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Speaker: Honourable P.J. McNicholas

Friday

10 June 1988

The House met at 10:00 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

Statements by Ministers

MR. BRETT:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:
Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform this hon. House today that the Department of Municipal Affairs has approved special operating grants totalling \$946,008 for the town of Windsor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. BRETT:
If I were playing politics, Mr. Speaker, I would have said \$1 million, because it is only a few dollars short of \$1 million.

These funds will be dispersed during the municipal calendar years of 1988, (\$186,367), 1989 (\$178,073), 1990 (\$190,169), 1991 (\$185,501), and 1992 (\$205,898). These funds are to assist the municipality in meeting the projected operating deficits of the council during that five year period, resulting from the provision of basic municipal services to the residents.

Mr. Speaker, these special operating grants are to be paid in addition to the grants and subsidies already being provided to the municipality at the present time, with provision for the payment of these amounts to be

made in the annual current account estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs in the five government fiscal years from 1989 to 1993.

Mr. Speaker, my department feels that the necessary funding for the town of Windsor is important because of the financial condition with respect to the operating deficit of the municipality.

Mr. Speaker, it has taken some time to arrive at these figures. They were not pulled out of a hat. There have been a lot of meetings and planning with the town of Windsor, and it was only after a lot of planning and a lot of meetings that we did arrive at these figures.

We asked the town of Windsor to do certain things in order to get this money, and I would like to list some of the things:

The town of Windsor has been asked to economize where possible, and attempt to increase it's local revenues. The financial situation of the town will be reviewed by the Department of Municipal Affairs at the end of the five year period to determine if further special operating grants are required, having regard to the status at the time of the possible amalgamation with the town of Grand Falls.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, and more importantly, the Department of Municipal Affairs will immediately conduct a detailed study to determine the costs of upgrading the municipal infrastructure in the town of Windsor to bring services up to a normal standard.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, and so that the people of

the Province will know that there is more than one town, this is not the only municipality in the Province where we have to give special grants in order to keep them going. Windsor did get a special grant last year, and there was an amount included in this year's budget, but the statement I just read advises the House that for Windsor it will be a long-term thing, over a five year period.

There are two other municipalities which get large grants in order to survive: One is Wabana, and for the last several years, I do not know how far back it goes, maybe ten years, they have been getting \$160,000 a year to survive. We have also had to assist the Town of Buchans, Mr. Speaker. I think it goes back to 1986, and they get a special operating grant of \$100,000.

So hon. members on both sides of the House can see that it is not easy to keep all these municipalities going, municipalities which have suffered an economical setback for whatever reason. They do not have the tax base and, of course, government accepts its moral and legal responsibility and duty to see that these towns can operate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the people of the Town of Windsor will be grateful to government for

providing them with these funds, and for agreeing to provide the funds in the future. It is an answer, but it is an answer not to the problem; it is treating the consequences and not getting down to the root cause of the problem; it is the equivalent of putting the municipality on welfare perpetually. And this is what is wrong with it in principle, even though the town needs it. It is a simple answer: just give them the fair share of the tax revenue that their incomes and expenditures and activities generate instead of letting it all go to that part of that community which happens to be in the district of the hon. the member for Grand Falls (Mr. Simms).

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. WELLS:

And this is what is wrong with it. They are not treating, Mr. Speaker, the basic problem, and that is what this government should be doing in this case. However, as soon as we change the government, after the next election, we will assure Windsor of fairness and balance and we will assure them --

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

-- that they will have fairness and balance with dignity and self-respect and they will not be treated to the ignominy of having to accept what is essentially municipal welfare. Even though I have to say I have no doubt the people of Windsor will be grateful for the bit of help, they will be insulted that government is not

really treating the problem which would allow them to continue to prosper as a municipality, with dignity and self-respect, as they are entitled to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker,

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We regret we did not have a copy of the statement to look at some of the details the minister has presented, but we note the minister acknowledged, when he opened his statement, that because he was on his feet and dealing with politics, he would round the dollar figure off to \$1 million. Well, it is quite clear by the manner of the presentation that obviously the Minister of Municipal Affairs comes in quite regularly and denies and decries the fact that members opposite are alleging political involvement in the allocation of grants. By the mere act of the announcement today, a week after we saw a whole load of municipal grants, in which we singled out a town that happens to be in the district just recently taken by the Leader of the Opposition, the minister is obviously committed to playing politics with the distribution of these grants.

Now, I am not sure whether he is nodding in the general direction of the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition doing a good job representing his district, or

promising the Mayor of Windsor that if he stays involved with the government party, he will be able to promise his constituents more from the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I think the manner in which the minister made his announcements, both last week and today, will clearly give members of the Opposition, and also everybody in this Province, the right to say that the distribution of municipal funding in this Province is clearly a politically loaded operation and the minister shows it in good fashion by making announcements the way he has this morning.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to report today that the Fisheries Loan Board enjoyed an extremely successful year during 1987-88. Board officials have prepared statistical information which clearly indicates an unprecedented level of activity for the 1987-88 fiscal year.

Under the Direct Loan Program the Board experienced a 48 per cent increase in activity for a total of 1,151 approvals compared to 778 approvals for the preceding fiscal year. This increase equates to a 66 per cent increase in the dollar value of loan amounts. This past year's total under the Direct Loan Program was approximately \$10.4 million compared to approximately \$6.3 million in the 1986-87 fiscal year.

Activity under the Bank Loan

Guarantee Program increased by an enormous 600 per cent from the previous fiscal year. Sixty-three loans were approved under this program compared to nine loans for 1986-87. In this case, the increase in numbers related to an 814 per cent increase in the dollar value of loan amounts, as there was \$2.05 million approved in 1986-87 compared to \$18.8 million for last year.

The category of bank loans which experienced the most significant increase in activity was for construction of boats greater than thirty-five feet. Of the sixty-three bank loans approved in 1987-88, thirty-five were to finance the construction of boats greater than thirty-five feet compared to two approvals for the construction of similar boats in the previous fiscal year. For the construction of large boats the increase in numbers results in a staggering 1500 per cent increase in the dollar value of loan amounts, as there was \$1.06 million approved in 1986-87 compared to \$15.5 million last year.

Mr. Speaker, activity under the Board's bounty programs also experienced a substantial increase in 1987-88. The Board's bounty programs apply to new vessel construction of both large and small categories, and rebuilding or repair of larger type boats.

Under the Board's rebuilding and repair bounty program last year there were thirteen permits approved amounting to \$330,810, compared to ten permits approved amounting to \$213,000 for 1986-87.

With respect to the small boat bounty program, 254 permits for small vessel construction -

vessels less than thirty-five feet - were issued compared to 210 permits in 1986-1987. The total small boat bounty paid in 1987-1988 was \$407,535, compared to \$229,000 the previous year.

Under the Board's large boat bounty program nineteen permits for large vessel construction - vessels over thirty-five feet - were issued as opposed to three permits issued in 1986-1987. The total large boat bounty paid in 1987-1988 was \$1.9 million compared to \$218,000 for the year before.

With respect to the future outlook for large vessel construction, the Board is aware of an additional twenty-five pending permits for vessel construction starts in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the outgoing funds through both the lending and bounty programs, we have to give consideration to the repayment of outstanding loan accounts. In this area, there has been a substantial increase in repayment activity, much of which can, no doubt, can be attributed to the Board's assignment of the CATCH Program. To March 15, 1988, the Board has already received approximately \$9.7 million in account reductions compared to total account reductions in the entire 1986-1987 fiscal year of \$6.4 million.

The builders of both large and small vessels were very busy in the 1987-1988 fiscal year and continue to be in the current year. There are twelve approved fibreglass boat builders and eight large steel and wooden boat builders presently in the Province who currently employ approximately 350 persons.

Mr. Speaker, I believe these figures clearly indicate a renewed confidence in our fishing industry by the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador. The increase in activity surrounding the Fisheries Loan Board is clearly indicative that the fishery of this Province remains a vital and rapidly growing sector of our provincial economy.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I think the minister's statement this morning, and some of the very impressive figures he announced, once again indicates the importance of the Fisheries Loan Board. The Board has now become big business in terms of the amount of money they are handling and disbursing to various fishermen.

Mr. Speaker, I think that also points out the need for this government to impress upon its counterpart in Ottawa the need to take a second look at some of the federal government's licencing policies with respect to vessel construction, and also, of course, it points out the need, given the fact that we now have a large number of our fishermen who are going in debt for considerable amounts of money, for government to maybe better manage the resource in order to protect the interest of our small boat inshore fishermen.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that in the past two or three years the fishing industry in Newfoundland, especially the inshore fishing

sector, has been anything but satisfactory. We all know, of course, that the reason the inshore fishery is continuing to fail can be attributed, to a large extent, to the mismanagement of the fishery on the part of the federal government.

We have cases, Mr. Speaker, where some of the smaller boat fishermen cannot now obtain sufficient fish to pay their expenses. I would strongly suggest to the minister that he should, maybe - and I am sure he has but I would again request him - to seriously consider making even stronger representation to his federal counterpart to have a second look at the licencing policies of the federal government, and also to impress upon the minister and his federal counterparts the need for a better and more practical fisheries management plan for the Atlantic area.

Mr. Speaker, we all know what has happened to the inshore fishery. We know that, I believe it was in 1986, for example, approximately 99 per cent of the total offshore effort was concentrated on the two banks that feed the inshore fishery, the Funk Island Banks and the Northern Grand Banks. Only after, I presume the government and members of the Opposition and the trade, the industry, objected to what was happening, did the 1987 management plan, I believe it was, announce that they were going to diversify the fishing effort - a third would be concentrated on the Funk Island Banks, a third on the Northern Grand Banks, and a third on the Hamilton Banks. That was a good move, but, Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the inshore fish stocks have not increased to any great extent, maybe they should go a little further and disburse the

efforts still further, and lessen the fishing concentration on the banks on which the inshore sector of the Newfoundland fishery depends.

Mr. Speaker, again I have a lot of good things to say about the Fisheries Loan Board. I know the difficulties under which they operate. I would like to hear from the minister, though, some time on the leasing policy he announced two or three years ago, where boats were being leased. In fact, that is not a new policy. It was a policy that was put in place back in the 1970s to facilitate fishermen who, through no fault of their own, could not find the necessary downpayment.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. W. CARTER:
Yes, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister to give us an accounting sometime of the success or otherwise of their leasing program.

MR. LONG:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we welcome the contents of the statement by the minister. In fact, I suppose the minister and the staff of his department are to be congratulated for some of the good works they are doing. But I have a particular problem I would like to bring to the minister's attention,

which I am not sure he is aware of. Given the expansion of the amount of activity going on through the Loan Board, I am not sure whether the minister realizes - perhaps other members are aware - that the staff at the Loan Board are quite overworked. I mean, this growth in the amount of activity means that there must be a concurrent growth in the amount of resources available in the department.

Now, in particular, this week I have been trying to speed up a process whereby a fisherman, who fishes out of the historic fishing community of Quidi Vidi, has had a loan approved by the Board but has been able to get no indication that he will be able to receive his cheque through the Comptroller's section of the department because there is an incredible backlog. He has an arrangement made to purchase a boat to persecute the caplin fishery, and he is watching the weather every day wondering how close he is to the caplin fishery, but is not able to get any guarantee that his loan, which has been approved, is going to come through within a matter of a couple of weeks.

Now, in speaking with officials in the department, I understand that it is not just this gentleman, whom I have been representing, but perhaps hundreds of people who are in that situation. So I would simply say to the minister, and I am glad to have the opportunity to respond in a specific fashion, that given the expansion of this activity, given the urgency when the season is about to be upon us, there has to be more assistance for those people who are doing such good work putting in place these statistics that the minister

can come in and take due credit for. So I hope the minister will take that suggestion in good faith and we can look forward to seeing more resources in the Loan Board Office and, in particular, in the Comptroller's section. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Before calling for Oral Questions, I would like to welcome to the galleries sixty-five Grade IX students with their three teachers, Peggy Dunphy, Jackie Tilley, and Norm Hickey, from Assumption Junior High in Avondale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

I would also like to welcome thirty-four Grade V to VI students with their two teachers, Betty Barron and Patrick Gear, from St. Regis Elementary School, Fox Harbour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

MR. BARRY:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Mount Scio - Bell Island.

MR. BARRY:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. Brett). I would like to ask the minister whether in the allocation of priorities for municipal funding this year he was

aware of the municipality of Paradise and the problems that that municipality was having, and specifically with respect to contamination of wells and ditches in the area of Paradise Road, and Pleasantview Avenue off Paradise Road?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Maybe not specifically, Mr. Speaker, because that type of problem is prevalent all over the Province, as other members have indicated here over the last few days. But I am sure that I was apprised of it sometime during the last four or five months.

MR. BARRY:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Mount Scio - Bell Island.

MR. BARRY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister is he aware that in that particular area of Paradise, whereas four of twelve homes on Pleasantview Avenue that had wells contaminated by human waste and sewage last year, this year eight of the twelve homes had their water supply polluted, that there is raw sewage in the ditches that is a hazard to children playing in the area, and that household pets are bringing this material into the homes? And would the minister indicate whether, in fact, there are higher priorities in the allocation of money for water and sewer than the health of the residents of the Province?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, my answer would have to be the same. There is nothing unique about that situation. It is an absolutely terrible situation when these sorts of things occur. But I have to advise the hon. member that it is, again, happening all over the Province, maybe to varying degrees. Maybe it is exceptionally bad in Paradise. I have not personally seen that. But again I repeat, in all probability somebody has brought it to my attention and I have been advised of similar situations in other parts of the Province.

In terms of priority, Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to prioritize, I guess, when you have that situation existing in different parts of the Province. It is fine to say prioritize, but you can only prioritize so much according to the dollars and cents that you have available.

MR. BARRY:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Mount Scio -- Bell Island.

MR. BARRY:

Mr. Speaker, realizing the minister is new to the department and there are many problems around the Province that have to be dealt with, I ask the minister is he aware that when the United Nations, or other World Health or aid groups, look at assistance to third world countries, one of their first priorities is to try and ensure that there is potable, drinkable water available to the

residents of these countries? I ask the minister, as I indicated in my letter which was delivered to him yesterday, I believe, whether the minister would consider meeting with the residents, and particularly the town council of Paradise, with a view to seeing, even if only on an emergency basis, whether something could be done for the municipality of Paradise to ensure that at least the standards of a third world country are applied to this municipality within the minister's responsibility?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, this government, and the department that I represent in particular, is very cognizant of the need to supply potable drinking water, proper sewerage disposal and all that sort of thing. That is why, a few days ago, I stood here and announced programs amounting to in excess of \$42 million. Unfortunately, it was not enough but it was certainly a good chunk out of this year's budget.

I am always happy to meet with any council, Mr. Speaker, whether it be Paradise or anybody else. I am doing it all day long. There is nothing strange about that.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Doyle). Now

that everybody knows that an agreement in principle has been reached on the closure of the railway in this Province, will the government indicate to the House whether they intend to provide an opportunity for full public debate on the terms and conditions that are agreed upon for the closure of the railway before implementing any terms of the agreement?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

Mr. Speaker, this is the same question that the member and other hon. members opposite, have been asking for quite some time now, and the same answer is no less applicable today than what it was when I answered the question back a month, two months or three months ago. Talks have been ongoing between the Province, the federal government, and CN with respect to the disposal of the Newfoundland Railway. If and when a decision is made on that, Mr. Speaker, appropriate announcements will be made and all members of the House will be duly informed.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Has the government gives its approval or failed to object to CN already taking steps to implement such an agreement by failing to maintain the rolling stock and the roadbed of the railroad in this Province?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of

Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

Well again, Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is very appropriate for me to stand here today and talk about current negotiations that are underway with the federal government. I have absolutely no intention of talking in that vein at all because it is just not appropriate, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated before, when negotiations have reached the stage where a successful agreement has been completed, all members will be informed.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Transportation. The minister will know that there used to be signs all along the Trans-Canada Highway saying that the fine for littering was \$100.

MR. DOYLE:

I cannot hear you.

MR. DECKER:

That is your colleague's fault, not mine, Mr. Minister.

Drivers could now assume that it is perfectly legal to throw litter on the sides of the roads. All those open spaces could be for throwing empty bottles and chicken boxes and so on. Will the minister explain to the House why the anti-litter signs were removed from the Trans-Canada Highway, as well as all up the Northern Peninsula and all across the Province?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

Mr. Speaker, it might be difficult for the hon. member to believe, but not more than half an hour ago I had a discussion with officials in my department on that very issue, in response to a letter which I received from the Cubs and Scouts in my own district, in Holyrood, which brought up that very same point. We do have some signs in various parts of the Province which point out the minimum and maximum fines associated with spreading litter around the Province, especially along the Trans-Canada Highway. I would like to inform the hon. member, as well, that within the next couple of weeks we have a new policy being put in place in conjunction with the Departments of Development, Transportation and Municipal Affairs, which will address the whole problem of signage between St. John's and Port aux Basques. One of the things that will be taken into consideration is the provision of appropriate signs which point out the minimum and maximum fines which will be associated with litter, and other matters pertaining to signage.

MR. DECKER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:

That is what I call action, Mr. Speaker, even if it is retroactive.

I asked the minister when he is planning to put those signs up,

will he also consider having trash cans put along the Trans-Canada, and ensure that they are picked up and dumped, not just an extra something to find its way out to the side of the road? So while he is putting the signs up, why not go all of the way and put the trash cans in place and arrange to have them picked up. Because in the past they were just thrown out on the side of the road, out in the gutter with the bottles and their chicken boxes.

MR. DOYLE:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

I am sure the hon. member will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that it would be very difficult indeed for my department to ensure that trash cans are placed along the sides of the Trans-Canada Highway between St. John's and Port aux Basques. That will be a very, very difficult thing to undertake indeed. But in place of that what the department is currently doing and will be doing within the next month or so is employing some students from various parts of the Province who will be engaged in a clean-up or anti-litter campaign for approximately a two month period. It occurs every year, as a matter of fact. But its a good point that the hon. member makes and we will certainly take it into consideration.

MR. KELLAND:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Windsor), and it relates to visiting foreign military personnel in Goose Bay and the request to have them exempted from retail sales tax, similar to the treatment that the Canadian Armed Forces have in European countries, or NATO allied countries.

Would the minister say what government's policy is regarding retail sales exemptions for foreign military on temporary duty in Goose Bay?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:

Mr. Speaker, our policy is very clear. Any items purchased in this Province that are taken outside of the Province within a thirty day period are eligible for a tax exemption on application by that person, provided the tax paid is a minimum, I think, of \$12. That applies particularly to tourists who come into our Province. It was an initiative that we introduced, I think about three years ago, which has benefitted tremendously the tourism industry of our Province. But persons from foreign countries residing in Goose Bay purchasing goods to be taken out of the Province within thirty days are fully entitled to make application and are eligible for this exemption of retail sales tax as well. It is simple.

MR. KELLAND:

A supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:

The minister is missing the point. In some instances, Mr. Speaker, the visiting military are there for a considerable period of time, and we are talking about possible purchases of vehicles and things of that nature. Will the minister confirm whether or not the provincial government originally agreed to the request to have them exempted from retail sales tax on purchases, and that this was later changed because of representation from the Minister responsible for Northern Development (Mr. Warren), who caused the government to change their minds?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:

The short answer to that question is no, Mr. Speaker. It is nonsense. Government's policy has been very clear and very consistent. However, we do have requests from people in the area that are being looked at, and we will consider them in the fullness of time. The hon. gentleman refers to automobiles. There have been incidents reported to me where people purchased automobiles and asked to have them tax exempt. The fact of the matter is they are and they will be for some time driving those automobiles in this Province and therefore they are entitled to pay taxes on them, the same as anybody else.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. KELLAND:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:

What we are asking for, Mr. Speaker, is treatment equal to what our Canadian Armed Forces get in, say, West Germany, where they do get tax exemptions. Does the minister realize that if the exemption is not granted to visiting military - we are not talking about the Canadian Armed Forces, but visiting military - not only will it result in the loss of tax revenue but will also result in the loss of local sales? Because these people will buy their products somewhere else, likely outside the Province, does he realize the resulting loss in sales may in effect result in loss of jobs in Happy Valley-Goose Bay?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that that possibility may exist because that charge has been made. Perhaps there is a difficulty there and we are looking at that.

What I intend to ensure, Mr. Speaker, is that we do not discriminate against Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the benefit of people from other countries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I put a question to the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Tobin).

It concerns the announcement in the last couple of days by the Federal Health Minister (Mr. Jake Epp) concerning a new program, a new initiative launched by the federal government in which they will be making up to \$40 million available to address the very serious problem of domestic violence and violence against women in the home.

I would like to ask could the Minister of Social Services give some indication as to the intentions of this government in being able to have access to these funds, with particular reference to the Province's responsibility to provide grants for operating assistance in order to be able to avail of any of these federal monies?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. TOBIN:

Mr. Speaker, we do have some limited material and information as it relates to the question that the hon. gentleman just asked.

They made available approximately \$40 million to approximately five departments of government, of which the largest portion, Mr. Speaker, is coming from CMHC, \$22 million, that will directly be involved in the physical structure, and the operations of that will have to be borne by some other agency, whether it be the provincial government or someone else.

Mr. Speaker, that announcement was only made two days ago, so we obviously have not formed any official position as it relates to that.

MR. LONG:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:
Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the answer by the Minister of Social Services in which he says that the government has not formulated its position.

Perhaps, I could put a supplementary to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mr. Simms), who has just come from a meeting with his federal and provincial counterparts across the country addressing pay equity and day care, and presumably this important initiative by the federal government.

Could the minister give us some indication whether the Province is going to put monies up front to assist the present three transition centres the government funds, and a fourth one in Labrador West, which are in desperate need of operating funds? In order for the Provinces to take advantage of this new program the federal government is offering, the federal government is asking for a financial commitment from the provinces to begin with.

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

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Obviously the specific question about funding for the existing facilities is more appropriately directed to the Minister of Social

Services. However, not to pass the buck, we did have a small briefing at the federal - provincial ministers' meeting yesterday in Quebec City related to this particular matter and this particular issue. I believe the program, whilst there has been some criticism that it does not contain a large amount of money and is not large enough to address all the problems, it certainly is a significant and important initiative on the part of the federal government. We, as a provincial government, I think would be most interested in involving ourselves in any way that we can.

As the Minister of Social Services has just said, we have not yet formally taken a position on the issue, but we intend to. If we had more revenue, of course, we could probably take the position at any time we wanted, any specific instance. If we did not have people in this Legislature who were so opposed to Newfoundland's case with respect to the Upper Churchill, and with respect to the offshore -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:
- and with respect to The Water Reversion Act, and with respect to the recall initiative that we undertook, then perhaps we would have more revenue and I would be able to answer the question directly, yes, which is what the hon. member would like to hear.

MR. LONG:
A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A final supplementary, the hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

I would like to ask the minister: In view of the fact that in the district of Menihek there is a transition house run by volunteers which may be forced to close, and in view of the fact that in my own district the Kirby House transition center in St. John's is projecting up to a \$100,000 deficit, will the minister today give a signal to the women who are doing the front line work in the transition houses that this government has a commitment to access new federal monies because it will put its own monies, in the way of additional operating grants, up front? That is what the women who are working there and the women who are availing of these services need to hear.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member need not get aggressive or nasty. He could ask the question in a sensible and orderly fashion. The announcement of the program only took place two days ago. I thought the hon. member was a bit more sensible than that.

MR. MITCHELL:

He has a reputation for being disorderly.

MR. SIMMS:

Yes. I understood the hon. member is usually well prepared for things, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL:

The member has a reputation for violence.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, this government has shown its commitment to improving

the rights of women, equality for women and all the other kinds of things associated with improvements for women, including the establishment of equal pay for work of equal value issue, including the establishment of the Women's Policy Office, including the establishment of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, including funding for transition houses, including all kinds of initiatives, Mr. Speaker, and we will address this issue in the same responsible kind of way that we have addressed all the others that I just talked about.

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Enshrined in the Constitution is the statement that equalization payments will ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation. In the equalization formula that is applied to this Province as well as other provinces, however, there is absolutely no consideration given to the difficulty of providing municipal services in a Province like Newfoundland and as a result we are getting ripped off hundreds of millions a year, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The hon. member is now making a speech so I ask him to direct his

question.

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker, it is a necessary background for the Minister of Finance to answer the question. My question to the minister is: Bearing in mind the fact that we are getting ripped off for hundreds of millions of dollars a year because of this oversight, what is the minister presently doing to ensure that we get some of this money back in the next year or so?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. gentleman for his question. It is nice to see that somebody over there has some concern about Newfoundland. It is too bad his leader is more concerned for the people of Quebec.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WINDSOR:

Perhaps if we had some of the money that his leader gave away to Quebec, Mr. Speaker, we would not be worried about equalization, we would be paying Quebec.

MR. BAKER:

Answer the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WINDSOR:

Maybe his leader would like to answer for that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BAKER:

He will.

MR. WINDSOR:

The only thing he has not done is

spoken French yet in this House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. gentleman for the question. He got it from the information that I provided to the Opposition last week, quite a bit of it, in fact, explaining fully the equalization system. He knows exactly the answer to the question but he is asking it anyway. The fact of the matter is there are thirty-seven items that are involved here in determining how equalization is paid across Canada, Mr. Speaker, and that is just one of them. Obviously, there is consideration given for a whole range of factors. You cannot possibly deal with every item that would have an impact on the financial position of the Province but over the years it is a very complicated issue, as this booklet that I gave the Opposition shows very clearly.

AN HON. MEMBER:

I do not have the booklet.

MR. WINDSOR:

Well, your leader has it. I realize he keeps stuff to himself and does not share it with you, but it was provided to your leader. If he was as generous with information to his colleagues as he is giving information to Quebec, then maybe you would be a little bit better off over there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WINDSOR:

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, it is a very complicated formula. It attempts to take into consideration everything that can impact on the economy. If the hon. gentleman does not understand this document, I am sure he leader does not, and I am not sure I do,

Mr. Speaker. It is a very complicated issue.

MR. BAKER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker, obviously he does not understand what this is all about himself.

Is the minister aware that of these thirty-seven items none of them, not one single item, takes into account the difficulty of providing municipal services in this Province? Is he also aware that not one of them takes into consideration the basic level of services that exists in this Province? Will he now admit that this is in contravention of the constitution of 1982, where we are guaranteed that we will get enough equalization to provide comparable levels of service?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the system does take into account provincial local property tax revenue, which does impact on the ability of municipalities to finance themselves. It does take into account personal income tax; business income revenue; capital tax revenues; general and miscellaneous sales taxes; tobacco tax; gasoline tax; diesel fuel; non-commercial vehicle license; commercial vehicles license; sale of spirits; sale of wine; sale of beer; hospital and medical care

insurance premiums; forestry revenue; new oil revenues, Mr. Speaker; oil revenues from new oil reference prices; old oil revenues; heavy oil revenues; mined oil revenues; domestically sold natural gas revenues; exported natural gas; sales of Crown leases; other oil and gas revenues; mineral resources, iron; mineral resources, uranium; mineral resources, asbestos; mineral resources, coal; water power rentals, Mr. Speaker. It takes that into account. That is an interesting one, Mr. Speaker, water power rentals; payroll taxes; insurance premium taxes; lottery revenues; miscellaneous provincial local taxes and revenues; miscellaneous taxes and revenues from the local level, Mr. Speaker; and shared revenues from offshore activities. We intend to get much more revenue from offshore activity than we get from Hydro.

MR. BAKER:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Will the minister admit his incompetence in this issue, set up a committee to study this obvious inequity that we are not being provided with what we are guaranteed under the Constitution, Will the minister now at least look at it to see and understand for himself that we are missing hundreds of millions of dollars a year? Quebec recently got another \$1 billion given them in spite of the fact they get \$3 billion in equalization. What is he doing to get something for this Province and to get the Minister of Municipal Affairs out of the spot

he is in now?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:

Mr. Speaker, I am entering into negotiations with Quebec to get back the \$1 billion that the Leader of the Opposition gave away.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Rideout). I wonder is the minister in a position now to tell the long suffering people of St. Lawrence and Lawn what time they can expect some action on getting their fish plants reopened?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker, the minister and the member for the area, all of us have been actively pursuing a finalization of the situation facing the people of St. Lawrence and Lawn since Monday. Progress is being made, and that is all I can say at the moment.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I wonder can the minister then tell the House without delving too deeply into negotiations, whether or not an operator is about to be put in place in that plant? The people in St. Lawrence, Mr. Speaker, are wondering what is going on, and I think they have a right to know. Can he tell the House if they are negotiating with a specific operator who more than likely will be put in place in that plant to operate it?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker, representatives of the Town Council of St. Lawrence, the union and other groups have been told in confidence what has been happening, they have been briefed in confidence as to the progress that has been made to date, and they are fully aware of where we are at this moment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the President of Treasury Board. It is in connection with the tenders that were called for the evaluation of the Department of Social Services and the Department of Public Works and Services. Those tenders have been awarded. Would the President of Treasury Board tell us how much that tender

was awarded for and who got the lender?

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to take the question as notice to get the specific details of the question. But I will do that for the hon. member.

MR. EFFORD:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary, the hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker, every time I ask a question nobody seems to know the answer. Let me say that the lender awarded to Clarkson Gordon was for \$476,000 plus expenses.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. EFFORD:
My supplementary is to the Minister of Social Services. Does this evaluation mean I want it confirmed - that there is going to be a saving to the provincial treasury and further cutbacks in the Department of Social Services, where cutbacks have already been implemented?

MR. LONG:
What! Cutbacks in Social Services?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. TOBIN:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for St. John's East was right, there have never been any cutbacks in the Department of Social Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TOBIN:
Mr. Speaker, we in the Department of Social Services, as the hon. gentleman said, wholeheartedly agree and support the consultants coming in to make evaluation. We are hopeful, and confident, by the way, that this evaluation will make the department a better department for employees to work in. It will make it a better department for the people we serve. Mr. Speaker, there have been no cutbacks in the Department of Social Services.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we are not able to do everything that the people want us to do, everything that the people would like us to do. Mr. Speaker, if we had the money that the Leader of the Liberal Party of this Province caused us to throw away! Mr. Speaker, that infamous letter of intent that was signed, which he may care to talk about, is the problem we have. We cannot do what we want to do because of the actions of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, may I suggest, before I sit down, that he should ask a question on it so we can really expose him to the people of the Province for what he did with that letter of intent.

MR. EFFORD:
A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Social Services explain to us why \$245,000 was given to the St. John's Community Service Council to study the effects of cutbacks of the Department of Social Services in this Province, if there were no cutbacks? Would he explain why we are paying \$16 million in salaries to the executive support staff of the Department of Social Services when we have to bring in a group from outside this Province to tell us how to run the Department of Social Services?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. TOBIN:

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the hon. gentleman's question is or what he was trying to get at. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, before I left the office this morning I was meeting with the regional directors from around the Province. Do you know what they are in at, Mr. Speaker? They are in trying to straighten out and take the additional thirty staff members that we have announced for the Department of Social Services. That is what the regional directors are at this morning, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. TOBIN:

That, Mr. Speaker, is not a cutback.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, as I explained to the hon. gentlemen before, we cannot do everything we would like to do. There are things we want to do but because of the actions of the Leader of

the Opposition the Province does not have the money to do what we would have been able to do if he acted as a true-blooded Newfoundlander.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The time for Oral Questions has elapsed.

Petitions

MR. MATTHEWS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies.

MR. MATTHEWS:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I take great pride and it is a privilege this morning to present a petition on behalf of approximately 1,000 residents of St. Lawrence and Lawn area. The prayer of the petition in essence is: "We, the undersigned, ask the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to purchase or expropriate the St. Lawrence Fish Plant, and to attempt to get the plant reactivated by next week, Monday, June 13th."

As the MHA representing the district, I am very pleased to stand in the House today and present this petition on behalf of my constituents. Let me say my obligations since being first elected to represent the district in 1982 has always been to put the wishes of my constituents first, and to make representations accordingly.

I guess, as we all know in this

House, and most people in the Province know, we have gone through a very difficult period in the town of St. Lawrence since the fish plant was put there in the first place as a result of the closure of the Alcan Mines. But the plant was never fully completed. It was only a feeder plant, filleting fish and sending the product on to Burin and Marystown for packaging and freezing.

As we all know, we had a new operator go in a couple of years ago and that operator, I guess, has failed. We have been in the process since the middle of April particularly trying to address the issue with the current owner and operator, Mrs. Rose Ting, St. Lawrence Fish Processors, and at the same time, trying to feel the waters to see if there is anyone interested in operating the plant in the short-term so we can salvage as much as possible from this current inshore fishing season.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to present this petition this morning and say, as the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Rideout) said in his answer to a question, we have been in constant communications with representatives of the town councils and the unions of both St. Lawrence and Lawn trying to address this very difficult issue. They are very much up to date as of late yesterday afternoon as where we are with it now.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table this petition and to go on record as supporting fully the wishes of my constituents in St. Lawrence and Lawn.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker,

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Twillingate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I think when Mrs. Ting arrived in the Province some years ago to take possession of that plant and the two plants on the Southwest Coast, I think she meant well. I think, and the minister has said this on a number of occasions in the House, that she was well received and her proposal met with the approval of a large number of people in the towns affected.

But I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have now come to the end of the road as far as Mrs. Ting is concerned. The member for the district and the minister can talk all they like. Mr. Speaker, the problem that you are having now in St. Lawrence, and I might add the answer the minister gave me this morning is almost the identical answer he gave me two weeks ago: 'Matters are progressing, negotiations are ongoing' and he is hoping to have a successful conclusions to those negotiations very shortly.' That is the answer we got almost two weeks ago, perhaps longer.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is in the way the plant was disposed of in the first instance. I suppose hindsight is fine, but maybe we can learn a lesson from what happened when the plant was given to Mrs. Ting. Of course, it must be obvious now to the minister and

to the member and to all the people in the communities effected that it was absolutely wrong to give that lady clear, free title to that plant.

In Lawn, of course, we have a different situation in that at least the Fishermen's Committee there, I presume, had the foresight to prevent that sort of a situation from developing. The plant in Lawn was leased to her under certain conditions.

But in the St. Lawrence plant, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for what has happened rest squarely on the Minister of Fisheries shoulders, and I suppose maybe too even to a greater extent on the shoulders of the member who represents that district.

It does not make sense a facility which cost the taxpayers of this Province, I believe, in excess of \$3 million should be just handed over to this lady who came in here, no doubt with good intentions, but certainly without a proven track record in fish processing, to have just handed over that facility to her, Mr. Speaker, to my way of thinking is entirely wrong. Of course, we are now seeing the folly of what happened and the people of St. Lawrence are paying for it.

Mr. Speaker, the minister this morning in reply to my question indicated all of the people in St. Lawrence are well aware of what is happening. They seem to be happy with the progress being made and are content to let things take their normal course. Well, I think he indicated words to that effect. The councils, I believe he said, and the workers and the unions know what is going on and they appear to be happy with the

progress being made.

Well, let me tell the minister, I met with a delegation yesterday of people from St. Lawrence. I believe they might have met with the minister. I think they are the instigators of this 840-name petition, a copy of which was given to me. They are not at all happy with what is happening, nor are they as well informed as they should be, Mr. Speaker, on the progress of negotiations.

The minister, of course, in the preamble to petition failed to mention, Mr. Speaker, one very important point and that is that they are asking the Government of Canada to purchase or expropriate the fish plant in St. Lawrence and to get the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to purchase or expropriate the plant in St. Lawrence and get the plant back in operation by Monday, June 13. Now, that date, I presume, is not just plucked from thin air and used to dramatize the importance of the petition.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is this is a very urgent matter. There are altogether, I suppose, more than 500 workers and fishermen in the communities affected that are depending on the reopening of that plant.

I give the minister full credit. I am sure he is working hard to try and get the plant reactivated. But it is quite obvious now he is not working hard enough or maybe he is taking the wrong tact. How long can the minister continue to be at the mercy of the former operator? Again, without suggesting that we do anything to discredit the Province or to injure in any way the innocent bystanders, the

creditors of that company, I contend the minister should set a deadline. If negotiations are not concluded by that date, and I think the date is long overdue, by the way, when he should have done this, then I think the minister should take whatever action is necessary. If that means bringing an act or a bill into the Legislature giving him the authority to maybe, for the want of a better word, to expropriate that plant for use, for a stated period, then I think the minister should take that action.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow that situation to drag on, as it is dragging on. I think the minister should seriously consider that. If The Expropriation Act under which we now operate does not allow an expropriation for use without affecting the creditors of that company, then I would strongly suggest to him he introduce the necessary amendment to the act which will enable him to do that.

I can almost assure him, Mr. Speaker, that members on this side, certainly our party, would do everything in its power to expedite the passage of that amendment.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. W. CARTER:
In conclusion, I support this petition, naturally, and I would again ask the Minister to do what has to be done to make sure the plant is put back in operation without any further delay.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

I have just had an opportunity to

look at this petition. I would like to draw hon. members' attention to a number of matters in it. Number one, it is not a petition to this hon. House, a point we have mentioned on a number of occasions. It is also 'demanding' and a petition is not a demand. Thirdly, I have some doubt about whether it is in order because it is actually asking for funds, either directly or indirectly.

Beauchesne, page 212, Section 685, Paragraph (3): "The House will refuse to receive any petition that directly asks for a grant of money out of the public revenues unless such grant has first been recommended by the Crown."

I think, as far as the House is concerned, we should just discuss this further, by leave.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on Your Honour's ruling, although I see the Government House Leader is now there and the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies is there as well.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:
In spite of what Your Honor has said, that this petition is not strictly in order, I doubt the people of St. Lawrence read Beauchesne every night before they go to sleep, but I do know they are concerned about their fish plant and they want it opened. We all know what their intent is, to have the government and the House take action.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

Is there leave?

MR. TULK:

Am I allowed to make a point?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is not making a point of order, he is making a speech on the St. Lawrence fish plant at the moment and that is not in order.

MR. TULK:

I am not making a speech. I am saying -

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is out of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. TULK:

Boys, oh boys, oh boys!

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker,

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

I assume you are asking leave?

MR. SPEAKER:

To the point of order.

MR. TULK:

There is no point of order.

MR. FENWICK:

I assume you are asking leave to introduce the petition even though it is irregular. Is that the question?

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes, leave of the House.

MR. FENWICK:

There is leave from us under one condition: We would like to address it as well, which would

require a fourth speaker on it. If the House is willing to do that, we would be quite happy to give leave to have it addressed, even though it is irregular.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, I think that is a form of blackmail which is not permitted and not acceptable to the House. The normal rules apply. We are simply respecting Your Honour's ruling, which is an accurate one, obviously, but the Opposition House Leader has agree to give leave -

MR. TULK:

I was about to.

MR. SIMMS:

Well, he was about to give leave. We are prepared to give leave, but the normal rules will apply: Two speakers to one side and one speaker on the other side. That is the normal rule. The two hon. members are not prepared to grant leave.

MR. SPEAKER:

Is there leave of the House?

MR. FENWICK:

If you are asking is there leave to do it, we have told the Government House Leader and the Official Opposition House Leader we think it is appropriate it be discussed, but we think it is appropriate it be discussed by all parties in the House. We, obviously, will not not a chance to speak to it. We would like to speak to it and we would like to support it, but if we are not

going to be given leave to speak, in violation of the rules, we will not give leave to have it discussed any further.

MR. SIMMS:
Every petition in the House?

MR. FENWICK:
You have your terms. Either agree or say no.

MR. TULK:
On a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:
A point of order, the hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. SIMMS:
It is blackmail.

MR. TULK:
Am I given to understand the people of St. Lawrence do not have their petition presented to the House, that leave has been withdrawn by the hon. gentleman because he cannot speak?

MR. FENWICK:
Yes.

MR. LONG:
We are asking for leave to speak.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

There is an irregularity in this petition and the simplest way to deal with the matter is by leave of the House. If leave of the House is granted, I will call on the hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. SIMMS:
Leave! Agreed!

MR. TULK:
You have leave from here.

MR. SPEAKER:

I am not sure what the hon. the member for Menihek's position is.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, the concerns of the people of St. Lawrence are more important than even our getting a chance to support it, it is obviously on the record that we do support it so we therefore give leave to the other parties.

We think this is a particularly nasty way of doing business. We gave leave to change the rules. We think they should have been gracious enough to allow us to speak to the petition as well. If they want to be petty about it, it is up to them. We will not deny the people of St. Lawrence the opportunity to have their concerns heard.

So you have your leave.

MR. J. CARTER:
On a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:
A point of order, the hon. the member for St. John's North.

MR. J. CARTER:
I think the solution to our dilemma is to allow this petition to be heard and then, after it has been heard, if the member for Menihek or that corner party down there want to speak, let them ask leave to speak and it may very well be granted to them.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

Leave has been granted. I recognize the hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WARREN:

Come on now, give it to them.

MR. RIDEOUT:

I will not be tempted. I could be, but I will not be. It is too early in the morning.

Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say I am pleased to have an opportunity, by leave of the House, unfortunately, to say we have been working very, very diligently, despite what the hon. gentleman from Twillingate (Mr. W. Carter) tried to intimate in his remarks this morning, in concurrence with the people of St. Lawrence and Lawn, to address this matter as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, you can take a long-term approach or you can take a short-term approach. Government has deliberately chosen to take a short-term approach to the problem facing St. Lawrence and Lawn at the moment, because other options, including the option, if it were to be accepted - that is another story that will have to be addressed at another time - of purchase or the option of expropriation, certainly the option of purchase without a willing seller is an option which may not occur very, very quickly. The option of expropriation, if government were to take that procedure, is not a short-term thing. It is not something which can happen just because the legislature passes a piece of legislation.

I happen to have gone through, Mr. Speaker, an expropriation process in terms of the asbestos property in Baie Verte, and I know the legal ramifications even after the legislature has exercised its constitutional and legitimate right to pass legislation. I know

of the legal barriers which can be placed in front of the finalization of the expropriation order. I know it from experience. This government knows it from experience. So our goal has been, Mr. Speaker, to get a short-term solution to the problem facing the people of St. Lawrence and Lawn and, then, have the time necessary to work on a longer term solution.

So I do not agree at all with the observations of the hon. gentleman from Twillingate, that we are not taking the right approach. We are taking the right approach. We are taking the only legitimate approach which can be taken at this moment to ensure there are employment opportunities in St. Lawrence and Lawn this Summer. Purchase and expropriation would not necessarily make that a reality. I know that from experience. We have told that to the representatives of the community and the representatives of the union.

We have made substantial progress, not in two weeks, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman intimated, but in four days, because the other party did not get to the table until Monday, but we had been negotiating seriously days, evenings, and nights over the last four days. We have made progress.

I do not know if there will be a successful conclusion. I hope there will be. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure there is. But we are doing our best in a very difficult situation, with the help of my colleague here, to get this matter resolved.

I will say this to the hon. gentleman, in closing. He talked

about the hindsight of the people of Lawn in not allowing their facility, which my department owns, by the way, to get into the same situation.

Well, the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, the facility in Lawn owned by my department was lease previously to H.B. Dawe, and it was the people of Lawn who insisted that we break that lease and give that facility to Mrs. Ting.

So, hindsight is twenty/twenty. For the people of St. Lawrence, it is twenty/twenty; for the people of Lawn, it is twenty/twenty; for the government, it is twenty/twenty.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Ting, to give an individual who tried her due, has invested in excess of \$1.5 million in a plant which had no freezing when she arrived here, in a plant which was a shell and had nothing only a building when she arrived here. She has made considerable improvement, money wise, capital wise, to that facility which, in the long-term, will be to the benefit of the people of St. Lawrence. That is the deal this government is trying to put together.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, could I have leave to speak to the petition?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Menihek (Mr. Fenwick) asks for leave of the House to speak to the petition. Does the hon. the member have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
By leave.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. LONG:
Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:
Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:
This is not done as a condition.

MR. FENWICK:
I know that, we gave you unconditional rights to reintroduce an imperfect petition.

Mr. Speaker, the reason we would like to address it is because of two reasons.

MR. J. CARTER:
A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A point of order, the hon. member for St. John's North.

MR. J. CARTER:
It should be understood and clearly acknowledged by the members of that corner party this is particular and specific leave not dependent on anything they did, or might do. Unless they are willing to acknowledge that, I will not give leave.

MR. LONG:
Brilliant intervention! Of course we acknowledge it.

MR. SPEAKER:
I do not think there is a point of order there but if the hon. member withdraws leave, the hon. member must stop.

MR. FENWICK:
I do not believe he did. I think he indicated certain conditions. We gave unconditional leave to

introduce the petition. It was not connected with any request to speak on it, so on that basis, I would assume it coincides with the conditions the member for St. John's North has outlined.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Merihek.

MR. FENWICK:

There are just two things we would like to say about it. We had a chance to meet with the same committee who I think met with the Minister of Fisheries and also with the Opposition Party.

In talking to them, it is obvious we should not be, I think, particularly vindictive in the sense of any reaction to Rose Ting because, in talking to the people of St. Lawrence, she did go in there and make a lot of improvements. She put in a plate freezer and quite a few improvements which were really necessary. It is a much better plant as a result of the activities she has exercised.

I had seen the plant before that and I know the problems they had. It was really a very difficult plant without a freezing section to be able to operate properly at all. So, in a sense, she took a shell of a building and produced a fish plant out of it.

Now, I understand there was close to \$1.5 or \$2 million necessary to do that and that that money is part of a mortgage on it, and so on, in which case I think it is appropriate that, well, the value at least is there. The part we were worried about was there was a mortgage for \$1 or \$2 million from which the money was taken and put somewhere else, but evidently, since it was put in the operation,

I think we have a legitimate right to say that at least we are in a much better position for the future of St. Lawrence than we ever have been before.

The other thing I would like to mention though, in saying that, is if you remember when Fisheries Products International was privatizing these plants, or selling them off, when it was still a Crown corporation and there was still some control from the provincial and federal government, we said at the time this was not a solution to the problem of St. Lawrence, Lawn, Port aux Basques, Isle aux Morts and of the other fish plants privatized.

I am willing to predict right here today, and I think the Minister of Fisheries will not bet against me on this, that of the sixteen plants that FPI privatized, we may not have heard from the last of the ones which are in difficulty as a result of the fact that fish prices are down considerably. Two weeks or a month from now we may hear from other plants in the same problem. That, I think, is important to understand.

FPI solved their problems, they became a leaner, more efficient company and they were able to privatize themselves as a result of it. We have never, ever accepted the idea that selling them was the solution to the problem.

So we are still back where we were two years ago. We still have to worry about fish quotas for them, we still have to worry about them getting a decent market, we still have to worry about a good operator, and in that respect, we support the petition because we

think this may be one of the few ways to break the log jam which currently exists and find a new operator who will be able to bring it on stream and provide a good living for the people of St. Lawrence.

MR. LONG:
Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMONS:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Fortune - Hermitage.

MR. SIMMONS:
With the leave of the House, I would like to have a few words to say on the petition as well, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
By leave, the hon. the member for Fortune - Hermitage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Agreed.

MR. SIMMONS:
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to support the prayer of the -

MR. TOBIN:
I am going to speak on it too.

MR. SIMMONS:
I have no difficulty with another member speaking on this petition. I think it is an important petition, one of the more important ones to have come before this House. I want to support the prayer of the petition presented by my friend from Grand Bank and in whose district the fish plants at St. Lawrence and Lawn find themselves.

I thought, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Rideout), the usually composed and calm Minister of Fisheries, was protesting just a bit too much now. There is no crime here, except the crime of unemployment, the uncertain future being faced by the people of St. Lawrence and Lawn and the minister is normally - I am talking about the Minister of Fisheries, of course - reasonably forthcoming on matters under his jurisdiction. I thought he was a little bit too much on the defensive just now, almost to the point of wanting to blame the people of Lawn for their initiative in asking that the Dawe contract be terminated some years ago.

The people of Lawn are not to blame for this issue, this dilemma, nor are the people of St. Lawrence. What we have here, Mr. Speaker, and I am thinking particularly of St. Lawrence, is the case of a community which has been dragged through the worst economic plight you would wish on your worst enemy. It is just terrible what St. Lawrence has had to go through in terms of mining and in terms of the fishing industry.

I believe what my colleague from Twillingate is really saying, or what I want to say as well, is that we wish the minister the very best in finding an expeditious solution to this problem which the people of St. Lawrence and Lawn are wrestling with, as well as the people in the communities further up the coast in the Rose Blanche and Port aux Basques area whose fish plants are also under the wing of Mrs. Ting at the moment.

We support the prayer of the petition and I endorse the

comments made by the gentleman from Twillingate because they are aimed at nothing else than looking for, and finding, and helping along, a solution to the problem, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
Before calling for Orders of the Day, I would like to welcome to the galleries twenty-three students and their two teachers from Bishop's Falls Pentecostal Academy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, first reading, Motion 12.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Municipalities Act." (Bill No. 57)

On motion, Bill No. (57) read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs to introduce a bill, "An Act To Incorporate The City Of Mount Pearl." (Bill No. 55).

On motion, Bill No. (55) read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, we will move along now to Order 28, Bill No. 28.

Motion, second reading of a bill,

"An Act Respecting An Increase Of Certain Pensions." (Bill No. 28)

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:
Mr. Speaker, this is a very straightforward bill, as announced in the budget speech some time ago. I announced increases of pensions to persons who were employed in various aspects of the public service and who were receiving pensions from the various pension plans. They are listed in the schedule to the bill and include The Public Service (Pensions) Act, The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Act, The Uniformed Services Pensions Act, and so forth, including The Members Of The House Of Assembly (Retiring Allowances) Act, I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker.

It provides the basic increase of 3 per cent. But in response to concerns that a number of persons who were either employed a long time ago, when salaries were very low in the Public Service, or survivor benefits that were extremely low, we have increased the minimum survivor benefit to \$2700, which was a significant increase, I think, of something in the order of 25 or 30 per cent - 40 per cent, really. We have provided a sliding scale so that persons who were pensionable on or before December 31, 1971 would actually receive up to a 10 per cent increase. Then there is a sliding scale from there on down to 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978, so that any persons who were receiving a pension as of January 1 of 1978 but before April 1 of 1988, will be receiving 3 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, it provides a

pension increase for all persons who are receiving a pension from the Public Service, but it provides enhanced amounts for those who are receiving very small amounts, particularly those who are receiving very small survivor benefits.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We obviously can support this bill. There are some things about it that should be said at this stage in terms of the intent of the bill. We all recognize that there is a tremendous unfunded liability to the Province related to these pension plans, and this is because down through the years, as the pension plans came into existence, there was no real government contribution. The contribution, as such, I suppose, was the kind of thing that was invested in the development of the Province. The contribution of the employee was also reinvested into the development of the Province, and that avoided borrowing large sums of money and so on.

In other words, the pension plan existed on paper. The government in contracting with its employees to have these pension plans, assumed the obligation of providing a certain pension and survivor benefits to the individuals involved.

So the government is meeting this obligation, even though there is this \$2 billion unfunded liability. I understand that now the pension plans are on a funded basis, and that this is something the minister has to deal with in negotiations with these groups as

they come up.

I wanted to point out that, first of all, we understand on this side that there is a huge \$2 billion unfunded liability concerning these pension plans. I also understand that, for the most part, there is no written obligation on the part of government to provide these increases to pensioners. The cost of living escalation clauses are built into some contracts, but these were things that did not exist a number of years ago.

So the two facts, then, we realize. Number one, there is a tremendous unfunded liability; number two, that this is an ex gratia payment, there is no direct obligation, written obligation, legal obligation on the part of government, for the most part, to provide these increases. However, government does have, I would suggest, a moral obligation, simply because some of the things that have happened in the meantime could not have been forecast in the past. And government has an obligation to deal with its employees who have provided, in a lot of cases, a lifetime of service to the Province, who have been responsible for the building of this Province, and who are now trying to exist on very small pensions. The amount in the survivor benefits, as the minister mentions, is a minimum amount of \$2,700 per annum. That is a very small amount, Mr. Speaker. It is \$225 a month, a very small amount. We are glad to see the minimum is in there and, in a lot of cases, increases the survivor benefits by up to 40 per cent. It is a fairly large percentage increase, but still a small amount of money.

We support it, even though 3 per cent, for instance, to somebody who retired in 1978 is a very, very small amount. Maybe the reason it is so small is because of the unfunded liability, and the Minister of Finance is the one who has to answer for that. It is a very, very small amount, and we would, in the terms of justice and what is right and fair to a lot of these people who devoted all their working lives to the service of this Province, feel that in that aspect maybe the amount should be larger.

By and large we recognize the principle of this bill which is to increase, where there is no direct obligation to increase, the pensions of these pensioners and, Mr. Speaker, we support it.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Parsons):
The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, this has almost become by nature a sort of housekeeping bill. I think I have seen it every year that I have been in the Legislature, and I think it has been in the Legislature every year for probably the last ten or fifteen or twenty years. In that respect, it is not an unusual piece of legislation, but it does give us an opportunity, I think, to have a bit of debate about the public service pensions in general, the series of them, the four major ones, and I think there are even a couple others indicated at the back here which are different.

One of the things that surprised me was the member for Gander, who is the Finance critic for the

Official Opposition, saying that this is a funded pension plan. It is not a funded pension plan, it is a pay-as-you-go pension plan which happens to have some sort of fund that was started up in 1980 to help government pay some of its obligations.

I think that is a very important point to remember, because when the Minister of Finance is making comments and talking about the \$2 billion unfunded liability or whatever number he is using, it is not an unfunded liability in the plan, it is the amount of money the government will need in the future in order to meet its obligations it has incurred on behalf of the 40,000 or 50,000 or 60,000 public employees who are currently under the plan, or have been under the plan and are now retired. That, I think, is very important to remember. Otherwise, we might start scaring people into thinking that there is no money for the plan. The day there will be no money for public service pensions is the day this Province goes bankrupt, quite frankly, because that would be one of its highest obligations, I would assume, next, perhaps, to paying off its funded debt. On that basis, I think we can assume that there is an incorrectness in the kinds of comments that were made about it.

The other point about it that perhaps should be made is that the increase in pensions from January, 1978 and onward is 3 per cent. I think if one looks at the inflation rate in the Province, or in the country as a whole, one will realize that that is still a small bit under the actual inflation rate itself, maybe a percentage point of two, and on that basis it still means that the

pensioners who are receiving this pension will actually have a little less money each year in order to keep themselves going.

There is one other thing I would like to mention to the Minister of Finance which he may want to do for us. He recalls that last year we had a big argument about the changes that were made to the Public Service Pension Plan with respect to the ability of individuals to retire under the Canada Pension Plan five years earlier and the actions taken by this government initially to cut back arbitrarily on public service pensioners, then later the withdrawal from that and the efforts to return some of it. I am not sure if the minister is listening to what I was saying. The former Minister of Finance, who is now Minister of Health, said, when the amendments were made in about June of last year, that the amendment would essentially give back to the pensioners what was taken out by the initial change in January. In other words, the pensioners themselves, on an actuarial basis, would be as well off as anyone in Canada, even though we were the only Province to change our provincial pension plan as a result of the changes in the Canada Pension Plan.

It would be interesting if the minister could maybe ask his department officials to have a look at it and see if actuarially that has been borne out. Since he was not the minister who introduced it, he does not have a vested interest in being absolutely right or wrong. But I am curious, because I think the pensioners are still poorer off than if we had done what the other provinces did. All they did was

ignore the changes in the Canada Pension Plan and continue on with the obligations they had before. Because ours was uniquely worded, there was the ability to reduce provincial pensioners' pensions at age sixty to sixty-five.

Now, an amendment was made to that, where the change was made to it differently, and then another amendment was made to that later on, and at the end, the Minister of Finance said they were as well off as anywhere else in the country. I do not totally believe that, but I am willing, if the Minister of Finance is willing to do it, to look at some actuarial figures to prove it one way or the other. I just thought I would mention that now, since we do have a pension bill in front of us.

On that basis, Mr. Speaker, I really do not have any other comments, other than to say let us hope these pensioners are living well and the amount of money coming to them is enough to keep them in some reasonable degree of dignity. It is too bad our pensions only cover about 30 per cent of the working population of this Province. It would be nice to see pension plans available to many other people in our society who currently go into retirement and have to live on just the meager benefits of, usually, the old age pension and the supplement, sometimes the Canada Pension Plan, but most often they do not even have much benefits accrued in that plan.

On that basis, I will sit down and let the minister wind up the debate.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

If the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

MR. WINDSOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just respond very briefly to some of the comments made by hon. gentlemen opposite. First of all, the hon. the member for Gander points out that our pension plans are not indexed. Whereas that is true, this government has shown over the years that we fully intend to recognize the needs of pensioners and the needs for increases on an annual basis. I correct the hon. the member for Menihek, in that there have not been increases every year; there were two years when we had wage freezes, where nobody received any increases, and obviously pensioners did not receive any increases that year either.

MR. FENWICK:

I would have let that (inaudible).

MR. WINDSOR:

I am trying to be very honest and clear, Mr. Speaker, with hon. gentlemen, smother them with facts. The fact that the increase is 3 per cent, I say to the hon. member for Gander, is certainly in line with increases given in other parts of Canada. In fact, general thinking, for those that are being indexed, and we will be seeing pension reform at the federal level over the next year, in fact, so that I think it is going to be pegged at 60 per cent of the consumer price index. We are being more generous than that. Last year in this Province, our cost of living increased by 2.9 per cent, so we have, in fact, exceeded the cost of living increase by providing a 3 per cent increase this year.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. WINDSOR:

Well, it is generally applied right across the Province. You may find that it is actually lower in other parts of the Province. We actually provided a more generous increase this year than will normally be applied on a national basis in future years.

With reference to the unfunded liability, that is not entirely true. It is partially funded. We do have a large liability, Mr. Speaker, more serious, as we know and as I have already told this House, in the Teachers' Pension Plan than it is in the Public Service Pension Plan. In fact, our actuary indicates to us that from a pension point of view we are probably ahead of all other provinces in Canada in the amount of responsibility we have shown, in that we are partially funding. So I disagree with the hon. member for Menihek.

We are partially funding. This began in 1979 or 1980, I do not recall exactly, but certainly it was this administration who, for the first time, began to contribute on an annual basis to a pension fund over and above the amount that is required to pay the present cost of servicing pensions which are outstanding. That amount has been increased each year. Obviously it is not enough, but we are in a much more favourable position with the public service pension plans than we are with the teachers' pension plan, which is seriously underfunded. Our actuary tells us that from a pension legislation point of view, because we have very strong commitments in our pension legislation, government

will accept the liability, that we are well ahead of other provinces in Canada, and that we are, in fact, leading the way.

Of course, as hon. members know, we are now doing a very thorough examination, first of all of the teachers' pension plan, as to what needs to be done there to deal with the long-term unfunded liability. It is a very serious situation, not so much with the teachers, because, obviously, as has been said, government is committed to meeting these pensions when they become due and payable. And unless a province is bankrupt, as again has been correctly said, obviously it will be met. The fact of the matter is, if we allowed the unfunded liability of various pension plans to grow, that could have a very serious financial implication for the Province in years to come, so we have to be fiscally responsible and deal with it now.

As it relates to change as a result of the Canada Pension Plan, Mr. Speaker, I think I can assure the hon. gentleman from Menihek that pensioners are indeed as well off. However, I will undertake to review that, now that we have had a year or so experience in it. Certainly the intent of the changes that were made was to ensure that people were treated fairly, and that they did not suffer any loss of income as a result of changes that were made. Mr. Speaker. I take great pleasure in moving second reading.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting An Increase Of Certain Pensions," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of

the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill No. 28)

MR. SIMMS:
Order 26, Bill No. 9.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Incorporate The Newfoundland And Labrador School Trustees' Association." (Bill No. 9)

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. HEARN:
Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that the purpose of the bill is to incorporate The Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. HEARN:
The parent body of the thirty-five various school boards spread throughout the Province and made up of volunteers who do a tremendous job in assisting in operating the education system in the Province. This formally recognizes them in legislation.

MR. DECKER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Parsons):
The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:
Mr. Speaker, we in the Official Opposition have no problem supporting this particular bill. I should say, though, Your Honour, that the temptation is there to go

into a long speech on all the problems with education in this Province, as well as with all the problems with the Minister of Education, and it would give an opportunity to all members of the Opposition to get up and go on for days on the problems which exist there. But I will not take advantage of that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and the minister expresses relief.

I should say just a few words on The School Trustees' Association, since I am speaking on it. I believe The School Trustees' Association is a force for good as far as education is concerned in this Province. Since their inception in the 1970s, they have been doing nothing but good for the cause of education. I understand that every school board in the Province is represented except the Seventh Day Adventist School Board, and I understand the reason there is not because of any philosophical dispute, but rather it might have had something to do with the cost of joining over the years; there is no philosophical or theological reason why they are not there. When we talk about The School Trustees' Association, we are talking about representatives from the overwhelming number, practically all school boards in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

As far as I can understand, in the early days of this Association they did suffer a little bit from the throes of denominationalism, I suppose it is fair to say; each seemed to be more concerned about his own denominational concerns than they were concerned about the overall cause of education in the Province. But that was not long disappearing when people from all denominations, and all school boards, realized that in their

unity there was strength. I should say, Mr. Speaker, that I served on the Integrated Education Council for a number of years, with the Anglican, the United Church, the Presbyterian, the Salvation Army and Moravian. By the time I served on it, it was the late 1970s and early 1980s, and by then the denominational overtones had died down a considerable amount. Sadly, I must say, on one or two occasions denominational concerns did come to the forefront, and you could see who was representing the Anglican, who was representing the Salvation Army and the United Church and so on. But as a rule, the vast number of decisions which are made by the Education Council are made for the benefit of the whole group and, I would say further, as with the Catholic Council and the Pentecostal Council, made for the benefit of the whole Province, because I think and I am convinced that they are concerned with the well-being of education in this Province.

This request for legislation came, I understand, from the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association. Some years ago, they had a study done. I think they had Mr. Roebothan do the study, if I am not mistaken, and one of the sixteen or seventeen recommendations made was that they would have to be recognized as an association, as is the NTA and other associations throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this group will do a lot of good for the future of education in this Province.

Now, I should say from the start that I, personally, am committed to a denominational system of

education for this Province. Now, maybe that is because of my background. I grew up in the educational system. I served in our denominational education system and, as members know, I was a clergyman at one time, which, ex officio, made me a member of a school board when I was serving in particular districts. I have come to see that there is a lot of good in the denominational education system, unlike our colleagues in the NDP who would abolish denominational education, who would throw it out, destroy it, who want nothing to do with it. The next logical step, of course, would be to get religion out of the schools.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we ever reach a time in this Province when we are like our friends in the United States, who cannot even say the Lord's Prayer in a school if they wish to do so, that would be tragic for this Province. I think the stand the NDP are taking is barely the first step. Because in the attempt to have freedom of religion, they end up having just the opposite of freedom, they have the abandonment of religion which is wrong, Mr. Speaker. This is not saying that one denomination is greater or lesser than the other, that is simply stating the facts as they are.

I believe I have a commitment to the denominational education system. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I also believe in co-operation among the denominations. That is not particularly an outstanding revolutionary position to take either, because that is the very position that the denominational education systems themselves are taking. We witnessed the recent report by the Catholic Education

Council, and we witnessed the Integrated Education Council report some years earlier. There is a spirit of co-operation among the denominational education school boards in this Province today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association is one of the biggest forces in the Province today which is forcing that co-operation among the denominations in our education system, and that is the track we must follow, I believe. We must go for co-operation. The hon. members of the NDP are suggesting that we have a system like they have on the Mainland. I am not as familiar with school systems on the Mainland, maybe, as the Leader of the NDP is, but I do know that I have met many people who come down from the mainland and are impressed with our school system. I believe we have a lot to offer, but we have to co-operate with each other. This is what the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association is doing. And this is what they are proving: They are proving to us that we can retain our denominational education system and we can co-operate.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of benefit in having a third party decide where schools are going to go, because this takes the politics out of it. Since this particular administration has come into power, the Strait of Belle Isle district has never voted P.C.; they have never lost their virginity, their purity; they have always stayed with the Liberal Party. Now, in that length of time there have been new schools built all over the district.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What about the hon. member's (inaudible)?

MR. DECKER:

Unfortunately, he is not in the same category, Mr. Speaker. There have been new schools built in Englee, in Roddickton, in Boyd Arm, in St. Anthony, in Great Brehat, and even at this very minute there is a school being built in Flower's Cove which will be opened this coming Fall. If I am not Minister of Education, then I hope the present Minister of Education, if we have not had an election by then, will be there with me when that school is opened. I will undertake now to tell him that if it is changed around and I am Minister of Education, then I will invite him if I can find him, if he is still in the Province after that election takes place.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am getting at is this: If we did not have a third group deciding where schools should go, I would suggest that there would not have been these ten or a dozen schools built in the Strait of Belle Isle over the past seventeen or eighteen years. If this government had to say where schools should go, I would suggest they would put the odd token school in Liberal districts, like they are doing with the odd token road in Liberal districts, or the odd bit of token municipal affairs, before the present minister came in, the odd bit of tokenism, Mr. Speaker, that is what would happen. But, where we have this third group, I believe schools are built on the basis of need throughout this Province. Now, there are not enough schools being built for many reasons, we do not have the money or whatever, but the fact is

I believe that where schools are built the decisions are made rationally, they are made by people who are knowledgeable, and they are made for the benefit of the students and for the benefit of education throughout this Province. Mr. Speaker, that is why I support the denominational education system. I have a great respect for it, and I hope it is here for a good many years to come.

I would hope the NDP would review their policies and if, God forbid, in the year 2000 or 3000 they are ever about to come into power, that they will realize the stupidity of what they are saying and they will think their policy through further. Perhaps they might even do like Rene Levesque did in Quebec and give an undertaking that they will not bring their policies into effect unless there is another election held, or something to that effect. The people of Newfoundland do not want to abolish denominational education. What they want is to see co-operation, and this, Mr. Speaker, I believe, is where the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association can come in. This is why I am pleased to see them enshrined in legislation, and this is why I believe they should get all the support both sides of this House have to offer. I believe they should get all this support, because I see them as the leading edge of this denominational co-operation.

As I have said, I believe in the denominational education system; I have served as chairman of school boards in this system; I have served as a board member in the system. Mr. Speaker, I even served on a Roman Catholic school board and I am a protestant. I

served on a Roman Catholic school board in the early 60s, which was almost unbelievable at that time in this Province. I served on a Roman Catholic school board out in Bonavista Bay, where there was co-operation. I was living in Summerville at the time and our students were going out to Plate Cove, so this idea of co-operation which we are seeing, Mr. Speaker, goes way back. People in the denominational education system, sure, they like their schools, of course they do, but if there is ever a case where they have to make the decision to choose the good of the denomination over the good of the educational opportunity of the young person, I would suggest that nine times out of ten, ninety-nine out of one hundred, they will choose the benefit of the child, and the benefit of the child's education. And that is what is happening. What we have to do is encourage co-operation, and that is why we have to build up the NLSTA, Mr. Speaker, we have to give them every support we can. This co-operation started way back at the beginning.

While I am praising up denominational education, I want to say that it is not perfect. Surely, goodness, no education system is perfect. Certainly the system on the mainland, and we have members who would like to bring it here, is not perfect. The American system is far from perfect. The American system has now gotten to the stage where people have a public system and whenever they can afford it, they have to send their children to a private system. That is something we do not want to see in this Province.

I should say also I am committed

to denominational education because, if we were to follow the NDP suggestion and, as a government, take it over ourselves, I am not sure we can afford to expropriate all those buildings from the denominations. Let us face it, they own those buildings. The Integrated Education Council owns all the schools throughout this Province. The Catholic education people own their schools. The government cannot be irrational enough to go in and take over their schools unless they would pay them for it, and it is an unnecessary waste of money, an unnecessary expense.

Mr. Speaker, I will not take all my time. I will just say the school trustees are facilitating co-operation. They recognize the denominational system is not perfect, nor is any system perfect, nor is this government perfect, if we are looking for the ideal.

In the denominational education system there are some glaring examples of where there is a problem. I would refer to my own home town of Roddickton, a community of 1,200 people. We have two total systems, a Pentecostal system and an integrated system, and there is not enough co-operation at the present time. But co-operation is on the way, Mr. Speaker. They are recognizing there is no point in teaching math in both schools and English in both schools and not being able to teach chemistry or biology, or whatever the case may be. They recognize that and see the need there.

Let me suggest, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure the Minister of Education will agree with me, that within two or three years, that problem

will be addressed and overcome, and it is because we have groups such as the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees Association, who are facilitating this co-operation.

That is why I am glad to go on record as supporting this bill today, as is Her Majesty's Official Loyal Opposition in this House. We support this bill, Mr. Speaker, and ask that the House put it through as quickly as possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

This is a miracle we have just seen occur here.

In the last couple of weeks, we have brought up the whole question of the shape of our school system in the future. We have had the Minister of Education sit like a lump on a log and not even say anything. We have finally gotten a comment out of somebody. Of course, the fact is that the comment was totally distorted, a gross exaggeration of our position, and so on but, Mr. Speaker, we are used to that. We have gotten that from the official, wimpy Opposition before, we expect to get it from the official, wimpy Opposition again.

Listen to the comments he made on it, because I have some specific

comments about the bill I want the Minister of Education to listen to. Listen to what he said. He comes from Roddickton, two complete school systems, totally inefficient, and he says co-operation is occurring.

Well, he knows the co-operation will take decades to go anywhere because the fact of the matter is, we have two school systems there who are more interested in keeping their empires intact than they are in the best interests of his kids and the kids of his neighbours to make sure they will get an education to bring them into the Twentieth Century. And Roddickton is not, by any means, the worst example! I will give you some others.

Port Hope Simpson is a great example. There are two school systems in Port Hope Simpson, both duplications of each other. One has less than fifty students and four teachers; the other has approximately one hundred and five students and eight teachers, and yet, if they were combined and had twelve teachers, they could offer many more options for the people of Port Hope Simpson. The fact is, it is the kids in Port Hope Simpson who are suffering badly because they are not prepared to go into the Twentieth Century because co-operation is just not appearing. It is not going anywhere. That is not the only one. Port Hope Simpson, by the way, has a Pentecostal Assemblies school and an integrated school.

I will give you another example: St. Paul's Inlet on the St. Barbe coast - two schools there. One is a Catholic school and the other is an integrated school. I do not want to throw bricks at any one particular denomination

exclusively because, quite frankly, the co-operation occurring out there is minimal at best. If you go look at St. Paul's Inlet, there is a single-room school with forty-four kids and one teacher, a Catholic school. And, in the same community, there is another school with several teachers and about eighty students.

Now, what sense does that make? What kind of a burden is being put on that single teacher in that single-room school that still exists and what kind of education could we have offered if they were willing to co-operate? The fact is they are not co-operating. They are much more interested in empire building than they are in doing the kind of co-operation necessary.

The reason I mention that is because the member for the Strait of Belle Isle (Mr. Decker) very incorrectly interpreted the policy we put forward. I table the resolution here so he has a copy of it and so he has no excuse for getting it wrong, but he will. What the resolution said was when we have a choice between two substandard schools, that a common use school will be set up to accommodate all the kids in a particular community. That is all we said.

Then the next WHEREAS said this would be consistent with the denominational educational system and with the provision of religious education in schools. So where is that undermining it? I ask you something.

We have had Pentecostal Pastors accuse us of trying to dissolve the school system. I say to them, if you think the religious faith

of your children is so poor and so weak that by mixing with Roman Catholics or Protestants they will lose it, then your faith is not worth keeping on with. That is what I am saying to them. And that is what I am saying to Roman Catholics who object and to Protestants who object.

If you need to have a hot house, if you need to have a situation in which people are not exposed to what they will be exposed to when they graduate from school anyway, because they will mix with Roman Catholics, Protestants and Muslims, for God's sake, all kinds of people of different backgrounds, so why should they not, when it makes economic sense and when it is in the better interest in terms of education and preparing them for the twentieth century, why should they not go to the same school?

To do it the other way is to perpetuate waste and duplication and a second class school system and higher taxes and a whole range of things which means the kids of our Province are not getting the best education possible.

We are glad to hear the member for the Strait of Belle Isle (Mr. Decker) give us the distorted version which is coming out because if that is what the Official Opposition is going to interpret it as, at least we know. If you want to be dinosaurs, if you want to be anachronistic, if you to be people who want to go back into the Dark Ages in terms of the education system, be our guests, but we are not.

We do not like the idea that we pay the highest taxes in the Canada. We do not like the idea

that we have School Tax Authorities who impose very regressive kinds of taxes on the richest and poorest in our society. We do not like the idea of having to pay twice for a school system when once would have done.

What we are saying is that duplication has to stop. We are willing to stand up and be counted. If you are going to stand up on the other side, then you have to tell us why are we paying \$10 million or \$15 million or \$20 million or \$90 million extra each year to perpetuate this system? I am using the estimates going from a low one the Minister of Education (Mr. Hearn) has provided for me to the high one which is the one that the NTA suggest is probably the cost of our duplication.

We also provide \$20 million a year to construct schools. How do we know we are constructing them in the right places? How do we know that? Because what we are doing is we are taking three completely different systems, giving them a bit of the money and they are going out doing their thing totally without contact with the others, totally without contact. That is what is occurring.

In Port Hope Simpson it makes no sense at all to have a Pentecostal School with 100 kids and an Integrated School with 50 kids and not have them combined so they can get a much better quality of education. It makes no sense whatever. For us to continue on with that, is to just bury our heads in the sand.

MR. YOUNG:

He wants it like the Mainland.

MR. FENWICK:

No, we are not talking about a Mainland school system.

By the way, there are a lot of Mainland school systems which teach religion in our schools. They have prayers and they have all the rest of that. So do not go and give us those arbitrary answers to it.

What I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, is this government has been irresponsible. It has not lived up to the responsibilities of the problems our education system currently faces and even more irresponsible in terms of what has to go on in the future.

Let me tell you what is going on. September of this year there are 139,000 students registered in our school system. The Minister of Education (Mr. Hearn) own figures show in a decade's time there will be only 99,000 students registered. We are losing 30 per cent of the number of students we currently have.

That means that that school in Port Hope Simpson that out of 100 we will have 70; and the other one, instead of 50, we will maybe have 35. That means the one in St. Paul's Inlet will be down 30 per cent. That means they will lose 30 per cent of their teachers. That means they will lose 30 per cent of their options.

What I am saying to you is if the option is to have a poorer education system, I do not want it. And I know that all of the parents I have talked to do not want it and the students do not want it.

The only people who do want it are

the people sitting on those Educational Councils who have a vested interest in it and do not want to see the whole thing moved. And the superintendents of some of the school boards who would have to end up having to co-operate. They are the ones who do not want the system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SIMMS:

You should be ashamed of yourself, attacking volunteers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. FENWICK:

I see, Mr. Speaker, we have the usual bunch up over there.

MR. SIMMS:

If we use your logic, in 15 years time there would be no schools.

MR. FENWICK:

Getting back to what the member for the Strait of Belle Isle said.

MR. LONG:

There will be no Tories in 15 years time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, could I have just a little bit of protection here. I do want to have to use the same word the Leader of the official Opposition used to describe the members opposite, because I know it is unparliamentary, but it seems to me there are a few of those attributes coming out right now. So if you would keep a little quieter, we would appreciate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, let us get back to what the member for the Strait of Belle Isle said. He was on the Integrated Education Commission. I believe he said that. He was back on it when it was being merged together with Anglicans, United Church, Moravians, Salvation Army, and there might be another denomination or two.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker: We have now Anglicans, United Church, and all these other denominations who now go to school together. Does this mean they are any less religious than Roman Catholics or Pentecostals in this Province? Are we saying that?

MR. YOUNG:

What have you got against Roman Catholics?

MR. FENWICK:

Because they have a common school system now. They have exactly what we have said, only with those particular Protestant denominations. Does that mean they are less people, that they are less Christian, that they are less worthy?

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, they are every bit as worthy as the rest of the people in our society who go to schools of only one particular religion. On that basis, I think the experiment has proved itself and we need to fear losing nothing in terms of the quality of our education by having common use schools. That is what we are saying.

Getting back to this particular piece of legislation, since we have disposed of the spurious arguments from the member for the Strait of Belle Isle, The Act To Incorporate The Newfoundland And Labrador School Trustees Association.

One of the things I would ask the minister to address here is why, in the objectives of the association, there is not a section that talks about collective bargaining responsibilities. I mention that because it is my understanding the School Trustees Association does have representatives on the committee which meets with the NTA when they negotiate an NTA agreement. It seems to me appropriate that it at least be clear they have a responsibility there. Now, I do not know if they are represented. Maybe it is the educational councils who are represented. It seems to me the School Trustees Association should appropriately have a role there.

The reason I mention it here is to particularly point out one other aspect of it. As hon. members know, many of the school boards in this Province have two separate and major groups of employees. One is the teachers and the other is the support staff, the secretaries, the janitors, the bus drivers and so on. A lot of them do work under collective agreements now and those collective agreements are between the individual school boards and the union which is the bargaining agent for the employees. Now, in many cases that is the Canadian Union of Public Employees or CUPE. In other cases, it is the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees.

I know from talking to a number of the people involved with these unions we are now at the point where about three-quarters, I believe, of the school boards are organized and they are actually looking forward to the day when there will be a master agreement covering the school boards throughout the Province.

So it seems to be appropriate for the minister to look at the bill. In the Committee stage he may wish to amend it to increase the number of objects for it or the powers of it or any of the other sections that may have to be done to reflect the fact that this organization, I think, will have to become involved in collective bargaining in the future. I mention that as, as we said at our convention, a friendly amendment. It is not a friendly amendment, but maybe it is something that is an oversight and not included in the legislation itself.

I support the legislation, but personally it is my hope the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees Association, five, ten, fifteen or twenty years from now, will have a much stronger role in education, and that the Integrated, the Roman Catholic, and the Pentecostal educational councils would take more of a back role in terms of it, because these school trustees associations are the ones who are actually elected, for the most part, by the parents of the kids who are in school. It is the parents who really deserve to have control over their school system.

As it is now, Mr. Speaker, I suggest they do not. What they have is a system where they do elect a certain proportion. They can elect, I think, two thirds of

them in all the school boards and in the Integrated ones they elect all, I think. In the Catholic school system, sometimes, there is a number appointed.

It is one of the amendments we would certainly like to see done to the other legislation which sets up the school boards itself so they are all elected. We feel, eventually, the elected representatives of the parents, which is what a school board is, are the people who should have the major say in how our school system goes. We have talked to them, we have talked to the parents, and other than the fact the systems have such a tremendous amount of influence from outside of the community through the religions, I think a greater degree of co-operation would occur.

I refer you to places like Deer Lake, for example, where within the last two years a major Pentecostal school was build and as a result the quality of education in the Integrated school, which lost those students, decreased significantly because they no longer had the teachers and the courses to offer their students.

On that basis that was a step backwards, in my opinion, and not a step forward. I think if the parents themselves in that community had a much larger say about what was going on they would not have voted for that kind of a school system. They would have looked for one in which the resources were more properly shared and were more available on the basis that we could give a high quality education.

The same thing occurred in Corner Brook last year where they were

trying to close down a couple of elementary schools and there was a tremendous uproar at the time. People said, quite frankly, when it came to the education of their children, they wanted to have the highest quality education in schools located most conveniently to them, especially in the lower grades, and although they wished to continue with the denominational system, they did not want it to deprive them of what they thought was their right, that is to good quality education locally available.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said those comments on the particular bill, we are quite supportive of it although we think that the minister has left a bit out when he refused to have collective bargaining obligations included in it. Other than that, we have enjoyed the opportunity to debate with the member for the Strait of Belle Isle (Mr. Decker) and correct many of the misconceptions he has put forward about our position and to put more firmly on the record our feeling about where the school system has got to go.

We have major problems in the school system now, the problems are getting bigger, and the ostrich like approach the Minister of Education has taken by burying his head in the sand, will not suffice any more.

Let us debate where we are going.

MR. WELLS:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say I share many of the concerns expressed by the hon. the member for Menihek (Mr. Fenwick) about the consequences of our present education system. What he says is in part true. There is a sound basis for some of his criticism.

I went through such a school system where the school I went to until Grade VII was a one-room school. Then there was a terrific expansion, 100 per cent increase and it became a two-room school for the rest of my school career. Across the little pond was another much larger school, a Roman Catholic school, with ten or twelve rooms, and we were totally separated. There was little or no co-operation, and we suffered greatly as a result of that. There is no question about that, that is true. Those things happen.

We are getting less value for our educational dollar because of the structure of our system at the moment. We came a long way toward correcting that in 1969 when the initial change was made and there was the coming together of a number of denominations to form the integrated school system. That resulted in significant improvements, and it has overcome a lot of these problems.

But that was done, Mr. Speaker, with consent of the people involved in it and with a major effort and a very commendable effort at co-operation. That did not mean that all the ills were cured. That little school that I talked about became the integrated school. I do not know whether it disappeared before that or not. But around about that time, even though it had increased to five or six rooms in the meantime, they

came to their senses and started to co-operate with the Roman Catholic School Board in the area and ultimately that school was closed out and all of the children in Stephenville Crossing now go to the single school system operated by the Roman Catholic Church.

In my judgement, they are infinitely better off for it, without regard to what their religious affiliations are. So that was done by consent, and it is a classic example of what can be achieved with co-operation and goodwill.

Clearly we have many places in this Province, like the one mentioned by the hon. member for the Strait of Belle Isle, where there is a great deal more of such co-operation needed. Clearly we are paying more for our education than we would have to pay if there was a higher level of co-operation and the schools were operated on a different basis. So clearly those wrongs do exist. To that extent, the hon. the member for Menihek is quite correct. That wrong needs to be corrected.

Where he is totally wrong is in the solution he proposes. Two wrongs have never, ever made a right.

The people of this Province have a constitutional right to the education system, and it is based on their religious beliefs, in the main. It is not a question of teaching religion. Everybody can have an opportunity to teach religion on their churches or anywhere else they want to. It is a matter of teaching life and preparing for life on the basis of religious convictions and principles. That is what people are concerned about, ensuring that

their children are prepared for life with a proper moral foundation and a proper religious foundation, in their view.

Now, whether they are right or wrong in that does not matter. They have a constitutional right under our system to have it that way, and you cannot trample on constitutional rights.

I happen to be one who believes we can co-operate together and put in a single system and still bring religious principles to bear, but I cannot say we should force this on people who have a constitutional right to have it otherwise. That is where the hon. member for Menihek is totally wrong.

His concerns about the difficulties and the problems and the wrongs in our educational system at the moment are obviously well founded and I share them. But I disagree totally with his proposed solution.

We ought to do everything we can in this House and government ought to do everything it can within its means to ensure that the maximum level of co-operation among the denominations is achieved, that the maximum inducement is given for people to co-operate, and instead of necessarily providing money for two schools, induce the boards involved, whether it is the Pentecostal, the Roman Catholic, or the Integrated, to work together and build a single school and share common facilities. Even if for a period of time they may have different classrooms, they could still have gym facilities in common, library facilities in common, and science labs in common. A great deal can be done to achieve this total integration

of our educational system on a basis which is acceptable to our people and not offensive to our people. That is what is wrong with the system proposed and the steps proposed by the hon. member for Menihek. That is where he is wrong.

There are a great number of communities in this Province where there is a high level of co-operation taking place. It has been going on for twenty and thirty years, in some cases, and it is great to see. It is better to achieve those desired results by that means, than by ramming it down people's throats and saying, 'Even though you have a constitutional right, we are going to eliminate it.' That approach, Mr. Speaker, is wrong, and I think everybody would agree.

I can understand the level of impatience. I had a level of impatience with the system myself. I considered that I was a victim of the system. I finished high school without having anything in the way of a foreign language. I could not study French or Latin or Spanish, or anything else. I had never taken a science course. The teacher who taught me in Grade XI had, himself, only Grade XI and one Summer in Summer school. Now, that is a terrible system. It is a terrible wrong to be continuing. It is not that desperate today, but there are still some wrongs that exist, and we ought to use all of our energies in an effort to change it. But the effort to change it must be made in a way that is acceptable to people and not offensive to them, to their religious convictions or to their constitutional rights.

MR. TULK:

As they did in Fogo.

MR. WELLS:

As they did in Fogo, as the hon. the member for Fogo indicates - a high level of co-operation.

MR. BAKER:

Glenwood.

MR. WELLS:

Glenwood. Any number of members of the House can refer to a great number of examples where this has been achieved. And I think the direction that the government is taking in this regard is, generally speaking, the right direction in terms of bringing greater levels of co-operation in the system.

Now, mind you, there is a great falling down on the part of the government in terms of general fairness in all communities in Newfoundland in providing reasonable access to education, particularly in rural Newfoundland. They are falling down terribly there.

Co-operation is the key, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle (Mr. Decker) noted, the School Trustees Association is a means of providing and achieving and promoting that level of co-operation. They can do a great deal towards achieving that and bringing us, in a proper and acceptable way, towards a system that will enable us ultimately to get the best value for our educational dollar and ensure that people throughout this Province have reasonable access to a good-quality education, no matter where they are.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, -

and I heartily endorse all of the comments of the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle in this regard - I am happy to support the bill and happy to take some action, at least, towards trying to correct the misguided approach suggested by the hon. the member for Menihek.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a brief intervention at this point in the debate. I think it has been instructive this morning, ostensibly under a discussion of The Schools Trustees' Act which is before us, but members have taken the opportunity to explore a wide-range of issues. I think, given some of the very real difficulties that exist in the education system, which the member for the Strait of Belle Isle referred to and in deference to the bill in front of us said he would not elaborate on, I think at this point it would be worthwhile bringing back, if you will, a context in which this discussion happens and that is the very immediate difficulties facing, particularly, many of the rural schools in the area.

If I may, I would like to read an excerpt from the most recent edition of **The NTA Bulletin** in which a teacher from Corner Brook has submitted a short verse with reference to the difficulties and, in particular, the position of the Minister of Education and some of his recent controversial

comments. The verse is entitled 'Let Them Eat Hake', and it begins:

"Teachers of rural Newfoundland/
So ill-equipped please understand/
Loyola knows whereof he spoke/
Underfunding's just a joke/
There's no mistake, there's no
misquote/ What I have said that's
what they wrote / And what they
wrote that's what I said / Its not
the Funds its them instead/ You
just are not quite qualified/ To
do that job where you applied/
Fulfill our education wishes/
Here's five barley loaves and two
small fishes/ And while your
distant urban cousins/ With loaves
and fishes by the dozens/ Perform
great feats to stun the nation/ It
is their experience and education/
Look 'round the Cabinet and 'round
the House/ You'll find among this
motley crew/ Ex-rural teachers by
the score/ Notice our Brian was
one too/ So don't despair and tear
your hair/ Nor crack your chalk in
two/ Remember great Loyola Hearn
was once a rural teach, like
you." A very fine verse, I think,
Mr. Speaker, which, in fine
fashion, sums up many of the
concerns that people, especially
dealing with the rural problems in
education, would like to submit,
and I think it is appropriate to
put it on the record of this
House, especially when it draws
our attention to the many former
rural teachers who are among us.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker,

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of
Environment and Lands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to be too long. It is not often that I support some of the things members of the Official Opposition say, but I do have sympathy with and support for some of the things the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle said this morning. My real concern, Mr. Speaker, is what appears to be the attitude of the NDP toward the whole denominational system of education in this Province.

While I think we all agree that there is a need for more co-operation, I think, Mr. Speaker, except for the NDP Party, we also all agree that the denominational system of education has been, is, and hopefully will continue to be, very good for this Province. While I do not think we have any fear of the NDP ever becoming the governing party in this Province, and God forbid not only for educational reasons but for many others if they did, I think what we are seeing here today is an attempt by the NDP to, in the not so long term perhaps, destroy or try to destroy - I do not think they will ever be successful in doing it - the very denominational system of education which has served this Province, as I said, so well. Mr. Speaker, that is a real concern to me. However, as I said, perhaps I should not be concerned, because I am sure they will never be in a position to have any great influence on it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to an article which I think all members of the House have seen. It is called 'Playing Not So Trivial Pursuit'. I will not read all the article, Mr. Speaker.

It has to do with a survey that was done, a cross-country student test, which produced some startling results. I quote part of it: "With the co-operation of local school boards, the CTV test presented twenty basic questions on history, current affairs and geography to 2700 Grade XII students. The low overall scores astounded them as did the contrasts between cities. The final marks from East to West were: Victoria, 55.1 per cent; Calgary, 68.7 per cent; Edmonton, 60.5 per cent; Regina, 53.4; Montreal, 48.8 per cent; and St. John's, Newfoundland, 70.3 per cent."

Further in the article, Mr. Speaker, it says, "The biggest surprise, though, was that Newfoundland, a Province not noted for fluents, topped the list." The next sentence, I think, Mr. Speaker, is indicative, "Could it's peculiar educational system, in which every school is a church school and gets funded equally, be a factor?"

MR. SIMMS:
The answer is, yes.

MR. FENWICK:
(Inaudible).

MR. RUSSELL:
That is what the hon. Leader for the NDP Party would like, Mr. Speaker. I have read the whole article and there are some good points in it and there are some negative points in it. The NDP Party, Mr. Speaker, would destroy everything pertaining to the denominational system of education if they had the opportunity to do so. I would like for at least the official Opposition and us to get that point out to the people of this Province, that that is their

ultimate aim, that is their ambition, to destroy the denominational system of education.

MR. LONG:
A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A point of order, the hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:
I feel obliged to rise, when the minister is referring to this party. The NDP Party is a tautology. We have a New Democratic Party or we have the NDP. There is no such thing as an NDP Party. Given the context of the discussion we are on, education, when members are talking about this party I would beg all members, and especially ministers, to get it clear, please.

MR. SIMMS:
To that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
To that point of order, the hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:
The hon. member is absolutely correct. There is no NDP Party, and there will not be after the next election, Mr. Speaker. The NDP is a Socialist Party. That is what they are, and that is how they should be properly referred to.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Lands.

MR. RUSSELL:
Mr. Speaker, NDP also stands for

something else, which is unparliamentary and I will not say it.

Just to take a couple of minutes with regard to this bill, I would like to compliment the School Trustees' Association on the things that they have accomplished since their inception, and what they are trying to do. They are very concerned. I have met with some of them in the Lewisporte district and other parts, and I know their hearts are in the right place. They are a very sincere group of individuals, and very qualified to deal with the problems facing the educational system, especially their executive secretary, Mr. Speaker, who is sitting in the gallery.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, they are a very worthwhile association and their objectives and aims and terms of reference, and everything else they stand for, are to be complimented. I would like, certainly on my own behalf on behalf of most of the people in this Legislature, to pledge my co-operation and support to them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

Before recognizing the hon. the minister, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Myrle Vokey, Executive Director of the Newfoundland School Trustees' Association.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
If the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. HEARN:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to join with the comments of most of the speakers in recognizing the tremendous job done by the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association. Perhaps more particularly now than in the past, this organization is really challenged and will show the tremendous leadership it contains in working together with the other agencies in bringing together a number of boards which are out there.

We heard an awful lot of talk this morning about co-operation and lack thereof, etc., but if we look at what is happening today, we see a move underway presently to consolidate even further the thirty-five boards at present in the Province. We will have many fewer than that in a few short years time.

The Integrated Education Committee has already completed a study, has made some preliminary recommendations, and are moving right away to consolidate some of the school boards. Of course, this is only possible with the co-operation of the local trustees in the various areas, and they have shown tremendous leadership in coming together, which will improve the educational opportunities for the children in the areas involved.

Above and beyond that, a more recent study commissioned by the Catholic Education Committee, which really, I suppose, took the hint from the Integrated Education Committee, which recommended not only the coming together of their own boards but co-operation and coming together with the Roman

Catholic school boards in a number of areas, the Roman Catholic study also recommended consolidation of its own boards but went further to recommend consolidation of boards in areas that covered a geographic area, which included representatives of all the different denominations, schools of the different denominations, so that they could more practically use the resources which are available to them.

I think we are going to see a lot of interesting things happen along the line of what the Leader of the Opposition said. I am glad to see he supports what we are doing, and agrees with what we are doing, as does the member for the Strait of Belle Isle and, I understand, all members of the Opposition. We are encouraging and promoting co-operation among the denominations. The way is clear. It is known by all of those involved in education the way we must go as our school population declines, as our resources, hopefully, do not become fewer, but we do have fewer resources as everyone knows, and we have to make better use of what we have. There are two ways of doing it: Force people to do it, which legally you cannot do because there is a protection in the Constitution for the different denominations, and rightly so. But even if you could, you would find, when you try to force people to do something, they tend to dig in their heels, or bury their heads and perhaps object. You encourage, you promote, and you assist, and that is exactly what we are doing.

For members of the ND Party - I remember it clearly. I was also brought to task at one time for saying the NDP Party, but I have

two reasons now for remembering it clearly: One is the ND, non-denominational party, and a little later on we can refer to them as the ND, now defunct party. For them to say that our system is a waste, that our system is the result of what is happening in our Province in relation to education. We are very proud of what is happening in our Province in relation to education. The excerpts read by my colleague for Lewisporte just show us once again where Newfoundlanders have come out in front. Our problem with education is like our problem with many other things, we forget to promote the good things that are happening and we emphasize the negatives. The Leader of the NDP got up this morning and gave examples of little communities in the Province where we still have two or three schools and, yes, there are a few, but we have to remember that we have about 570 schools in this Province. A few short years ago, before 1969, we had over 1300 schools in the Province and then we saw the coming together of the integrated group. That is co-operation. That was the start of it, but it has gone much further than that since then. Fogo is a typical example, where nine schools were replaced by one. We can name Pasadena, we can name Gambo, and we can go on and on. We also have to recognize in Newfoundland, geographically we have many areas where denominational co-operation is not possible, because you have strong areas of one denomination or other, and such co-operation is, as I say, impossible and you see a centralization of the schools in those areas as populations drop and road conditions improve, etc.

There are many good things happening. Many of these things

that are happening are inspired by the local volunteers, the trustees at the local level, because they are responsible for delivering education at that level and without their co-operation, the progress that is being made would have been impossible to make.

The Leader of the NDP also mentioned that schools are being built totally without contact among the different denominations. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it is an insult to the people who make up Denominational Education Committees in the Province. They work extremely closely together. The executive directors, who do the front line work for them, share offices. We meet with them on a monthly basis on different matters quite often, and they, themselves, are constantly sending in to us not individual reports and suggestions, but joint suggestions for co-operation and progress in all fields of education. That was a thorough insult to them to say that they are building schools without any contact or co-operation.

I think it is also an insult to the trustees out there and to the members of the Denominational Education Committees, to say they sit on councils because of their own vested interests. They sit on these organizations, giving up their own time, energy, and efforts, to promote education in the Province and to assist where possible. I think it is with our leadership, promotional assistance and financing, despite what the Leader of the Opposition says about 'the general unfairness, we are falling down in not delivering our finances equally.' I might say that we as a government do deliver our finances equally, and

that is what has created the problem, because you can do a lot more in larger areas than you can in others. What has aggravated the discrepancy is the amount of revenue collected by School Tax Authorities in the Province, School Tax Authorities that were brought in by the government of which he was a member. And I do not criticize him for that, I congratulate him, because I support School Tax Authorities. They are bringing in many dollars that we do not have ourselves to put into education at the local level, where they have a say in how the money is used. What we are trying to do is to offset this discrepancy by readjusting our financial delivery to the rural areas in particular, so that they will have equal funding, and very soon we will see that day.

Mr. Speaker, with that I would add my own word of congratulations to the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees' Association. I thank them for the tremendous job they are doing, and I encourage them to work closely together to continue this work because there are challenging days ahead.

AN HON. MEMBER:

There are?

MR. HEARN:

Yes. Despite the fact a lot of good things are happening and have happened, we still have a long way to go. But working together and collectively, we can get there. With that I move second reading.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Incorporate The Newfoundland And Labrador School Trustees' Association," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill No. 9)

MR. SIMMS:

Move on to Order 27.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Newfoundland Teacher (Collective Bargaining) Act, 1973." (Bill No. 27).

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. HEARN:

Mr. Speaker, this is really labour legislation and on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Blanchard), I am proud to introduce it.

It is really to give substance to an agreement which has been reached between the Newfoundland Teachers Association and the Roman Catholic School Boards whereby under certain conditions members of religious orders such as nuns and Christian brothers can be exempted from seniority provisions as they are under control of their orders when they are posted in certain areas. With our declining school enrollments and changing positions and loss sometimes of teaching positions in the field, we find a member of a religious order would have less seniority than perhaps a lay teacher in that area. There have been a number of problems in the past where a senior member of the teaching force on the school will be laid off rather than the religious order who would have less seniority. In fact, we had a court case some time ago on that.

But now the Newfoundland Teachers Association and the school boards have reached an agreement whereby in certain areas this can be taken care of and actually the amendment is to make sure it is covered in The Collective Bargaining Act.

I move second reading.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:

On behalf of my colleague for Stephenville (Mr. K. Aylward), I will reply to this bill, Mr. Speaker. I do not think it is particularly earth-shattering. It is pretty well to do something which was already done some years ago.

I am not overly familiar with the religious orders, Mr. Speaker. I have never had the privilege of being taught by the religious orders, but I think it is probably my loss because I did not get some exposure to them.

The only question I have about this is not necessarily a criticism of the bill. But I would like for the minister when he closes the debate to address the retroactiveness of this particular legislation. The bill renders legality to the original contract of 1982 which saw an arrangement worked out that would accommodate many teachers within religious orders. Now this is as the minister pointed out.

But I always twig when I see things being done retroactively. This government has been famous for retroactive legislation. If you have any doubt, just ask anyone who ever was involved in Labrador City when the mine cut back there and the effect that that had on a lot of the people when the retroactive legislation was brought in. I am sure the minister is aware of what I am

talking about.

The thing which always concerns me about retroactive legislation is I might be doing something right at this very minute, Mr. Speaker, and in eight or ten years time I could discover what I am doing is illegal and I could be fine for doing it. So there is always a bad taste left in my mouth when I see anything being done retroactively.

We had an example of that here this morning, I believe, when I called the road signs on the Trans-Canada Highway to the attention of the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Doyle). I discovered by coincidence it was a half hour an hour earlier, retroactively, he had already made a decision to do that. So there is something about retroactively which leaves a little bit of a question mark in my mind.

But this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, it has been worked out. It should have been done in 1982. This legislation should have gone through the House in 1982 when the contract was signed. Nevertheless, since it was not gone through in 1982, I do not think it is going to disrupt the educational system in this Province. I do not think it is going to stop any schools from being built. It is not going to interfere with the education of the people down in Roddickton who have two systems which my friend from the NDP Party is so concerned about.

So we are pleased to support this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, and hope it gets speedy passage through the House.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, it seems like education day today. To tell you the truth, in looking at the particular piece of legislation, it was a piece of legislation I had some serious concerns about and I just want to recount some personal experiences in order to give you the background on it because I think it is important to give it.

In Cape St. George, where my wife teaches, she teaches in a high school called Notre Dame D'Cape which is a high school that has been operating there for, I guess, about thirty or forty years, but in all the time we have lived there, which is thirty years, the community was fortunate enough to have a number of members of the congregation of the Presentation Sisters as teachers, principals, and so on in the school there.

I say fortunate enough because back in the 1960s when the school system was in a period of flux, the arrival of the Sisters was a tremendous blessing to the community. I mean that in more than a religious sense because what it brought for the first time was a professional group of teachers who had a tremendous commitment to the profession.

I remember talking to a woman who taught at Cape St. George in 1964, her name then was Helen Gale, and her name now is Helen White, and she is now a teacher in Stephenville, but she is always remembered by the individuals at Cape St. George as a individual who had a tremendous commitment to

teaching. She told me stories of the times when teachers were hired for the school system, because of the lack of teachers, I guess, in the early 50s, 60s and so on, who would teach there until the middle of April and then would go lobster fishing and just quit. As a result, the whole school system was in flux. There was a difficulty of getting any kind of reasonably good education done there.

When the Presentation Sisters arrived there and when other teachers who were more professional were introduced to the system, it eventually stabilized and the quality of the teaching improved considerably, and the Sisters were a very important element of it. There were as many as eight, nine or ten Sisters there at a time.

I say that because I think it is important to use that as a background to what I am going to say next which is that in the last number of years there has only been two or three Sisters left there and, unfortunately, instead of being teachers who were in the classrooms and so on, several of them were just administrators. As administrators, they tend to make it very difficult in a school which would end up as a Sister as a Principal for two or three years and then leave and go somewhere else, and another one would be brought in for another couple of years and then leave and go somewhere else, and the continuity of administration of the school suffered greatly.

I should mention, by the way, that this September will be the first year that Notre Dame D' Camp will have a lay teacher in all the time that we have been there and I

guess for a number of years before that. I look on that as an improvement because this way there will be an individual who is resident in the community, and who is also bilingual, by the way, because that is a French high school or a high school with a major French immersion program in it. That is important. That was one of the liabilities with the Sisters, many of them could not speak French. As a matter of fact, none of them could, of all the ones that we had there.

In the last number of years, the presence of the Sisters as administrators in these schools ended up to be not as much of a positive influence in the system as they had twenty years earlier when they were there. I think that is a symbol of what is happening in our school system in general and with what is happening to the Presentation Sisters, the Sisters of Mercy, the Christian Brothers and so on, is that because of declining numbers, they are now having to reaccess their role.

So, when I looked at this piece of legislation, which essentially enshrined an agreement made a number of years ago by the NTA and the government, I was wondering whether or not this is the kind of thing we wanted to perpetuate. So what I did was get in touch with the Newfoundland Teachers' Association and talked to their individuals about the background of this particular piece of legislation and what it intends to accomplish.

In talking to them, what it appears to be, in a sense, is this will cover a situation that perhaps in five years will mean there will be virtually no

religious teaching in our school systems at all. Now, I am not saying that is a good or bad thing. All I am saying is that that seems to be the direction to which it is leading.

For example, in 1982 to 1983, which is, I think, six years ago, there were 221 religious teachers teaching in our school systems in this Province under this particular agreement, and those 221 were spread out among 8,000 teachers. Four years later, in 1986-87 the 221 religious teachers had dropped down to 164 and one-half. I do not profess to understand where the half came from but 164 and one-half was the number.

This year, the 1987-88 school year, we have 160 religious covered by that particular clause here, which means that the number has decreased in the short five or six year period by some sixty-one religious which is, at that point, something like about one-third of the number we had.

In talking to Sisters who I have known, it seems to me what they are doing is looking at their own role and redefining it. For example, a number of the Presentation Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy are going now to communities where it is extremely difficult to get well-trained teachers to teach. They are also expanding their mandate so it is not just teaching they are involved in, but they are involved more in community development work, which I think is an area that is a significant one that they can make a major contribution to.

In talking to Lorraine Michaels, who I believe is one of the most

highly committed Sisters in the entire Province, and is, by the way, I think, a very influential force in the Sister of Mercy congregation in this Province, because a lot of the other Sisters take their lead from the commitment that she has to minority causes and the willingness she has to be a community activist, which is the role that they seem to be chunking out.

So what we are seeing, in a sense, is the passing of an era. It may be, in a sense, a shame this era is passing, but it is. We will probably have a period of time in a number of years where there will be virtually no religious covered by this particular clause, and, in that sense, I think we would look on it with a sense of nostalgia. Also, in another respect, because we do have properly trained lay teachers there and many of the religious tied up in education are now into other pursuits, such as the Brother T.I. Murphy Learning Center, for example, which is an institution set up to address a specific need that the education system did not seem to be responding to properly. So, in a sense, this whole re-definition of the role is probably a good thing in that other needs we have had to have addressed are being addressed.

By the way, one of the other things I wanted to mention was that, of the 160 covered by the contract, fifty-six of them were administrators in the year 1987-88, which meant that if you actually added it up, there are slightly over 100 religious in this Province who are actually in classrooms teaching. So in a sense, 100 out of 8,000 teachers, or whatever the number is now, is not a huge number.

I thought I would mention those comments because it is a change. Again, I guess, there are different attitudes to it. I know that in Grand Falls the announcement the Christian Brothers were no longer continuing on with the school there was greeted with a tremendous amount of regret by the people of Grand Falls who recognized their contribution over a long period of time.

I am not sure if there was an effort made to get them back. Was it successful?

MR. SIMMS:

There was a public meeting (inaudible).

MR. FENWICK:

They are still trying.

So there is obviously a role there and it has been an influential role in the past, but not nearly to the extent there has been, say, twenty or thirty years ago when really the great missionary work in our school system was done.

Now, we hope there is a new role for them. I hope they can continue to improve the number of recruits to these religious orders, which has been a problem in the past.

But on that basis, Mr. Speaker, we are in support of the particular change to The Newfoundland Teachers Association Collective Bargaining Act, since in consultation with the teachers, it seems this is just a method of accommodating religious people within the school system and, in a sense, is a provision perhaps ten years from now, perhaps unfortunately, will no longer be necessary.

MR. HEARN:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

If the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. HEARN:

Mr. Speaker, it is, as the Leader of the New Democratic Party said, really an amendment which may, somewhere down the road, unfortunately, not be necessary. But it does serve a purpose at present and the retroactivity of it undoubtedly will cover the area between discussions around the agreement and getting it here to the House. It is no more than that.

It might, in closing, be a very appropriate time to speak about the great job the religious have done in our schools. I personally am a product of the Presentation Sisters.

When we hear these days about equality and lack of opportunity for women in the work force and in leadership roles, certainly the Sisters did not know much about that because all women, of course, right through high school years, in fact, the only teachers in the school who were women were nuns. The Principal certainly of all the schools under the Sisters were nuns. So consequently, the leadership role was quite evident in the past. Unfortunately, and I say that because I think it is true, it is declining. The dedication by the religious in the schools, the Sisters and the Brothers will be very, very hard to replace. Their main purpose in life was to assist young people in the pursuit of educational opportunities and they were

dedicated to that twenty-four hours a day. When you have such dedication and effort, it will be very, very hard, as I say, to replace.

MR. TOBIN:
All those in favour.

MR. HEARN:
So consequently, in the interim, hopefully we will see an increase in the numbers in the various groups. But certainly at the present time the little bit of a dispute that does exist can be clarified by the amendment here.

So I move second reading.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Newfoundland Teacher (Collective Bargaining) Act, 1973," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill No. 27).

MR. SIMMS:
Order 34.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting The Newfoundland Institute of Agrologists." (Bill No. 38).

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development.

MR. POWER:
Mr. Speaker, this Agrologists Act is something that is very important to the persons in Newfoundland who are professionally involved in the study of agriculture, in assisting our farmers and different persons in the agriculture community in Newfoundland.

We are the only Province in Canada

which does not have an Agrologists Act. Basically this Act which is very simple to do and obviously it will go through the House I suspect very quickly, is very important. It is a small number of people who contribute significantly to this Province.

The agrologists want to be able to associate with their professional counterparts on the Mainland on an equal footing and we just want to set up this act. It is set up the way many of the associations of professional engineers, the association of whatever you have in Newfoundland, we have large amounts of them. I guess with that, Mr. Speaker, I certainly have answers to any questions you want to ask me about The Agrologists Act. With that, it really is just designed to make sure our agrologists are covered. It does not change the industry or anything. It just puts our fellows on an equal footing with everybody else in Canada.

I move second reading.

MR. KELLAND:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with the minister the time is probably passed due that we do have an act that does govern and regulate the practice of the persons involved as professional agriculturists in our Province.

In reading through the piece of legislation, a number of different points come to my mind. Perhaps when the minister gets around to closing debate on the subject, he

may enlarge upon it.

In the explanatory note it states that the purpose is to "provide for the regulation of persons practicing agrology in the province." In the definition, Section 2, an agrologist is defined as "a professional agriculturalist registered as an agrologist under this Act."

Now, in reading beyond that, the question which comes to my mind, first of all, relates to Section 3 and it says "This Act will not apply to or affect (a) a person carrying on the business of farming or the growing of crops, unless he or she becomes a member of the institute or practices agrology."

The question I have there is the Act can effect a person who is not a member of the institute, by the way I read this Section, as long as he or she practices agrology, or as it says further down in that same section, 'holds himself or herself out as an agrologist.'

Now, in my mind, that raises a couple of different questions and perhaps the minister could explain in more detail when he winds up debate, whether or not the Act does indeed affect or apply to people who, though not members of the institute to be formed, do hold themselves out as agrologists or professional agriculturalists because when you talk about that, and we ask that question, you look at Section 25 which has some significance, in that under Offences and Miscellaneous, "A person who contravenes the Act is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction" to certain penalties.

I would ask him to explain to me

if the Act only applies, as it seems in some wording, to those who are registered with the institute or also applies to people who hold themselves out as agrologists. I find that a little unclear and maybe a little ambiguous. My approach is not a legal one but rather one as a person interested in anything that happens in the areas for which I have shadow responsibility.

The other sections within the Act itself, I read them in detail and they seemed to me to be pretty straightforward, Mr. Minister, and are for the purpose stated. I see no argument with any of the sections other than the clarification I sought there just a minute ago.

I would like to - and I say this as an individual member - I would like to see always, I suppose, in any professional association or any other association which totally affects our Province, I would like to see this read, "An Act Respecting The Newfoundland And Labrador Institute Of Agrologists." Now, that may in some sense be a small point but to the people who live in Labrador, even though we may not have professional agriculturists in Labrador, we may very well have them sometime in the future. It strikes me if we wish to remain cohesive between the two geographic sections of our Province, that is the Island of Newfoundland and the region of Labrador, that we should, whenever possible, give some recognition to that area which I have the honour of representing one section of, and to some degree, all of it, when we speak about shadow Cabinet responsibilities for Northern Development and matters that concern the region of Labrador.

That may be a small point in whether or not it is worth an amendment at this stage of the game, is not a point that I press at this time. But I would like to express the thought, as many people in Labrador express time after time, that when you talk about the Newfoundland Association of or the Newfoundland this or the Newfoundland that, it creates in the minds of people in Labrador some feeling that they are being left out. I do not think that was intentional in any way, shape or form, and I do not suggest that. But I somehow would like to see that sort of thing to ensure we do have some kind of a cohesiveness in our Province and that we do not see the ugly head of separatism raising itself through some very small inadvertent point.

Generally speaking, in reading through the legislation, I find no sections I would object to except for clarification which I ask for in my opening remarks. I support the piece of legislation for the purposes as stated.

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker, I think what probably I should do is, as it is one o'clock, I will just adjourn the debate because there are a few words I want to say on this on Monday.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Port de Grave has adjourned the debate.

The hon. the President on the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform hon. members that on Monday we will be continuing with some legislation. We will, in fact, be doing - perhaps the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the NDP would like to take a note of this - The City of Mount Pearl Act will be done on Monday.

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:

On today's Order Paper, it is on the back of the page because it was just introduced yesterday, but we gave a reading today. It is Bill No. 55. I guess that is the appropriate note for him. The City of Mount Pearl Act, Bill No. 55.

Then we will be doing some Finance motions, particularly, Monday we want to start with the motions dealing with The Stock Saving Plan and the Venture Capital Program. Those are, if you wish the numbers, Bill 34 and Bill 35. I suspect that will probably be as much as we may do on Monday. So we will leave it at that.

I will indicate on Monday what we will be doing on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday after we have a look at the progress we have been making.

Mr. Speaker, I move the House adjourn until tomorrow, Monday, June 13, at 2:00 p.m. and that this House do now adjourn.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow Monday, June 13, at 2:00 p.m.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
FOURTH SESSION, FORTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND:

Hon. P.J.McNicholas.....Speaker
 Mr. Glenn Greening.....Deputy Speaker
 Chairman of Committees
 Mr. Kevin Parsons.....Deputy Chairman of Committees

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Premier Peckford.....PC.....Green Bay
Mr. Power.....PC.....Ferryland
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Mr. Rideout.....PC.....Baie Verte-White Bay
Mr. Russell.....PC.....Lewisporte
Hon. Mr. Simmons.....Lib.....Fortune-Hermitage
Mr. Simms.....PC.....Grand Falls
Mr. Tobin.....PC.....Burin-Placentia West
Mr. Tulk.....Lib.....Fogo
Dr. Twomey.....PC.....Exploits
Ms. Verge.....PC.....Humber East
Mr. Warren.....PC.....Torngat Mountains
Mr. Wells.....Lib.....Windsor-Buchans
Mr. Windsor.....PC.....Mount Pearl
Mr. Woodford.....PC.....Humber Valley
Mr. Young.....PC.....Harbour Grace

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Mr. Barrett.....Development and Tourism
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Mr. Rideout.....Fisheries
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Mr. Simms.....President of the Executive Council
President of Treasury Board
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Dr. Twomey.....Public Works and Services
Ms. Verge.....Justice
Mr. Warren.....Minister Responsible for Northern Development
Mr. Windsor.....Finance
Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro
Mr. Young.....Consumer Affairs and Communications

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