it is against the rules of this House to read a speech.

AN HON. MEMBER: You seem to be reading.

MR. NEARY: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I have a few notes in front of me.

MR. RIDEOUT: The hon. member

MR. NEARY: It is so long since I have been in the House now that I need a few notes to guide me along. I cannot make a speech without the notes. But it is, Sir, against the rules of this House to read a speech. But as hon. members know Your Honour turns a blind eye to that, so hon. new members need not worry about

Mr. Neary: reading their first speech in the House.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I started to say when I said, it may be amusing, and the hon . gentleman interrupted me, but it is not funny, Sir. It is not funny the way the consumers in this Province are being ripped off because of various factors that fall within Provincial jurisdiction. There is something, Mr. Speaker, that this government can do

MR. NEARY: about inflation and the high cost of living. I will spell a few of them out in a few moments, Sir. Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why the cost of living is so high in Newfoundland is because of the inefficient and inadequate transportation system that we have. And that is something the Province can do something about. And another reason is because of the inefficient food marketing procedures and policies that are followed in this Province that fall under provincial jurisdiction. And, Mr. Speaker, some unethical wholesalers and retailers and professional people are ripping our people off, are gouging our people. That falls under -

MR. J. CARTER: Name one.

MR. NEARY: Yes, I will name one. I will come to it later. The hon. gentleman should be a little patient. It is raining out today so he is not in the savory patch today. This is something else that hon. new members will learn, that the hon. gentleman will only attend the House when it is raining. When it is fine he is up in his savory patch.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. NEARY: There are, Sir, procedures and policies being followed by wholesalers and retailers and professional people in this Province that are immoral and unethical and I will give an example shortly.

MR. J. CARTER: Outside the House.

MR. NEARY: I have given it outside the House and I will give it inside the House. And if the hon. gentleman wants me to go up to Mount Scio Road and give it to him, I will go up there and give it to him too. But, Sir, I wish Your Honour would restrain the hon. gentleman because we hear so much about the decorum of this House. Everything is blamed on the decorum and blamed on the Opposition. If Your Honour would restrain the hon. gentleman because this is a very, very serious matter, a very serious topic we are on, Sir, and I would like, if I may, just carry

MR. NEARY:

on in silence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. NEARY:

Mr. Speaker, all of the

factors that I mentioned fall within provincial jurisdiction.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there is a unique situation that exists in

Newfoundland that exists nowhere else in Canada and that is that

we have in this Province a group, a breed, a gang known as semi-

exclusive or exclusive manufacturers agents, they exist nowhere

else in Canada, and they fall under provincial jurisdiction. And

yet, Mr. Speaker, the government, as I indicated, have consistently

been telling us here in this House and telling the people of

Newfoundland that there is nothing they can do about the high cost

of living or inflation in this Province. They brush the people off

by telling them, "Why do you not take your problems to the Department

of Consumer Affairs? Tell it to the director of that department

or tell it to the minister." And that is about all you ever hear

about it, Sir. That is all you ever hear about it. I might say,

Sir, in connection with the policy of this administration, they are not

merely saying there is nothing we can do about the high cost of

living in this Province, But I will make you a prediction, Mr.

Speaker, I will wager you a bet that when the Budget is brought

down tomorrow we will get more of the same old line on this problem

by the government and that is, it is beyond their control. It is

outside of provincial jurisdiction and either pawn the blame

off on the Government of Canada or some foreign country. Mr.

Speaker, it was rather interesting to note recently that at the

meetings held in Japan where all the countries gathered together

to decide whether or not they would allow an increase in world oil

prices or not, they had just about taken their seats in Japan

when lo and behold one of the representatives from Newfoundland,

namely Mr. Crosbie, was the first to jump to his feet and say, "Yes,

we have to allow world oil prices to increase." He was one of the

first to agree had

MR. S. NEARY: and then had the face to say that the cost should be passed on to the consumer. It was also, Mr. Speaker, in case hon. gentlemen do not read the newspapers or do not listen to the news, it was also ironical, Sir, that it was the Clarke/Crosbie team up there in Ottawa that allowed Alberta to increase their oil prices, to lift the freeze on oil coming into Eastern Canada resulting in a substantial increase in heating fuel and gasoline to the Provinces in Eastern Canada that get oil from Alberta. And that is something, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps sometime when the hon. Leader of the Opposition has the time in this House, perhaps the hon. gentleman can straighten me out on something that I do not understand. We are an oil producing country. Canada is an oil producing country and I can never understand why the oil from Alberta is not brought into Eastern Canada, brought into the Maritimes and brought into Newfoundland. We allow it to be exported and the Government of Canada collects so much revenue from the exporting of this oil and gas and they subsidize oil prices in Eastern Canada. The subsidy, by the way, is diminishing, the subsidy is having less value this year than it had last year.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Tories want to get rid of it altogether.

MR. S. NEARY: And the Tories want to get rid of it altogether. But what I do not understand - I do not want to get into that now, that is too complicated - is why as an oil producing country that we do not get the oil from Alberta here in the Atlantic Provinces. Is it because we do not have a pipeline? Is that it?

AN HON. MEMBER: Partly.

MR. S. NEARY: Partly, The hon. gentleman says partly. But anyway, Sir, while all of this is going on that I do not understand, Alberta is building up a heritage fund that is now, I believe, in excess of \$2.5 billion. Their heritage fund, what they have put away for a rainy day, is almost the equivalent of what this Province owes, the provincial debt of this Province which is getting up near \$3 billion.

MR. S. NEARY:

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are my few preliminary remarks in asking hon. gentlemen to support this resolution. I hope that hon. members have been following the pattern that I outlined that developed in this Province over the last six or seven years. I do not know if it will change under the new Premier. I hope it will. We will have to wait until the Budget is brought down tomorrow and then we will find out if everything is going to be blamed on Ottawa. Maybe not so much now on Ottawa because you have a Tory Government up there. Before, it was easy to blame everything on Ottawa because you had a Liberal Government. But they may give Ottawa the odd little flick now just for show, just for window dressing more than anything else. But certainly we will find out if they are going to blame the high cost of living in this Province, Sir, on what is happening in other countries. For the past seven years this has been the excuse for not coming to grips in this hon. House with the number one problem in Newfoundland today, the high cost of living, especially food, electricity, gasoline and heating fuel.

Now, Mr. Speaker, back in November 1974, the Federal Prices Review Board presented its report to this government of an intensive survey and investigation into food prices in Newfoundland as compared to those in Toronto, Halifax and some areas in Northern Ontario. At that time, Mr. Speaker, in case hon. gentlemen have not had an opportunity to read the Food Prices Review Report that I have in front of me that was presented to the government they are supporting back in November 1974, the cost of a balanced food basket of food in St. John's was found to be consistently eight to nine times higher than in Toronto.

AN HON. MEMBER:

9 per cent higher.

MR. S. NEARY:

That is right! 8 to 9 per cent higher than in Toronto and 5 to 8 per cent higher than in Halifax.

Mr. Neary: This difference, Mr. Speaker, between cities was not the same for all areas of Newfoundland, because not all food items in Newfoundland costs the same in each community, the prices vary in different regions of the Province and different communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, according to the statistics that I saw in the paper recently, the price differential would be substantially greater today as indicated, as I say, by Statistics Canada, the latest figures that I saw of the Monthly Consumer Price Index, that shows the living cost is rising more rapidly in St. John's and in Newfoundland than in other provinces of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Food Prices Review Board back in November 1974, made an observation that was completely ignored by this government. The Food Prices Review Board said, "It is clear that the most significant sources of the difference between retail food prices in Newfoundland and the Mainland lie within the Province and the internal food distribution system." Let me repeat that, Sir, what this report said in case hon. gentlemen have any doubts. And, Mr. Speaker, the report is available, I presume, in the Legislative Library to anybody who wants to take the trouble to go down and get it to read it, or they can borrow mine. "It is clear", they said, "that the most significant sources of the differences between retailed food prices in Newfoundland and the Mainland lie within the Province and the internal food distribution system."

Having considered the factors contributing to higher prices in Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker, the Food Prices Review Board made ten recommendations of which, Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, this government that tells us that there is nothing they can do about inflation and food prices in this Province - would hon. gentlemen care to hazard a guess how many of the ten recommendations fall under Provincial jurisdiction? One? No, Sir. Two out of ten? No. Now remember this government is telling us they cannot do anything about the high cost of living in Newfoundland, it is the fault of the Arabs and the Japanese and the Chinese. How about three? How about

Mr. Neary: six? No, Sir. No, Mr. Speaker,

MR. FLIGHT: Probably eight.

MR. NEARY: No not eight. Not quite eight. Seven out of ten recommendations in this report fall under Provincial jurisdiction.

Now, Mr. Speaker, five years have gone by and there is no evidence yet that any of the recommendations have been acted upon, except one, Sir. I will give the government credit for one, and that was the Food Prices Review Board recommended that we have in this Province a separate Department of Consumer Affairs. But they could not even do that right, Mr. Speaker. They set up a Department of Consumer Affairs and the Environment. And if there were ever two things that are incompatible they are Consumer Affairs and the Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. NEARY: They could not even do that right, Sir.

MR. JAMIESON: At high cost to the people.

MR. NEARY: That is right.

And I would suggest now, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. gentlemen that they might just review that situation, because I believe, Sir, that the Department of Consumer Affairs should be separate, should be a department by itself. Because, Mr. Speaker, as members know, more effort, more time of that department is spent on the environment, which is a major problem, than is spent on the problems of the consumers in this Province. A very bad track record indeed, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, back in 1967 a report commissioned by the Newfoundland Government on economic prospects of Newfoundland and Labrador drew attention to the inefficient food distribution policy in this Province. And here is the report in case hon. gentlemen does not believe that it exist, again available in the Legislative Library.

MR. S. NEARY: Let us see, who were some of the people on that commission who wrote this report? We have Mr. Arthur Lundrigan, the late Mr. Albert Martin and we had none other than Frank D. Moores, the former Premier of this Province, John R. O'Dea, Albert Perlin, Dr. H.D. Roberts, father of the Opposition House Leader and a number of other prominent Newfoundlanders were on this commission that wrote this report and here is what they said about the inefficient food distribution policy in this Province. They said that the most significant finding of their study of the economic state and prospects of Newfoundland and Labrador, the most significant finding was the inefficient food distribution policy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The result, Mr. Speaker, completely ignored by this government. Now, Mr. Speaker, the latest report to draw attention to the high cost of living in this Province is the Sullivan Royal Commission Report on transportation in Newfoundland and Labrador. Now while we were all quick to jump on Mr. Sullivan and his colleagues who recommended the abandonment of the Newfoundland railway - well, only one colleague in that case - this controversy that developed over the abandonment of the Newfoundland railway overshadowed all the other recommendations made in that report. And that was indeed unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because there are some very valuable recommendations in that report if adopted by this government that could help very greatly to reduce, if not certainly curb the ever increasing cost of living in this Province.

And we also have, Mr. Speaker, - there is the report of the inquiry on transportation by the way.

AN HON. MEMBER: Was it ever referred to this House?

MR. S. NEARY: I do not think it was ever referred to in this House, I do not think it was ever tabled in this House. Then there was another report that was done, Mr. Speaker, the Kostaszek Report that I initiated after my legal battle with the lawyers of this Province about the high cost of legal fees for real estate transactions in this Province. AS a result of that six months' controversy the government of the day set up another royal commission called the

MR. NEARY: Report of Commission of Inquiry, Government of Newfoundland, on the cost of Home Construction and Housing. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, that there is no shortage of material to back up what I am saying and there is no excuse for the government not doing anything about the high cost of living and inflation in this Province. There is no need for the government to throw up its arms in defeat and let the wholesalers and retailers meander on their merry way, doing as they please and allowing unethical and immoral, the ones amongst them who are unethical and immoral and there are some pretty good wholesalers and retailers in this Province, allowing them to go on their merry way and gouge the consumers in this Province to their hearts' content. And that is why, Sir, I put forward this resolution to set up a prices review council in this Province. I think it is high time, Mr. Speaker, that the consumer and the consumer groups have some meaningful protection against price fixing, price gouging and unethical and immoral policies and practices followed by some, and I underline that some, of our wholesalers and retailers and manufacturers' agents and representatives here in Newfoundland.

If it is too much bother to the government, Sir, to tackle the high cost of living in this Province, as it seems to be, then the least they can do, Mr. Speaker, is to provide the consumer with some real machinery, some real mechanism whereby groups and individuals, who are the victims of price gouging and other questionable policies being implemented by these wholesalers and retailers, can get a fair hearing on their grievances and complaints. We already have, Sir, a number of agencies set up. We have the Newfoundland Tenancy Board, for instance,

MR. NEARY: that controls rent in this Province, and we have the Social Assistance Appeals Board and we have all kinds of other boards, but in the most important field of consumer protection and consumer affairs we have no board with a representative of the consumers on it.

Mr. Speaker, if hon. gentlemen, and the hon. member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) said, Well, who are they and what are they doing? - well, if the hon. gentleman will recall back last year, the last session of this House, I raised a matter that was very questionable indeed, and I raised it after I had a number of complaints from manufacturers' agents and salesmen and people who were trying to stock the shelves of the big supermarkets in this Province. As a result of that I wrote on December 15, 1978, the hon. Warren Allmand, Minister of Consumer Affairs, in connection with the matter that I raised in this House. The hon. gentleman says, 'Would the hon. gentleman raise it outside the House?' Well, I am going to table the letter, Sir, because I did not write the letter in the House I wrote it outside the House, down in my office.

I said, "Dear Mr. Allmand: I have had oral complaints from a number of manufacturers' representatives, local producers and other middlemen that in their dealings with Dominion Stores they are forced to give additional discounts and rebates to Dominion Stores as a condition of obtaining their business.

"I write at this time to ask if your department has any means of discovering whether the savings to Dominion Stores through this

MR. NEARY: squeezing of their suppliers are passed on to the consumers. May I hope for an early reply."

Well, I got a reply back a few weeks later and he said; "Dear Mr. Neary: Thank you for your letter of December 15. The granting of discounts to large buyers is not an offence and so forth - he goes on - I am going to table the letter because I do not have time to read it, I have a few other things I want to say, I just want to read the last paragraph. "We have not conducted any studies to discover to what extent discounts are passed on to the consumer, but you may be interested in the current study that is being undertaken by an Ontario Royal commission dealing with discounts in the food industry.

"The commission is looking into discounts, allowances and rebates by procedures to purchasers such as chain stores and among other things is endeavouring to determine the effects on prices paid farmers as well as the cost of food to the consumer."

So you see, Sir, in Ontario they did something about it. It was raised here in this House and the government just scoffed at it. Up in big Ontario where the per capita personal income is the second highest if not the highest in the whole nation, they did something about it because the people could not cope with the high cost of living. In Newfoundland where we have the second lowest personal per capita income in the whole of Canada, our crowd sits back and blames it on the Arabs.

MR. JAMIESON: And the highest cost of living.

MR. NEARY: And the highest cost of living in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard various and sundry reasons given by members on all sides of the House as to why the people of this Province are disgruntled with governments and disgruntled and disillusioned with politicians and politics generally. In my opinion, Sir, the real reason for the discontent the people are showing, and the lack of respect, if you want to put it that way, on the part of the people toward governments and politicians and politics, is the fact that the government and the elected representatives of the people have not faced up, have not come to grips with the real problems that are facing the ordinary people in our society today, number one of which is the high cost of living.

In the past six or seven years, Mr. Speaker, this government has been too preoccupied with bailing out their buddies, too preoccupied down on the eighth floor with figuring out how they are going to rent office space downtown from somebody who created a white elephant office building, figuring out how

MR. NEARY: they are going to bail out, Mr. Speaker, when you speak in this House you have to be in your own seat, Your Honour knows that, and anybody who was in this House before should know it.

MR. FLIGHT: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) contracts.

MR. NEARY: They have been too preoccupied, Mr. Speaker, with trying to line up expensive helicopter contracts for their buddies and trying to look after their legal buddies through Legal Aid and through goodies passed out by ministers and various departments of government. And the hon. gentleman, who took a little swipe at me the other day when he was speaking, said, 'Oh, he went down to Southern climes to get his money for the leadership,' well I want to tell the hon. gentleman there was not a cent came out of Southern climes, and if there was, Mr. Speaker, at least it did not come out of the Public Treasury where the hon. gentleman's came from, because the hon. gentleman is one of the benefactors.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. NEARY: I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman was under pay from this government from the time he got defeated - not under salary. He was given a job to consolidate the statutes of this Province and he could work whatever time he wanted. When he was not over acting as 'the little professor' over at McGill he could put in all the time he wanted at \$50 or \$60 an hour. And that gentleman has the face to stand in this House and say, 'Oh, the hon. gentleman got his money in Southern climes.' I have a few other little goodies for the hon. gentleman if he wants to stay on that trend, if he wants to keep that up, a few more goodies for him. That is only one. But that is what they have been preoccupied with, Sir.

MR. MARSHALL: The hon. gentleman is determined this House (inaudible).

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is determined -

MR. SPEAKER: (Sighs) Order, please!

MR. NEARY: - to see that the truth comes out.

MR. NEARY: The hon. gentleman is determined to see that the people of this Province get a fair shake and that the business of this House is not done in the interest of the few, that the business of this House will be in the interest of the ordinary people of this Province. And when the government does something good for the ordinary people, I will praise them and when they do something that I do not like, I will criticize them for it. And I did not start it, Mr. Speaker, it was the hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy (Leo Barry) who took the little flick, who could not resist the temptation to take the flick.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and give other examples of extravagance and waste and the type of thing they have been preoccupied with, the two explosions on either side of the Strait of Belle Isle, the Norma & Gladys, Mount Scio House, the abuse of M.C.P., the fishery gear replacement programme and so on and the scandals involved with the Labrador Linerboard mill and the contravention of the Public Tendering Act. I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, but I will do that at another time and in another place. That is what has been going on in this House for the last six or seven years. And, Mr. Speaker, if there was any lack of decorum in the House it was only because the government were stonewalling and refusing to give us truthful answers and to give us information and refusing to discuss and debate the real issues that were affecting the Newfoundland people, namely, record unemployment and the high cost of living in this Province. Mr. Speaker, as I say, I could go on for days listing all kinds of items that have preoccupied the government in the past six or seven years that we are told now is going to sweep everything under the rug and we are going to have new policies and new procedures. Well, Sir, we will just have to wait and see. I hope that is true, Mr. Speaker. I have grave reservations because there are so many of the old gang still left, Mr. Speaker. But anyway, we will see what happens in that regard. As I say, I could go on for days, Sir, listing all kinds of items that preoccupied the administration over the last several years, none of which, Mr. Speaker, will put bread and butter on the tables of the people of this Province or put shoes on the feet of the children in this

MR. NEARY: Province, or cheaper food on the tables of the people of this Province.

Hera, Mr. Speaker, I am giving the House, giving members on both sides, an opportunity to show some real concern for the people of this Province by setting up a fair prices review council not only to help them deal with their grievances, the consumer groups and the individuals, to deal with their grievances and complaints. and when they go down to the supermarket and they feel they are being ripped off when they buy their meat or buy their bread or buy their fresh produce

MR. NEARY: nothing demoralizes people more in this Province, Sir, than to first of all go in and have to pay out these high prices but then to realize that they have been ripped off. Nothing frustrates them more, Sir. And here we have the mechanism on making a proposal positive, a positive suggestion. The hon. the Premier tells us, "Be positive." What could be more positive than to recommend that the consumers, both as individuals and groups in this Province, be given the mechanism whereby they can air their grievances and complaints about price gouging. What could be more basic, Mr. Speaker, than giving the consumers at least the feeling that they have something whereby they can attempt to cope with the cost of living in this Province, and tell us how it should be tackled and what action we can take as elected representatives of the people and the government to help them come to grip with this number one problem in Newfoundland that is facing the ordinary people today and facing our society, the inflation and the high cost of living.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Simms): The hon. member for St. John's North.

MR. BARRY: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order. The hon. minister.

MR. BARRY: A point of personal privilege,

Mr. Speaker. I understand the hon. member opposite, while I was out of the Chamber raised certain personal matters relating to work that in a private capacity I was retained to do by this government. I would like just to make note of this so that I could have an opportunity to examine Hansard. I believe we have a responsibility to raise the matter at the earliest possible time and I would like to keep the matter open, Mr. Speaker, until I have an opportunity to examine Hansard and see just what sort of - what I believe to be an unparliamentary reference the hon. member made. And I would like for him to repeat the matter either outside the House or to me personally

MR. BARRY: and we would deal with it further there.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please! That is perfectly in order, I guess, to serve notice and I think that is what the hon. member has done.

The hon. member for St. John's North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. J. CARTER: Mr. Speaker, this is the first opportunity I have had to speak in this session except for giving a notice of motion and let me first begin by congratulating you yourself on the high office you have been appointed to and also the Deputy Speaker, our new female page in the House, and also all the new members who have been elected for the first time, and also say that I am very glad to see some of the old faces back.

MR. SIMMONS: Some.

MR. J. CARTER: Some. Only some. I would like to congratulate the new Leader of the Opposition (Hon. D. Jamieson) who is certainly a breath of fresh air in the Opposition bench and I am sure will bring great harmony and good will to this House of Assembly.

Now the resolution that has been made, Mr. Speaker, I believe is a tribute to your forbearance and a monument to the lack of control that the new Leader of the Opposition is able to exercise over his members. I would think that if the Opposition Party has a caucus, I suppose they have a caucus occasionally, more like a coven but, I suppose, it is a caucus and presumably matters like this are discussed and for anyone to make such an outrageous resolution as this shows a complete lack of control and a disintegration of party spirit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SIMMONS: Private Members Day.

MR. J. CARTER: There is a certain little dirty that comes to mind that perhaps would apply in this case. "There once was a man from LaPoile/, Who would Speakers and ministers roil/ 'Til a man from Bellevue/, Cut his income in two/, So now he's subdued but he's loyal."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. J. CARTER: And since I had to read that, Mr. Speaker, I do not mind tabling it.

So it is the most inflammatory resolution that is on the Order Paper to date. It is quite in character with the former Opposition House Leader and it is reminiscent of Senator McCarthy in that it throws out -

MR. NEARY: You are (inaudible) observing the decorum of the House.

MR. J. CARTER: - in that it throws out smears, innuendoes, and blanket accusations. Now, Mr. Speaker, who is guilty of price gouging? Who is guilty of unfair pricing? Who is guilty of profiteering? Unethical procedures? False advertising? Increases in electricity rates? Who is guilty of this?

MR. NEARY: We do not have any of that in this Province?

MR. J. CARTER: If the hon. gentleman wishes to name names, who is price gouging? Does he offer any names?

MR. J. CARTER: Let him name the names. Oh, no, it is just a blanket accusation. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that unless names are named, unless actual accusations are made, neither this House nor any department of government is able to deal with it

MR. SIMMONS: What are your comments on quantity discounts?

MR. J. CARTER: Quantity discount? Has the hon. gentleman ever read a seed catalogue? You buy 100 pounds of seeds. you certainly get it cheaper than if you buy an ounce.

MR. SIMMONS: Then you uphold what they are doing. You are saying you agree with them.

MR. J. CARTER: The hon. gentleman obviously does not trust the market, does not understand the market. I suppose.

MR. R. SIMMONS: I do not trust Dominion.

MR. J. CARTER: So I have to ask myself, Mr. Speaker, how does the hon. gentleman, from the former Opposition House Leader, how does his mind work? I suppose he assumes that if you throw enough mud some of it will stick. We, obviously, have been in the grip of inflation, prices are going up and the average housewife finds herself faced from week to week with price increases. And no one approves or condones or likes to see price increases. Some of them are the result of External Affairs and some of them are, perhaps, the result of local conditions not only in Newfoundland but in Canada. But there is no question about it that anyone who suffers as a result of price increases gets angry. And I suppose the hon. gentleman feels that if he panders to this kind of anger and suggests that really there is a big villain, there is a plot and there is someone or some people benefiting and if he can be the hero, that he can ride his white horse that he will always be elected in LaPoile. The government party can send the angel Gabriel and he will still get elected.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. J. CARTER: Well, Mr. Speaker, this proves that these sort of tactics work but God help us if they continue to work.

MR. J. CARTER: God help us if this is the kind of person who is going to get elected, the person who would make a resolution like that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible)

MR. J. CARTER: Well, he first ran, I think, for the NDP and then he ran for the Liberals and then he ran Independent. I wonder where next, the Communist Party? According to the sentiments that he is expressing I am sure he would find a home there. But, in fact, Mr. Speaker, I happen to know that the hon. gentleman belongs to no organized political party, he is a Liberal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. J. CARTER: He would much rather score cheap political points. Now to be serious, Mr. Speaker, some of the inflation that we suffer is caused from abroad. The increase in the price of oil; no question about it that is going to increase our cost of energy and that goes right through the whole market.

Some of the fault is caused by Canada. The government, the former Liberal government has consistently spent far more, greatly in excess of its income and, of course, the money market is a market like any other market and it reacts by devaluing itself. Our dollar has been locally devalued over the last ten years. So the present Leader of the Opposition (Mr. D. Jamieson), who was former man number two in the former government, I think has to take his share of the blame. I understand that he was a very close advisor to Mr. Trudeau. In other words, Mr. Trudeau used to listen to him. And presumably, if he had used his not inconsiderable economic knowledge he would have advised the Prime Minister not to be resorting to such excessive deficit financing. In fact, Mr. Speaker, only twelve short months ago the present Leader of the Opposition was the head of the whole world in his role as External Affairs Minister, he was the President of Security Council of the United Nations

MR. J. CARTER: which is the nearest thing we have to a world governing body. So the hon. gentleman cannot plead that he did not have enough power or enough prestige or enough influence to perhaps make some battle against inflation. The hon. gentleman also was former Minister of Transportation and the goods that we receive here have to come across the Gulf by ferry. Our groceries are not going to walk across - even the most overripe cheese is not going to walk across the Gulf! So we have been asking for an East Coast ferry for years and years and years, and yet the only thing we get is a little bit of Summer relief.

I remember, myself, having a disagreeable experience on the Port aux Basques ferry, and I wrote the then Minister of Transportation and I must say, I got back a very courteous, very prompt reply telling me what a fine service it was and that surely I was mistaken. So I think the present Leader of the Opposition has to take some blame - he has to take the blame twice - he has to take some blame that he allowed this resolution to reach the Order Paper and he also has to take some blame that the conditions described in this resolution do, in fact, exist. So he has to take some blame on two counts.

Now the hon. gentleman who presented this resolution obviously mistrusts the market system. He does not realize that it is competition that keeps prices down and that the supermarkets in town are vying with each other for Specials. They know that the housewife shops around - people do shop around. So I can see that the member would very much like to see such a committee formed and himself, no doubt, as the chairman. And he would love nothing better than to summon, I suppose, various people who have displeased him over the years, on the carpet and make their lives miserable. He would like to play the part of the grand inquisitor.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand by the present rules of this House that I can go on for a total of forty-five minutes, but I intend to cut my speech short because I hope by that method that this resolution will get that much closer that much faster to the trash can. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

The hon. the member for Trinity -

Bay de Verde.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. F. ROWE:

Mr. Speaker, I really hesitate to

reply to the comments from the member representing St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) in case I might add some dignity to them. Sir, it is quite incredible that a member of this House of Assembly since 1972, can stand up in this House and speak against a motion calling for the setting up of a special committee of the House of Assembly to be appointed immediately to lay down guidelines for the setting up of a provincial fair prices review council when just last week, Sir, it was announced in the press that St. John's, Newfoundland had the dignity of having the highest cost of living in this nation.

MR. J. CARTER:

We are the farthest away from the centres.

MR. F. ROWE:

The hon. member is the farthest away,

Mr. Speaker, not St. John's.

MR. F. ROWE: It is incredible, Sir, that the member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) can call this an outrageous motion, an inflammatory resolution. I jotted down the remarks made by the hon. member.

MR. FLIGHT: It just shows his contempt for the ordinary people.

MR. F. ROWE: And on top of that, Sir, gets around to accusing my friend from LaPoile (Mr. Neary) of being a communist.

MR. NEARY: That is decorum in the House.

MR. F. ROWE: And hon. members opposite, Sir, conducted a recent election campaign talking about the need for improvement in the decorum of this hon. House.

MR. LUSH: Shocking! Shocking! Shameful!

MR. F. ROWE: And in the same breath, Sir, that he is going out of control, the hon. member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) and making a complete fool of himself and having every member sitting around and ashamed of him, he accuses the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. D. Jamieson) of not having any control over the member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) for moving one of the most important private members' resolutions in this House in view of what we heard last week, that St. John's, Newfoundland has the highest cost of living of any other part of this Nation of Canada.

MR. LUSH: Except for the West Coast.

MR. F. ROWE: And, Sir, if that is true for St. John's, Newfoundland what must it be for places like the Northern Peninsula.

MR. NEARY: And Labrador.

MR. F. ROWE: And Labrador and other rural and isolated communities in this Province.

MR. J. CARTER: (Inaudible).

MR. F. ROWE: The hon. member, Sir, had an opportunity to make a speech a few minutes ago and if he made a complete a-s-s of

MR. F. ROWE: it that is his problem so I would ask him to refrain from -

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

Now, Mr. Speaker, the only contribution that the hon. member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) made to this debate was obviously a negative one. He is obviously not going to support it. I hope his colleagues do not speak in the same tune when they speak to this particular motion. If they are going to vote against this particular resolution, Mr. Speaker, I hope they give substantial reasons, certainly more reasons than labelling my friend as a communist, and becoming, I suppose, the biggest blame layer in this hon. House, that is the member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter), the greatest blame layer. Last year hon. colleagues opposite were blaming the federal government for everything, for the high cost of living.

MR. LUSH: They will get five years out of that again.

MR. F. ROWE: A sudden change, Sir, this year now that we have a PC Administration in Ottawa, now Sir, they are blaming the Arabs. They are blaming the Arabs.

MR. LUSH: They got seven out of blaming the Provincial Liberals, so they will get another five.

MR. F. ROWE: And he went one step further, Sir, he, in his remarks, discovered that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition was the External Affairs Minister and was the President of the Security Council of the United Nations and figured out some strange twist of logic to indicate that therefore he must be responsible for the high cost of living not only in Newfoundland and Canada but in the whole world. Now that is the kind of logic, Sir, we have to listen to in this House. God forgive the people of this Province and I hope we hear a little more sense coming from other hon. members opposite. So, Sir, I will not further dignify the hon. member's remarks by referring to them anymore.

Now, Sir, I happen to think that this particular resolution is one of the most important resolutions that

MR. F. ROWE: has been brought before this House in light of the fact that we heard last week, and I repeat again, that the capital of this Province is suffering from the highest cost of living in the nation. And we did not need a news report to remind us of that, Sir, we know that we are suffering from the highest cost of living and that is further compounded by the fact that we are receiving one of the lowest average salaries per capita of any province in this nation and probably in the whole Western world. Therefore, Sir, this particular motion is very important.

Now, my friend from LaPoile (Mr. Neary) cited a number of reports that have been done with respect to the cost of living in this Province over the years. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that there is a need for this special committee of the House of Assembly to be set up immediately if for no other reason than to collate the recommendations contained in these various reports. The last thing that I want to see are further reports done on the cost of living in this Province, further reports on transportation in this Province,

MR. F. ROWE:

we have quite enough already. What I would like to see is a select committee of this House sit down and lay down guidelines for the setting up of a provincial fair prices review council but at the same time collate the recommendations contained in these reports. Now, Mr. Speaker, if I could commend to hon. members I would like to refer to the Food Prices Review Board Report that was made public in November of 1974, some five years ago which, as the member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) has mentioned, contained ten significant recommendations; three for the federal government and seven for the provincial government for the purpose of lowering the cost of food alone in this Province. Sir, I am sorry to say that such recommendations and such reports end up just collecting dust on the shelves of various departments of government, federal and provincial governments. I would like to commend to hon. members opposite, the administration in particular and the various Cabinet ministers to whom they relate, I would like to read through and recommend that they take action on some of these particular recommendations.

The last recommendation, the one suggesting that a separate Ministry of Consumer Affairs in the provincial government be set up has partially been accepted and acted upon by this administration. But they did not go the whole way, Sir, they combined it with the Department of the Environment and now we have the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Environment which I would submit, Sir, distracts somewhat from the importance of the consumer affairs element of that particular department. And as a matter of fact, Sir, in my dealings with the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Environment and as a casual observation - I can stand to be corrected on this one - most of the activity in that particular department has been in the area of the environment. However important that may be, I submit, Sir, we have to step up the sector dealing with consumer affairs.

But, Sir, that Food Prices Review Board Report which was made public some four or five years ago, none except that last one that I have mentioned, none of the recommendations have been acted upon. And

MR. F. ROWE:

as the report states, it is clear that the most significant sources of the difference between retail food prices in Newfoundland and the Mainland lie within the Province and the internal food distribution system. So the problem is here in this Province itself and it is time now that we stop going for further reports and support this particular motion so that this particular council, along with setting up the Provincial Fair Prices Review Council with back up legislation, can collate the recommendations of these various reports so that we can see some action in this Province for a change instead of the submission of reports.

Now, Sir, the first recommendation that they make - and I will ask hon. members to take these recommendations seriously and act upon them. And I can assure them on behalf of my colleagues here, if this administration acts upon these recommendations they will be commended by members on this side for doing so. But what we want is simple action. The board suggested, recommended that the provincial government should encourage the development of a more integrated and more competitive system of food marketing within Newfoundland particularly in the development of an efficient system of wholesale distribution.

Now, Sir, this is what my friend from LaPoile (Mr. Neary) was getting at when he was talking about middlemen and rip-offs going on in the distribution of the food within this Province. And the hon. member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) can cry all he likes about naming names

MR. F. ROWE: but the fact of the matter, Sir, is that we are in a sense a victim of our own history in this respect. These middlemen and some of the - what was the other the member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) mentioned? - 'manufacturers' agents'?

MR. NEARY: They are unique to Newfoundland.

MR. F. ROWE: Unique to Newfoundland. They grew up with our history. So there is nothing premeditated necessarily about this. Families in this Province have inherited this situation and have become rich as a result of it, and the ordinary people of this Province have had to pay the tune for it.

MR. NEARY: A manufacturers' agent would not be so bad if the person buying the products could go straight to the factory in order to be supplied, but in this Province they are exclusive; you have to through them and there is where it is wrong.

MR. F. ROWE: Precisely, Mr. Speaker.

Now this is one recommendation that the Government has not acted upon in spite of the fact that this recommendation has been sitting in a report for the past four or five years. Sir, my friend from LaPoile mentioned the 1976 Royal Commission on the Economic State and Prospects of Newfoundland and Labrador, the authors of which were some distinguished Newfoundlanders. And here is what they recommended, Sir:-
 "(a) The encouragement of a voluntary chain group of retailers to improve purchasing and other marketing functions. The Board considers that it would be preferable for this development to be sponsored by a strong wholesaling unit."

Now I ask the hon. members opposite, Mr. Speaker, what has the Government done about that particular recommendation coming from the mouths of distinguished Newfoundlanders -

MR. NEARY: Including our former premier.

MR. F. ROWE: - not outsiders, and including, Sir, the former premier of this Province?

"(b) The vigorous encouragement of retail consumer co-operative stores. The Board considers of particular importance

MR. F. ROWE: the development of a more efficient system of wholesale purchasing for these stores." And "(c) A complementary programme of training for managers as specialists in food marketing."

Now, Sir, this particular Royal Commission on the Economic State and Prospects of Newfoundland and Labrador said that the Board stresses, or at least the Food Prices Review Board stresses that these recommendations are in need of immediate implementation. This was said four or five years ago. Immediate implementation.

So I would ask the hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs and the Environment in her capacity as the watchdog over consumer affairs in this Province, to take these three recommendations under very serious consideration. They did not come from any great crowd of outside experts hauled into the Province; they came from a number of distinguished Newfoundlanders who certainly know this Province inside out. I would commend that the Minister take them under very serious consideration with a strong view to implementing them, as the Food Prices Review Board suggested, immediately, and bring in such legislation that would do so.

Sir, the third recommendation that the Food Prices Review Board made, that required Provincial Government action, was that the Provincial Government should improve the facilities for the distribution, handling and storage of food throughout the Province, and they suggested two ways in which this could be done: "(1) The upgrading of roads on a systematic basis to meet the needs of distribution of all communities." Now, Sir, anybody in this House who represents rural communities must realize that the high cost of food, for example in Blue Cove, East Cove West, Plum Point, communities on the northwest coast, Three Rock Cove, and then we can go down the south coast, you can go in parts of the Northeast coast, and certainly in Labrador - would realize that the upgrading of roads on a systematic basis for the transportation of food is of the greatest necessity. To give a typical example, Sir, I was driving through St. Barbe North one March day, on a sunny day, as a matter

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MR. F. ROWE:

of fact, and anybody who is familiar with the Northwest coast knows what that road is like once you get north of Port aux Choix, say.

MR. F. ROWE: I came across a transport truck that had just simply been blown off the road, blown off the road, and in this particular case it was carrying vegetables in the middle of March with about sub-zero temperatures. The truck was left there overnight and all the vegetables were frozen, so that particular trucker - somebody had to lose - the trucker lost. The distributor lost. Somebody lost but I would suggest to this House that as a result of that one accident alone, and, of course, there are many more besides that, that the people who really lost were the people on the Northern Peninsula who had to buy that food when the second truckload came along afterwards. And it is just simple little examples like that that would significantly lower the cost of food in this particular Province. So to repeat this third recommendation from the Food Prices Review Board was "that the government should improve facilities for distribution and handling and storage of food throughout the Province (a) through the upgrading of roads on a systematic basis to meet the needs of distribution to all communities, and (b) an improved regional system of storage including, particularly, storage with controlled temperature for perishable food". Now, Sir, I do not know what the government has done since they have taken over in the year 1972 in this respect, but I can remember that one of the things that the people used to laugh at on the Northern Peninsula at Plum Point was this food storage unit. And the reason people naively laughed at this food storage unit, which has since been converted into something else I understand, was why are they putting a food storage unit on the Northern Peninsula where there is no farming. They were not looking at the fact that during the summer months of year or the fall of the year when it is obviously less hazardous to transport vegetables and such other foodstuffs to the Northern Peninsula, that storing it in such a unit would significantly cut down on the cost of the food when the consumer finally purchases it. Now to my knowledge, Sir, there has not been a significant

MR. F. ROWE: thrust forward on the part of the government to set up these controlled temperature units for perishable foods. If I am wrong, I will be only too glad to hear citations of where such units have been established.

Another recommendation, Sir, from this review board, Food Prices Review Board, which the provincial government can take some action on, is that the provincial government should reassess the potentials of local food production and processing and encourage the expansion of agricultural production. And, Sir, I have travelled this Province quite extensively and we are not the farm-belt of North America. There is no doubt about that, but anybody who has travelled this Province has seen one of our greatest traditions gradually disappear from the face of this Province and that is a situation where you have, particularly in fishing communities, the fishermen fishing in the Summer combined with farming in the Summer, harvesting in the Fall, doing their nets in the Winter and this kind of a thing. But this government, Sir, can exert some great leadership in urging Newfoundlanders, either on a family basis or a community basis, to encourage them to expand and produce and process as much local food as they possibly can, whether it is vegetable food or food from the sea or cattle. I do not think we have gone far enough in encouraging this. We are not going to be great exporters of vegetables or cattle, red meat, from this Province. We can be great

MR. F. ROWE: exporters of fish products, but we are not going to be great exporters of vegetables, nor are we going to be great exporters of red meat. However, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that if this recommendation were taken seriously by the government that we could be self-sufficient in the supply of our vegetables and of red meat in this Province. That is the fourth recommendation from the board, Sir.

Another recommendation, Sir, in view of the difficulties reported by consumers in buying fresh fish the board recommends that the Provincial Government give consideration to the establishment of retail fish markets in St. John's and other centres.

Now, Sir, one of the saddest things that I find in the very little travelling I do throughout the Nation, or North America, is the extent to which other coastal provinces or states exploit the products of the sea, particularly for tourist reasons. And you come back to this Province of ours and you find it very difficult to find good retail outlets for fresh fish. You find it very difficult to find many restaurants in which you can get a superb fish meal. Quite honestly, Sir, I prefer to cook it up myself at home.

MR. STAGG: Do you eat fish meal?

MR. F. ROWE: Well if the hon. member wants a straightfoward answer to that practically the only meat that I eat is fish food. I am keeping off the -

MR. FLIGHT: He is being smart, he said fish meal.

MR. F. ROWE: Fish meal?

MR. LUSH: He is being funny.

MR. F. ROWE: Oh, he is being his usual hysterical self like he was yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FLIGHT: Very funny and very -

MR. F. ROWE: I thought he saved such hysterics for his speeches, Sir.

MR. FLIGHT: When that speech is circulated in Stephenville he will -

MR. F. ROWE: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for - what is it Port au Port is it?

AN HON. MEMBER: Stephenville.

MR. F. ROWE: Stephenville - wishes to indulge in eating of fish meal he is quite welcome to. The utterances that threw across the House yesterday would indicate that he has been exclusively on fish meal for the last twelve months.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying that - and I commend the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. W. Carter), I commend the Minister of Fisheries for his interest and drive in trying to promote the consumption of fish in this particular Province. I would suggest, however, Sir, that if there were more pictures of fish plates in the newspapers rather the Minister of Fisheries that we might have a greater success in the selling of fish products within our own Province. But I think the minister sincerely, Sir, is trying his best to push the consumption of fish food within this Province but I think a whole lot greater effort is required to make us, in a sense, not only the fishing capital of the world but the fish exporting capital of the world. And I would commend again to the Minister of Fisheries and the Minister of Consumer Affairs that particular recommendation.

Now, Sir, these are a number of recommendation. I know it is old news, particularly for those who have deep concern over Consumer Affairs in this Province and they have probably read this a thousand times. I know it is old news, it may be boring news.

MR. STAGG: Yes, it is boring.

MR. F. ROWE: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Stephenville (Mr. Stagg) says that this is boring.

MR. STAGG: As presented by the hon. member it is boring.

MR. F. ROWE: As presented by the hon. member is boring. Well I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that if the hon. member for Stephenville (Mr. Stagg) would just shut his ears and read these recommendations, if he finds me boring, and does all he can to move the administration to adopt some of these recommendations he will be making some contribution to this Province. I cannot really say that I have seen the hon. member make any contribution up to this point. But we got on the one hand the member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) calling this motion inflammatory and outrageous and we got the hon. member for Stephenville (Mr. F. Stagg) calling the recommendations of the Food Prices Review Board, written up by a distinguished Canadian, making three recommendation from another report, the authors of which were distinguished Newfoundlanders, if he finds this boring, Sir, I am saddened by the fact that the hon. member even got elected to this House of Assembly.

AN HON. MEMBER: He finds you boring.

MR. STAGG: I find you boring.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. F. ROWE: And these are the gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, who are shouting and ranting and roaring about the decorum

MR. F. ROWE:

in this House. I sincerely hope, Sir, that the hon. the press if they are bored by me are listening intently to the utterances that are coming from some hon. members opposite because I am sure that there are some of the newer members who are not at all impressed by the flicks, the cheap, political flicks that are coming across from some hon. members opposite -

MR. FLIGHT: The Minister of Social Services (Mr. Hickey).

MR. F. ROWE: - when they are the ones who have been talking and ranting and roaring and screaming and yelling about the Opposition being responsible for the poor decorum of this House of Assembly. Now, Sir, that basically is the basis of the remarks that I want to make in support of this particular motion. I simply wanted - by the way, I might add for the benefit of the Minister of Consumer Affairs and the Environment (Mrs. Newhook) that there are three other very good recommendations there pertaining to transportation of goods across the Gulf and another recommendation dealing with a subsidy on evaporated milk and another one having to do with the fact that the federal government should give active consideration to a reevaluation of the disincentives to the production and local sale of fish resulting from the unemployment benefits programme. These are three recommendations that are made that really pertain and are for action on the part of the federal government. And if this great spirit of co-operation does exist between the present administration and the present P.C. administration at Ottawa, I have no doubt that these three particular recommendations will be acted upon pretty soon.

But, Sir, the essence of my remarks in support of this resolution was to bring before the House of Assembly once again, the fact that these, with the exception of one, nine recommendations from the Food Prices Review Board Report have not been acted upon. So, six still have to be acted upon by the provincial government and three still have to be acted upon by the federal government. And I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that if these recommendations were adopted and acted upon

MR. F. ROWE:

immediately by both levels of government, that we would see a significant decrease in the cost of at least food in this Province. Now there are other cost factors such as fuel and oil and energy that other hon. members have dealt with but I commend these two particularly to the Minister of Consumer Affairs and the Environment (Mrs. Newhook). And with that, Sir, I would hope that anybody opposite who wishes to speak against this particular resolution, would at least have the dignity and the foresight to try to cite some particular reasons why this particular resolution should not be adopted, give some reasons. We did not hear any such reasoning from the member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter), we heard a vicious personal attack on the member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary). We heard, Sir, the greatest degree of partisanship that I have heard in this particular House which was not unexpected coming from the hon. member for St. John's North. We had interventions from the member for Stephenville (Mr. Stagg) who finds all of these recommendations very boring. I hope, Sir, that he has the intestinal fortitude to go out to Stephenville next week and read out all these recommendations and say, I find these very boring. I would like to see the hon. member undertake to do that.

Sir, I give this motion my wholehearted support and I hope that the members of this hon. House will see fit to vote for it. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): The hon. Minister of Social Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HICKEY: Mr. Speaker, I should first of all say that it is with some surprise that I get an applause from the other side but I welcome it: it shows that

MR. HICKEY: We are off to a good start. I was encouraged the first few days and discouraged today, but now I am encouraged again.

Your Honour, first of all I should deal with some formalities, this being my first chance to get on my feet, and first of all I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to Your Honour on your appointment as Deputy Speaker, to His Honour the Speaker, the member for Grand Falls (Mr. L. Simms), and to all members of the House be it their first election or re-election. I am sure we all have similar aims. I am not so sure that we get our points across clearly as to what those aims are, but I will start off by adding something I hope to the decorum of the House by saying that we do not mistrust or distrust or read wrong motives from hon. gentlemen on the other side. We assume and we will continue to assume that they are here as we are here for the good of the Province and of the people and until such time as they show us differently, of course, we will adopt that position.

I want to make a few remarks with regards to this resolution because I think the subject matter is certainly an important area, and as Minister of Social Services I think I would certainly be derelict in my duty if I did not make some comments on it, by way of defense of this government on the one hand, and to address myself to the question as to the resolution itself, whether or not indeed there should be a special committee set up to look into the whole question of the high cost of living.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, there are two groups in this Province, I submit, who feel the effects of the high cost of living more than any other; one, the recipients of social assistance in terms of my own department; and, two, a group which very often are overlooked, a very significant and important in a Province such as ours where there is high unemployment and where we have not been able yet to reach the level of production and indeed

MR. HICKEY: amenities that other provinces have, namely, the working poor. There is a group in this Province that can fittingly be labelled the working poor. They work, Mr. Speaker, they try their best and they continue to work and they live at what I would suggest is borderline poverty. Some people suggest today that anyone in receipt of social assistance experiences a certain amount of poverty. Well, if that is the case, I am not going to address myself to that because I have some difficulties in accepting that statement because we have made tremendous strides in the whole social area in the past seven, eight years, and I am absolutely certain, having had the privilege of being there first in '72 as minister and now again and able to reflect the changes and improvements and the progress that has been made in this area, that we have come a long way notwithstanding the tremendous increase in inflation and resulting from that the tremendous increase in the cost of living. But this group of people that I refer to who work regularly in regular jobs who do not receive assistance and very often, Mr. Speaker, the only reason they do not receive assistance is indeed because they do not apply. There are many people in this Province who, although gainfully employed, are eligible and could be eligible and could receive, in fact, social assistance from my department. I suggest to you, Your Honour,

MR. T. HICKEY: that those people and the recipients are the hardest hit of all. And as I have said, that is one of the reasons I want to make a few comments with regards to this resolution. I do not take lightly the subject as raised by my hon. friend opposite. I think it is a very serious subject.

I can not say that I agree with the suggestion of a committee. First of all, Your Honour, I think I should point out that this government has not been without acting and has taken some action in the whole area of consumer protection in relation to the cost of living in its many facets over the past six or seven years. I can say that with some validity, having had the opportunity to revamp the whole Department of Provincial Affairs and build or create what was the Department of Provincial Affairs and Environment which is now renamed Consumer Affairs and Environment. And, Mr. Speaker, right from the outset in late 1972, December I believe it was, under the restructuring process then brought in by government, one of the chief aims of restructuring that old-line department was indeed to bring in the area of the environment and to make some headway there whilst at the same time giving some real emphasis to the whole question of consumer protection.

I can say, Your Honour, without fear of contradiction, as I am sure hon. members who have been here since 1972, that tremendous strides have been made by the number of administrations that have held office on this side of the House, all of them including the present administration as such, continue to make progress, to make changes, meaningful changes all for the purpose of protection of the consumer. I can not recall, obviously, the number but I can say to hon. members that going back to 1973, from added protection in the field of real estate, conditional sales agreements, mortgages, a whole host of areas, a whole waterfront, so to speak, of consumer protection has been addressed. That is not

MR. T. HICKEY: to say the job is done, it is not to say that we have solved all the problems. Indeed, it is not to say, as my friend from Trinity - Bay de Verde (Mr. F. Rowe) just pointed out, that all of the recommendations of all the studies been acted upon. But it is wrong, Mr. Speaker, to create the impression that there is a need for this kind of a committee today solely because this government or the past government has done little or nothing for protection of the consumer.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, and I do not wish to dwell on the past, or past administrations but the only real sign of protection for the consumer that has been evident in this House has been since 1972. If one wishes to research and go back and find the number of amendments to legislation which had something to do with protection of the consumer prior to 1972, they will find that they were few and far between. They will find a whole host of areas addressed by means of legislation and new legislation and amendment of old acts, old statutes since then.

Your Honour, I think probably the most significant of all and I am surprised that my friend from LaPoile (Mr. S. Neary) did not refer to this, or indeed did not reflect this in bringing in his resolution because I think if he had thought of it he might have probably

MR. HICKEY:

changed the tenure of it or probably gone about it in another way.

Just last year this House passed a bill called the Fair Trade -

MR. MORGAN: Fair Trade Practices Act.

MR. HICKEY: Fair Trade Practices Act. And, Mr. Speaker, that one piece of legislation in itself addresses itself to a whole host of areas covered in this resolution. That act being proclaimed requires, I believe, a solicitor to head up that division as director. Surely, Mr. Speaker, the whole purpose of the solicitor is indeed to provide added protection for the consumer in many of the areas, if not all, covered in this resolution. So that it is not accurate to say that the need for this kind of a committee for this type of protection that we have referred to is as evident now as it might have been twelve months ago or a year and a half ago.

What I am saying, Your Honour, is that the nucleus or the foundation, so to speak, of total consumer protection is in place in my colleagues department. And what it means and what it takes from here on in is to obviously build on what we have set in place. I do not have the figures at hand, Mr. Speaker. I know that my colleague, the minister responsible, will address herself to this vital question at an appropriate time and I know that when she does she will enlighten all of us by going back and telling the House how many people have been added to the public service purely and solely for consumer protection purposes. And maybe she might also address herself to, indeed, if it can be done anyway quickly, the numbers of amendments and new legislation brought before and passed by this House, again solely and purely for consumer protection.

There are a number of ways, Your Honour, that the plight of our people who suffer from high prices or the high cost of living can be addressed aside from setting up a committee. For such committee would do what? Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that such a committee would romp around the Province, hold public hearings, find out what we already know. Indeed my colleague from Trinity-Bay de Verde (Mr. F. Rowe)

MR. HICKEY:

almost has said the same thing. While he might well vote for this resolution, in citing the reports that he cited and in acknowledging as indeed he did in a most honourable way that not only has this Province not accepted and acted upon all recommendations but the federal government have not either. Indeed, the federal government to my knowledge has acted on none. I suggest, Your Honour, that the performance of this legislation or of this Province as it relates by comparison to the Government of Canada, is shining compared to them. It is true they had Mrs. Plumtree I believe. She romped all around the country. I suggest, Your Honour, that prices have never increased faster than they did while she was romping around the country. The most could be said for that exercise was indeed a direct contribution to inflation in the country -

MR. MORGAN: Can you get some order here, Mr. Speaker? The conversation is so loud.

MR. HICKEY: - by the tremendous price tag that was put on that commission. I wonder if indeed

MR. HICKEY: My hon. friend from LaPoile (Mr. Neary) has not stumbled in the pitfall of some people in another party. I am not sure they are a party right now, they used to be at least, the New Democratic Party, who talks about and who advocates a fair prices commission, a fair prices review board, all sorts of grandiose things that of course cannot be done or that if done would be useless and senseless anyway. For they talk of rolling back prices. The Federal Liberal Government in its wage and price control programme talked, too, rather bravely of rolling back prices. But what did they roll back Your Honour? The only thing they succeeded in rolling back was the wages of people and not the prices. Indeed, they failed miserably in that area.

I see really nothing to be gained by setting up a committee. I think, as I have said, Sir, there are areas where we can achieve some progress. There are areas where we have not addressed ourselves yet. The only defence I would offer is indeed we cannot do everything all at once. This government, and the former government, in the last few years have continuously emphasized our people getting back to the land to grow their own vegetables, to harvest their own vegetables, to help in terms of the high cost of living. I think our people, those who have not already and there are many who have come to the reality, that that is one area that we must get back to. This government and past governments have continued to assist agriculture, to enable people to farm small plots of land just to make themselves self-sufficient. Why the Department of Forestry and Agriculture just a few years ago, Mr. Speaker, introduced a programme of family plots which has got to be one of the most successful projects ever undertaken by any government.

I believe it is fair to say, and again the figures escape me, but the numbers that were made available were grabbed up overnight almost and that programme is continuing.

MR. MORGAN: A very popular programme. A very, very popular programme.

MR. HICKEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that those are some areas - that is one area - rural development in its many forms can have an effect on the cost of living, can enable people to do things and to produce things at the local level, which certainly can have two effects, not only do something for rural Newfoundland but help people fight for survival in terms of the high cost of living.

But there is a whole host of positive things that have been done and that this government is addressing itself to along those same lines, constructive action as opposed to giving lip-service to this very important area.

Mr. Speaker, let us face it, I think it can be acknowledged almost by anyone that there have been some excuses given for the high cost of living. Sometimes it is transportation. Surely transportation plays a significant part in terms of the cost of living in this Province, where we are located geographically and the cost of freight to bring things in from the Mainland which we need. In some instances, Your Honour, the cost of the commodity is doubled by the cost of freight. I do not have any items of foodstuff that I could name in terms of what is normally used by a family but I could certainly quote some in the farming industry. Obviously, that

MR. HICKEY: does not have a direct effect on the cost of living, but it has an indirect effect on the cost of dairy products. And I believe that - I do not know if my colleague agrees or not - hay that is bought in P.E.I. is something like three times the cost of the product by the time it gets here because of the freight costs. But, Mr. Speaker, what can be said is that the cost of living is caused to a very large degree by issues which are beyond our reach and beyond our control. It is not a case, Mr. Speaker, of blaming the federal government. It is a fact of life that no government has an answer to overnight. God knows the government that just got defeated a few months ago had no answer for eleven years, so surely we should not expect miracles from the new government in Ottawa but hopefully in different areas they will improve conditions which will improve overall the general climate which might affect inflation and will have an effect. And that is about the most we can hope for, at least from that point of view. The transportation area is one which, I suppose, we have to live with for the time being. There are no instant answers with regards to that area either. So what does it come down to, Mr. Speaker? I suggest it boils down to what I have already said. The most that this government or any government can do is to do what it can in as many ways in terms of the areas where we have control, such as convincing people to make themselves sufficient in the areas such as agriculture, fishery, this kind of thing, to try to orientate people back to the land and the sea for which most of our people are familiar. And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that will not be a bad thing, some very good signs to that, and as I said earlier there are some real positive signs that that has already taken place thanks to the emphasis and to the various programmes that the government has put in place over the years. Aside from that, Your Honour, the other area is the area where we have done much more than lip-service, where we have acted, where we have taken action and have given a very positive response to the needs of our people in terms of consumer protection. I do not see for the life of me what this

MR. HICKEY: committee would achieve. If my hon. friend could convince me, I assure him that I would not be able to vote against it because in the department that I am in and the people that I represent, not as a constituency as such but in terms of the problems, the recipients of social assistance, I would have to think twice on something which is as important to them as the cost of living, because it is the cost of living which very often outstrips everything we do by way of increasing welfare payments to our people. So, Your Honour, there are no instant answers and I suggest that this resolution will not do anything to cure the problem. I in no way suggest that my hon. friend is anything other than sincere when he brings in the resolution, but I hope that he can see through the points being put forward that already in place are a whole host of areas of protection which would indeed be duplicated if we were to adopt the resolution before us.

Mr. Speaker, I think the important thing, most of all, is that this House work together. The fact that a resolution is brought in does not necessarily tie anyone to support it. Let us get away from the area of supporting something for party reasons. Let us address the issues as indeed we see them. Let us address them in the light of new information. The effort is commendable. Indeed, just to have a debate on

MR. HICKEY:

the area of the whole question of the cost of living, there is certainly nothing wrong with it and let us take it from there. Your Honour, I think if hon. members, especially the newer members who are fresh from the areas in which they have lived, can see very quickly that by approving this kind of resolution, by setting up this kind of committee, does not produce instant answers, does not produce the kind of action which will do anything for the cost of living. Indeed, the real meat of the resolution in terms of protection, I would suggest to my hon. friend opposite, that if there are areas where this kind of thing is going on - I am not saying for one second there is not. Someone talked about naming them. Well I cannot name them. I do not know if he can but I cannot. But that is not to say that maybe there are some areas where there is a need. Well if there are, all I am saying, Your Honour, is that there is a vehicle in place, there is a system in place where they can be referred to and there are offices all over this Province where there are representatives of the Consumer Affairs Department. I would suggest if those referrals are passed on to those people, surely the system is there by which this whole question can be addressed.

I think therefore, Mr. Speaker, that hon. members should indeed vote against this resolution because at best, from where I sit at least, it would be duplication that certainly would not achieve the goals for which it is introduced to the House. I for one, therefore, can do nothing other than vote against the resolution.

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): The hon. member for LaPoile.

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, Your Honour realizes, of course, that when I speak now I close the debate on this resolution.

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): Yes.

MR. NEARY: We are just having a trial run, Mr. Speaker, on the new rules, the guillotine rules that are about to be brought into the House.

MR. SIMMONS: Which goes to show we do not need them, right?

MR. NEARY: Which goes to show that we do not need to have these things,

MR. NEARY:

Sir, if we can co-operate with one another in the House there is no need of the guillotine, Sir. But in the meantime I want to thank hon. gentlemen who participated in this debate, Sir. I must say I was rather disappointed, extremely disappointed that some of the heavy timber, some of the big guns, some of the ministers on the government benches with a little common sense did not participate in this debate which is probably, Sir, one of the most important resolutions, the most important matter probably to be raised in this House this session.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Argus Corporation, the gentlemen who sit in the board rooms of Dominion stores and Sobeys would be proud and delighted, Sir, if they were in this House today and heard the statements made by the hon. gentleman from St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) and the hon. gentleman from St. John's East Extern (Mr. Hickey). The Argus Corporation who own Dominion Stores would be so tickled and so pleased that I am sure the contributions for the political campaigns would just pour in to the coffers of the Tory Party of Canada and of Newfoundland.

AN HON. MEMBER: He could give out two bags of savoury to every constituent this time.

MR. NEARY: Yes, Sir, that is right, the hon. gentleman would be able to send over two bags savoury to Mao Tse-tung.

MR. SIMMONS: To every constituent.

MR. NEARY: No, no. He sent it over one time - somebody from this Province was over in Communist China and the hon. gentleman gave him a couple of bags of savoury to bring along hoping that he could pawn it off on the poor old people of Communist China, Mao Tse-Tung's crowd.

MR. SIMMONS: There is a strong suggestion that Mrs. Newhook might want to speak.

MR. NEARY: Well, Sir, if the hon. lady wanted to speak-well by leave I can let her have the floor and I will clue up the debate next week if that is all right with Your Honour. Did she wish to participate in the debate? I did not mean to close it off that fast. By leave then, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER (SIMMS): By leave of the hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs and Environment.

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SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MRS. NEWHOOK:

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I did think that this debate would continue on during the whole session of this House. I had been making notes and whatnot, and I was going to get figures and all sorts of things to substantiate what I wanted to say. So I really do not have these at this time. But to the hon. member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) I would like to say that in a free enterprise society merchants have the right to request a fair and equitable price for their goods, and competition in the marketplaces does place a role on the establishing of these prices. However, consumers have the right to the lowest possible price which can, in one way, be ensured by comparative shopping. Consumers have the power to influence the prices charged by retailers in the marketplace and their refusal to purchase can do this. At the same time, I do realize that refusal to purchase can not in most cases apply to electricity, gas and oil.

I am most sympathetic with consumers, especially with large families who are confronted daily with the prices, and I would be less than honest if I could give you assurance that my department has at the present time any legislation or regulations to control prices. I would like to point out, however, that in June of 1978 the House of Assembly passed an act entitled, "An Act Representing Unfair and Unconscionable Trade Practices". This act will empower a director of trade practices, who will be a practising solicitor, to take civil action against suppliers when unfair and unconscionable trade practices occur. This act will also cover unfair and misleading advertising, and misrepresentation by a supplier or their representatives. The act also contains severe penalties for breaches of the act. Under the act a supplier can be fined up to \$100,000 and not less than \$1,000. When a director of trades practices is appointed, this act will be proclaimed to come into force and should prove to be a very effective tool in my department and our Government's attempt to strengthen consumer protection in the Province of Newfoundland.

Now this director - We are right now in the process of appointing a director for this post.

MR. MORGAN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: (SIMMS) A point of order has been called.

MR. MORGAN: The hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs and the Environment is making a very important speech on a topic brought forward by a member of the Opposition, and the conversations are so loud over there, we can not even hear what the lady is saying.

MR. ROBERTS: To that point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. ROBERTS: To that point of order, it is obviously out of order if any member speaks in a conversation that interrupts the hon. member or any other member of the House. And if my colleagues and I have been guilty of that, then I quite readily and quite openly proffer our apologies. I might also say, Sir, that I think the hon. gentleman from Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan) is going out of his way to destroy as best he can, for whatever motives, the era of good feeling which has developed. If he does feel this and he is closer than anybody else, then I would suggest there are other methods than the method he has thrice tried to - including at one stage when his House Leader and I were trying to settle matters of House business. So I would simply say, I apologize if any words of mine -

MR. S. NEARY: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBERTS: The hon. lady can see how interested we are in her. My hon. friend, the member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) gave leave with our full support to let her speak. That shows how anxious we are to hear her speak, we gave leave under the rules. But I will say that if the gentleman from Bonavista South keeps up this kind of arrant nonsense he, Sir, personally, will go a long way towards destroying what I think is turning into a very good session of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: On the point of order the hon. Minister has the right to be heard in silence and I would call on the hon. Minister to continue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

July 13, 1979

Tape 139

RT-3

MRS. NEWHOOK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like further to explain that this type of consumer protection legislation was first

MRS. NEWHOOK: introduced in Canada in 1974 and when our act comes into force we will be on a par with British Columbia and Alberta and Ontario. And it is to be noted from this action on the part of the Government of Newfoundland, that we are not behind in consumer law and are striving to bring in new methods to deal with marketplace manipulators.

It is to be noted that a mechanism exists under consumer protection legislation and that is the Combines Investigations Act to deal with price fixing and monopolies and mergers and if the hon. member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary), or any other hon. member of the House of Assembly or the general public have in their possession evidence to indicate that price fixing is occurring in Newfoundland I would be most happy to undertake, upon receiving this type of evidence, to request the Federal Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to institute an intensive investigation under the Combines Investigations Act.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that last year our department dealt with over 10,000 complaints and enquiries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MRS. NEWHOOK: And we did our best to advise complainants what to do first and if then they could not get satisfaction to come back to us. But, of course, when our Trade Practices Act is proclaimed, then our department will really be in the position to help the consumer and really to help him to recover his losses. And I really cannot give you the figures on just how much our department has expanded in the last few years. . . I have not been there long enough yet to get these figures together but we are doing a very good job and it will be expanding more and more each year as I am sure you will find out. Within the next four years I am sure that I will be able to stand here and give you a

MRS. NEWHOOK: very good account of our department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Simms): The hon. member for LaPoile (Mr. Neary) now speaks and closes the debate.

MR. NEARY: The hon. minister, Sir, who just spoke gave the House the justification, the very reason for having this fair prices review council established. 10,000 complaints last year the hon. gentleman told us -

MR. SIMMONS: Lady.

MR. NEARY: - the hon. minister told us, and probably most sent away disgruntled, frustrated, not having anything done about their complaint or their grievance. This is the very reason, Sir, why I put forward this resolution to have this fair prices review council established, that people feel that it is just a complete waste of time, the procedure they have now. They need an independent body made up of an independent chairman, and two people appointed, one a consumer.

Mr. Speaker, I really am shocked and amazed to find out, Sir, that the government would not go for this resolution, would not go for this fair prices review council. We have heard the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Hickey) the very man, Sir, who should be pushing for this, whose clients are living on a fixed income, the sick, the unemployed, the crippled, struggling to make ends meet, unable to make ends meet. Not hungry because there is nobody hungry in our society anymore, but suffering from malnutrition, under-nourished, people under-nourished because of the slender amount of money they get from the minister and his department and they are unable to make ends meet. Everytime they go to the supermarket the prices are gone up. The senior citizens, the veterans, the people who live on fixed incomes, the working poor, everybody, everybody is affected by the high cost of living and every minister and every member who spoke in this debate except my hon. friend the member for Trinity-Bay de Verde

July 18, 1979

Tape No. 140

NM - 3

MR. NEARY:

(Mr. F. Rowe) made no reference at all to the high prices, no reference at all. My hon. friend gave us a list of all the legislation that was brought into the House in the last couple of years.

MR. NEARY: none of which will do anything about the high prices in this Province, will they?

AN HON. MEMBER: Is he paid to complain? (Inaudible)

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, what I am suggesting here, Sir, I am suggesting that a mechanism, a meaningful way, be established to give the consumers both as consumer groups and as individuals the machinery whereby they can process their grievances in a meaningful way.

MR. HICKEY: I just told you about one suggestion.

MR. NEARY: And my hon. friend says give him a little plot of land where they can go out and grow a few vegetables and then let the Argus Corporation that own Dominion Stores, let them put the gears to the consumers in this Province.

MR. HICKEY: That is an oversimplification.

MR. NEARY: That is an oversimplification! That is one of the arguments the hon. gentleman used against this fair prices review council.

MR. HICKEY: I just said that is one of the things we are doing.

MR. ROBERTS: Interruptions again.

MR. NEARY: I do not mind the hon. gentleman interrupting me.

MR. ROBERTS: No, but his colleague is not saying anything.

MR. NEARY: No, that is right. Well, I mean, I do not mind.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, Sir, that the people of this Province, the consumers, are not getting a fair shake. I am not saying that all wholesalers and retailers are a bunch of rogues and a bunch of crooks, I am not saying that either, Sir. What I am saying is that the consumers should be given the right and the privilege, it should be enshrined in law, that he be given a method whereby, if he feels he is being ripped off, he can do something about it in a meaningful way, take his grievance or his complaint to

MR. NEARY: a fair prices review council and have it looked into and he knows that something is going to be done about it and he is going to get a fair shake, not to have a civil servant as my hon. friend - they are going to appoint somebody about unfair trade practices - another civil servant. That is not the way to go about it, Mr. Speaker, and this fair prices review council could also make recommendations, could study the various reports that I have here in front of me and find out what can be done about inefficient food marketing procedures and policies in this Province, find out what can be done about giving exclusive rights to manufacturers' agents, and semi-exclusive rights. I have nothing against manufacturers' agents. Maybe they are a necessary evil in the kind of set-up we have in this Province, but, Mr. Speaker, what I do object to, and what sets the devil in me, is the fact that they are given exclusive rights; that if a retailer or a wholesaler in this Province wanted to go directly to the manufacturer, he is not allowed to do it. If he wanted to bring about a reduction in prices by going directly to the manufacturer, he is not allowed to do it. He is told to call up some manufacturers' agent who has a telephone in his house and that is all he does for his huge commission is phone in the order. Now is that right, Mr. Speaker? As I say, Sir, I only have three or four minutes, but I will end on the note that I made a few moments ago, that the Argus Corporation, the big monopolistic, capitalistic barons of this country, would be proud -

MR. SIMMONS: Carter's friends

MR. NEARY: - would be proud of the member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) and proud of the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. N. Windsor) and proud of the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Environment (Mrs. H. Newhook). And they talk about lip service. Here was a chance, a genuine opportunity, a

MR. NEARY: positive, constructive suggestion put forward by an elected representative of the people and flung back in our faces. Are they interested, Mr. Speaker, in doing anything about the high cost, the ever increasing high cost of living in this Province? I would say, "No, Sir". They are more interested in protecting vested interests than they are in protecting the consumer, and we saw evidence of that here this afternoon, and they should hang their heads in shame, Mr. Speaker. I am, of course, extremely disappointed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JAMIESON: This afternoon the forecast is going up again.

MR. NEARY: That is right, and this very afternoon my hon. friend, the Leader of the Opposition, reminds me that the cost of living is going up again. It has been forecast. We are headed for a recession so we are told in Canada.

MR. ROBERTS: Tory times.

MR. NEARY: Tory times are hard times, there is no doubt about that, and all I want and we want on this side of the House is the government to take action, to take action on the factors involved in the high cost of living that fall under provincial jurisdiction. That is all we want.

MR. NEARY: Mr. Speaker, there is not much else I can say, Sir, except that if this is a prelude of what we can expect, if this is the new broom going to sweep clean, the new Premier, the new flag, the new policy, then I say God help the consumers of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms) Order, please! Order, please!
The debate has closed.

The hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs.

MRS. NEWHOOK: I was just going to thank the
Leader of the Opposition -

MR. MORGAN: Respond with leave.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister wants to respond
with leave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: By leave. By leave.

MR. SPEAKER: It is nearly six of the clock.

MR. MORGAN: Same old Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: By leave, the hon. Minister of
Consumer Affairs.

MR. NEARY: To do what? To do what? Do I have
leave then to respond?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, we are quite willing to
give leave if the hon. minister wishes to say something. The hon.
minister made a speech, a good speech, nearly as good as my hon.
friend from LaPoile (Mr. Neary). She has no right to respond. If
she wishes to ask a question I am sure my hon. friend will - the
clock may have to stop for a second or two, it would not be the first
time, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!
Is the House ready for the question?
Is it the pleasure of the House to
adopt the motion? Those in favour please say "Aye", contrary "Nay",
in my opinion the "Nays" have it.

July 18, 1979

Tape No. 142

WM - 2

MR. SPEAKER: (Simms)

It being six o'clock, I do now
leave the Chair until tomorrow, Thursday, at three o'clock in
the afternoon.