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(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

Friday

[Preliminary Transcript]
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17 November 1989

The House met at 9:00 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Lush):
Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. SIMMS:
On a point of order, I guess, a matter that might require some correction in Hansard. This is the Hansard actually of Wednesday. The vote on the resolution, for example, and the Clerk might wish to take note of this, there are on Page R 53 a list of names, I do not know those who spoke or voted against, I am not talking about them, I am talking about those who voted in favour of the motion. There are, I think, my count anyway, fourteen names listed, yet the recorded vote, as enunciated by Your Honour on the next page says the vote is seventeen for the motion, so clearly there are some missing. The reason I stood originally was to point out that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition certainly voted for the resolution but his name is omitted and now since then I have discovered there are a couple of others. I understand the Member for Green Bay (Mr. Hewlett) and I do not know if there are any others. The clerk would have the names anyway so could the Hansard be amended, or corrected, through this little exchange. It is just to get it on the record because it is very important.

MR. RIDEOUT:
I simply want to be on the record as in favour of that motion.

Statements by Ministers

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

DR. KITCHEN:
Mr. Speaker, I want to make a statement on pre-1967 pensionable service. I do so because one of the hon. Members opposite has been raising havoc in the civil service as a result, presumably, of her desire to get her 'physog' on the television screens.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

DR. KITCHEN:
Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure all Members of the Public Service Pension Plan, particularly those contemplating retirement, that there has been no change in the recognition of pre 1967 service for pension purposes. However, I wish to clarify the pensionable rights to pre-1967 service that public servants have under the plan, so that there can be no misunderstanding, and to do so I refer to the Public Service Pensions Act, and here I have an office consolidation, and in particular to Sections 9 and 24. According to Section 9, any pre-1967 service shall be counted as pensionable service for those who were employed on April 1st, 1967 and who have been continuously employed since. For them, no Cabinet approval is necessary. However, for those who are not employed in the Public Service on April 1st, 1967 but who later returned to the Public Service, Section 24 states that any pre-1967 service may be counted as pensionable service. For this latter group, the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, that is the Cabinet, is needed. It must be clearly stated that for

those with such gap in their public service, the recognition of pre-1967 service is not automatic. For them the Act leaves it up to Cabinet whether or not to approve pre-1967 service. Their request must go to Cabinet. However, since 1967 all such requests have been approved. Mr. Speaker, members of the public service pension plan can rest easy. There is no change in the recognition of pre-1967 service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

DR. KITCHEN:

What was, is. Moreover, there will be no change implemented unless appropriate notice is given to those concerned. Mr. Speaker, this Government and those who work for Government, face great challenges in the area of pensions, as we seek to improve the adequacy of the pension fund to provide appropriate incomes for public servants upon their retirement. In the future, especially after the report of the Commission on Pensions is received, changes can be expected. However, Government will always have uppermost in mind the interest of its employees.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MS VERGE:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The Member for Humber East.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MS VERGE:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This week we, in Opposition, have

done our work. We have caught out the Government in a precipitous move to do public employees out of their pension benefits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MS VERGE:
We caught out the Government, we exposed them, and what the Minister is saying here this morning is that the Government is retreating, but retreating only temporarily.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MS VERGE:
The Minister is saying 'There has not yet been any change in the Government policy for giving credit for pre-1967 service.' He goes on to say 'There may well be a change in the future, but with appropriate notice.' The Premier confirmed that by speaking across the floor of the House.

PREMIER WELLS:
It is very clear they are looking at it.

MS VERGE:
Not very comforting for the hundreds of public employees who are depending on Cabinet approval.

MR. SIMMS:
Shame on you.

MS VERGE:
Most of the public employees who had an interruption in service and who require Cabinet approval for pre-1967 service are women. And do you know why? Because women interrupted their careers in the public service to have babies.

MR. SIMMS:
Right.

MS VERGE:

In years gone by there were no maternity benefits for women in the public service.

MR. SIMMS:

That is right.

MR. GILBERT:

You are picking on women.

MS VERGE:

Thanks to the PC administrations of Premier Moores and Premier Peckford maternity benefits are now in all of our public service collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister ended his statement by sounding the warning that once The Pension Commission Report is presented at the end of the year, changes can be expected.

MR. SIMMS:

Right on!

MS VERGE:

Let me serve notice, on behalf of the Official Opposition, on the Members opposite, that we will be watching, that we will be vigilant, and we will not put up with any tampering with public employees pension benefits and rights, without protesting to the full extent of our powers.

MR. SIMMS:

Right on!

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MS VERGE:

Mr. Speaker, this statement is not as precise as it should be to address the worries and concerns and questions of public employees -

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:

Oh, nonsense!

MS VERGE:

- who are planning retirement soon who have already applied for Cabinet approval for their pre-1967 service. This statement does not answer precisely the questions of the nurses at Western Memorial Regional Hospital, such as Margaret Jacobs, whose story was told on television last night and on radio this morning.

MR. SIMMS:

Are they going to be approved? Are you going to approve hers?

MS VERGE:

It says 'Since 1967 all such requests have been approved.'

It does not say whether this Liberal Cabinet will approve all such requests from May 5, 1989. There have been requests from public employees in the system since last spring. How does the Minister explain that?

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister tell the public and the public service precisely whether he will have the Cabinet approve immediately all pending requests from public employees, including employees at Western Memorial and the Grace Hospital, for pre-67 pension service in conformity with long-standing policy and practice? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Further statements by Ministers?

Oral Questions

MR. RIDEOUT:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RIDEOUT:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that yesterday I asked the Premier a number of specific questions about possible components of any Federal/Provincial response program to present and future crises in the fishery. I specifically asked the Premier if this Government had already given approval in principle to a number of those possible components. Mr. Speaker, let me ask the Premier this morning whether or not a paper entitled Structural Adjustment Options For The Newfoundland Fishery have in fact been presented to officials of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador by the Federal Task Force, and whether or not that structural adjustment option paper has, in fact, been presented to the Cabinet of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:
Mr. Speaker, I can say with certainty that it has not been presented to the Cabinet, although there was a meeting last week when I was away. I reviewed the file, and I do not recall seeing that there. But there certainly was no discussion of it in any meeting that I have attended, and I do not think it was on that agenda last week while I was away. Whether or not anything has been presented to the officials, I will have to take the question under advisement and

let the hon. the Leader of the Opposition know on Monday.

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

MR. RIDEOUT:
Mr. Speaker, just so the Premier has ample opportunity here, let me ask the Premier this: In view of the fact that he might not recall this note entitled Structural Adjustment for the Newfoundland Fishery, let me tell him that it has since been renamed Building a Viable Fishery Option. Can he tell the House whether or not that particular paper has been presented to the Cabinet of Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:
Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that the Federal Government, the Tory counterparts of Members opposite, are feeding information to the Opposition before they deliver anything to the Government. I have not seen any such paper. Maybe it is the former Deputy Minister who serves on the Committee, I do not know. Maybe he provides the information. That could be. I do not know.

MR. RIDEOUT:
Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please! Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier is awful testy this morning. It ill behoves the Premier to try to speculate publicly where I may or may not get my information. Oppositions have been known to get information from sources for time immemorial, even from the Government in power of the day. That might even be happening, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:

You had better look inside.

MR. RIDEOUT:

You had better look inside, perhaps.

Let me ask the Premier this, Mr. Speaker. Is it not a fact, Mr. Speaker, despite the Premier's lapse of memory on this particular matter, that the Newfoundland Cabinet has given approval in principle to a paper originally entitled Structural Adjustments Options for the Newfoundland Fishery, since renamed Building a Viable Fishery for the Newfoundland Fishery? Is that not a fact?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RIDEOUT:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker, is it not a fact that following approval in principle of that particular option, the Newfoundland Government have since directed their officials to

proceed to carry out detailed discussions with the Government of Canada on that particular option? Is that not a fact?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

No, Mr. Speaker, it is not a fact.

But I can say to the House that we have been carrying out discussions through the Task Force. I have not been briefed by the Task Force for about ten days or so. So what the Provincial Task Force has discussed with the Federal Task Force in the last ten days or so - I do not remember exactly when we had the last meeting - I cannot say with certainty at this moment, but I will find out and I will let the House know on Monday.

But the suggestion that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition is making is totally and completely fabricated and false.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Just lies.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. RIDEOUT:

I assume Hansard will show that the hon. gentleman for Placentia said 'lies'. I do not think that is allowed to stay on the record of the House, but I am sure Your Honour will check.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Premier questions about what the Cabinet have discussed or given approval in principle for, not whether or not there have been further discussions with officials. Mr. Speaker, is it not a fact that the Newfoundland

Government, having approved the options in that particular structural adjustment paper, have accepted the following criteria for a commercially viable fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador, that is fewer fishermen, fewer plant workers and fewer fish plants open, which were questions I asked the Premier yesterday.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

No, Mr. Speaker, it is not a fact. I know the hon. the Leader of the Opposition has his questions written out so he reads them, but that is contrary to what I just told him. No, we have not accepted it. No, the Cabinet has not approved it. Yes, the Cabinet has an open mind to anything that will improve the fishery and take care of the crisis. We do not have closed traps for minds. We have open minds, and we will deal with any aspect of it that is necessary to deal with, including any proposal. We may accept or we may reject when the time comes. At this point in time, the Cabinet has made no such decision. The answer is no. I do not know how many more times it can be answered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people of this Province will see the real answer sometime before midnight on Christmas Eve, I say to the Premier, because this Government have accepted those principles, have accepted those

policies and it will be part of any deal that is done. Now, let me ask the Premier, is it not a fact that the principles have been put to bed, the principles have been accepted, and that all that is left now is to work out the details implementing those principles? Is that not a fact?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

No, Mr. Speaker. No, no, no, no. How many more times can I say it? What does it take to give the answer to the hon. gentleman? No principles have been accepted. We are discussing all possible aspects of it. I have no doubt that a couple of the things that were mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday have probably been discussed by the task force. As I say, I have not been briefed in the last ten days or so. The one thing he did mention, about part-time, I remember that being discussed. No, decision has been made. No firm decision has been made on the principles. The only thing that is happening is everything that affects the fishery is being discussed for the simple reason that we want to make the fishery work properly. We want it to be a secure opportunity for the people in Newfoundland and Labrador who are engaged in the fishery to have an opportunity to earn a reasonable living with dignity and self-respect, and we want to provide economic opportunity for anybody who will not be able to do so in the fishery. So, we are looking at all possible answers to that, all possible avenues by which those objectives can be achieved. That is in the process of being considered. It may well be that the different things the

Leader of the Opposition has mentioned are being considered, but I can say with absolute certainty that the Cabinet has made no decision in principle on it. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I object to the refusal of the Leader of the Opposition to accept my word for that, as he is required to do under our rules. When I tell him that the Cabinet has not, he had better be prepared to produce proof that we have before he suggests that it is wrong and they have in fact done so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

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

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Leader of the Opposition on a final supplementary.

MR. RIDEOUT:
Mr. Speaker, nobody is refusing to accept the Premier's word, but I also have information that tells me that other people involved in this process have been told that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador have approved those things in principle. Now, I say to the Premier, is he going to stop skating around? Because the Premier said to this House quite clearly this morning that everything is up for grabs and some of the stuff the Leader of the Opposition says might even be true. When is the Premier going to stop skating around this issue and tell the thousands of fishermen in hundreds of communities in Newfoundland and Labrador exactly what he is proposing for their future? When is he going to do that, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:
Mr. Speaker, Ray Andrews, who was the deputy for the former -

MR. RIDEOUT:
Whom no one has seen since you fired him, by the way.

PREMIER WELLS:
That is right: He is not a member of Cabinet. He does not know what the Cabinet discussed. Roy Rideout, I believe the Leader of the Opposition's brother, works in Mr. Crosbie's office. He is not a member of Cabinet. He cannot tell the Leader of the Opposition what Cabinet has discussed. I can. The fifteen people here are members of Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, and when we tell the House that the Cabinet has not made any such decision, we are giving the House the accurate information, not the concoction and fabrication that is being put forth by the Leader of the Opposition. Whether he is doing it, or somebody else is concocting it and giving him false information, I do not know. But I can tell the House with certainty, Mr. Speaker -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

There has been a question put to the Premier. The Chair has asked hon. Members before, please allow the Premier to answer the question and not interfere by raising other questions. Because if the Premier attempts to answer these, then he is going to be up much longer than he ought to be.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They obviously do not like the answers, Mr. Speaker, and it provokes this kind of response to which Your Honour's remarks were just addressed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

When the Chair asks for order, the Chair expects order.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet has made no such decisions. It has not made any such decisions. And some of the points mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, I have not even been aware that the Task Force have discussed. They may, or may not. I do not deny that they have, they may well have done so, but I can tell the House with absolute certainty that the suggestions being put forward have no foundation in fact. They are a complete fabrication. I do not know who fabricated it, but I can assure the House that they are, indeed, complete fabrications.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. HEWLETT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

MR. HEWLETT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had a question for the Minister of Energy, but I will direct it to the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

If hon. Members do not want their colleague to ask a question, that is fine by the Chair; we will wait until there is complete order.

The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

MR. HEWLETT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The recent power bills from Newfoundland Light and Power have indicated that they are going for a 3.84 per cent rate increase; however, when you look at a breakdown of the consumption levels, people with low consumption are being hit with something over 13 per cent, medium consumers are being hit with approximately 5 per cent and the highest consumers are being hit with the lowest rate, 2.8 per cent. Given the fact that the lower consumer of electricity is probably the poorer person, in the absence of the Minister of Energy I ask the Premier, does he think that this application for rate increase is at all fair.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, I am not the Public Utilities Board. We have a law in this Province that empowers the Public Utilities Board to regulate monopolies like Newfoundland Light and Power and Newfoundland Telephone, and regulate other activities of monopolies, and, Mr.

Speaker, any such application for rate increases must be heard by that Board and the propriety of it determined by that Board. I would never be so irresponsible as to prejudice what that Board should decide, by expressing an opinion publicly in the House that it is right or wrong or fair or not fair. That is for the Board to decide.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I keep hearing irrelevant remarks and I again remind hon. Members that that is not to be tolerated. There is a place to ask questions and hon. Members have the opportunity to ask questions. I ask them to please refrain from asking questions when a Member is answering a question.

The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

MR. HEWLETT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that the biggest consumers are getting the lowest increase, and given the fact that we still have not done our thing in Labrador and brought any major projects on stream, would the Premier not agree that this rate structure is somewhat counter to good energy conservation?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

I am not sure what the first part of the hon. Member's question was, because there still was a lot of babbling from the other side.

Would he repeat the first part?

MR. HEWLETT:

Big consumers get the lowest rate increase.

PREMIER WELLS:

I do not know that it is right. I do not know that it is so. Presumably, if that is not the right thing to do, the Public Utilities Board will make the decision. I am not under any guise, no matter how the hon. Member changes the question, going to presume to take on the rights and responsibilities of the Public Utilities Board by proclaiming on the propriety of the proposal in the House. I mean, that would be grossly irresponsible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. HEWLETT:

A final question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:

You will talk about anything but Meech Lake.

PREMIER WELLS:

I will talk about Meech Lake.

MR. HEWLETT:

Again to the Premier -

MR. SPEAKER:

Just a moment. I have not recognized the hon. Member.

The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

MR. HEWLETT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the Premier: Given the fact that the Premier served on the Board of that particular power company, will the Premier assure us that his influence during his tenure had nothing to do with the

kind of rate structures being put forward by the company today?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

The utter stupidity of the question makes an answer really unnecessary, Mr. Speaker. But the ability to understand what happens in the process or the lack of ability to understand, may make an answer necessary for the hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker, there is nobody in this Province who does not know that many years ago I became a Director of Newfoundland Light and Power. I served faithfully in that position as a director for a number of years, and ultimately I became Chairman of the Board of Newfoundland Light and Power.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER WELLS:

The day I decided to seek the leadership of the Liberal Party, before ever I was elected as leader, I resigned from that position because I considered it inappropriate for me to have both positions, as Leader of the Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition, and, at the same time, be a director, and particularly Chairman of Newfoundland Light and Power. So I resigned immediately. Not only did I resign, I sold a handful of shares I had. So I have severed all connections with Newfoundland Light and Power. Now the whole world knows that. Therefore, the stupidity of the question just makes it unnecessary to answer it.

What Newfoundland Light and Power or its directors are doing now is

for them to decide. I have no idea what they are doing. That is for them to decide. It is for the Public Utilities Board to determine the propriety or the otherwise of their requested rate increase. And that is why I will not be so silly as to express an opinion -

MR. TOBIN:

Stupid and silly.

PREMIER WELLS:

Now I would certainly not be as stupid as the Members opposite, I could never. No matter how low I sunk, I could never be that stupid.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, it would be most improper for me to express any kind of an opinion in this House as to what the PU Board should or should not do.

MR. HEARN:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

MR. HEARN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier earlier, in answering one of the questions from the Member for Green Bay (Mr. Hewlett), stated that the real protector for the common consumer in the Province was the Public Utilities Board. Will the Premier now confirm for the House that he is in the process of restructuring the Public Utilities Board, with a view to eliminating the consumer rep., the real protection for the common consumer, and that the main benefactor of a weakened Board

would be the Newfoundland Light and Power Company, a company of which he is former Chairman of the Board?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, I will confirm for the House that we are in the process of considering the recommendations contained in a report commissioned by the former Government, of which the Member who just asked the question was a Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER WELLS:

We are in the process of considering that report. I have no doubt that in end we will make the right decisions, and when the decisions are finally made and the legislation that the Government proposes is tabled in the House, then I will speak to what is contained in that legislation and not before, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

MR. HEARN:

Mr. Speaker, the report was commissioned by the former Government, but, as the Premier knows, it is his Government, and he alone, of course, will be the one who decides what will be done in relation to the Board. But I ask the Premier, being a former Chairman of the Newfoundland Light and Power Company, was the Newfoundland Light and Power Company one of the contributors to his salary when he was Leader of the Opposition?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, the temptation is to ignore it, because, again, it is so utterly unreasonable and inappropriate and unfounded as to be an indignity to any Member of the House. The simple fact is no, Mr. Speaker, no. The salary I was paid as Leader of the Liberal Party, while I was Leader of the Opposition, was paid by the Liberal Party, not by any named company.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

PREMIER WELLS:

The same people I suppose that the P. C. Party get their contributions from.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

MR. HEARN:

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has always maintained in this House when asked a question about his salary, as Hansard will show, that he did not know who paid his salary. Now he knows who did not pay his salary, so I will ask the Premier, can he tell us who did not pay his salary as Leader of the Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, what I have just told the House is that my salary as Leader of the Liberal Party was paid by the Liberal Party. Who

contributed to it? I do not know and I do not want to know. Now that is the position that I have maintained before. The question the hon. gentleman asked, I mean, if he thinks the people of this Province are so utterly stupid as not to see the stupidity of the question he has no respect for them, and I have no doubt that they would be insulted by his insult to their intelligence to suggest -

MR. TOBIN:

Why did God give you more brains (inaudible)?

PREMIER WELLS:

Probably because he did not give the hon. Member any.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. PARSONS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Provincial and Municipal Affairs. After seeing, and I suppose many more besides me, a documentary as to where our Sports Hall of Fame is housed, and seeing that a lot of the history and culture of our past and our great achievements of the past are documented and stored in an eight by ten room at the Colonial Building, and seeing that all the documentation there is stored in a few cardboard boxes, is the Minister aware of the situation?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker, yes I am, very much aware of the situation. I have known since we took Government that our Archives, both Provincial Archives and specifically the Sports Archives, are badly in need of a different home from where they are right now. I have my Assistant Deputy Minister, Bill Frost, and the officials looking at possible locations for an Archives, both the Provincial Archives and the Sports Archives. We are very much aware of the problem and the fact that they are deteriorating where they are located now, and we will be moving those Archives to another site as soon as it is identified.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. PARSONS:

Mr. Speaker, again I would like to ask the Minister because there were plans by the previous Government to move to the Newman Building - it was one site - has the Minister looked at this, and is he now prepared to give us a time space and make the announcement as it pertains to the new location?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member is quite correct that the Newman Building was initially identified as the site for the Sports Archives, however, some concern has been expressed by the Sports Governing Bodies that proper security, twenty-four hour security, is not available and it may be very costly to provide it; and there are some other concerns with the space available there.

We are continuing to look at that Building and look at other sites as well. We do not want to make the move to the Newman Building until we are satisfied that it is the correct site and that another more appropriate site may not be better. So we are looking at the whole area of Archives, including the Sports Archives, and until we make a decision on a site for the Sports Archives and all other Provincial Archives, we would rather not make the decision to move the Sports Archives. So we are awaiting an overall report on the whole matter of Provincial Archives.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Environment and Lands, who is responsible for Wildlife.

Would the Minister advise if any changes with respect to the carrying of firearms have been made to the Wildlife Regulations since he became Minister?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Environment and Lands.

MR. KELLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for his question. I wish he would have been more specific, but there is a regulation change with respect to trappers in the carrying of firearms. As you may or may not know, this year we adopted the main trapping regulations in accordance with the FIC recommendations with one

exception. Having adopted humane regulations, the most humane method for dispatching animals that are still alive in a trap when a trapper checks his settings, is by a small bore firearm. So there is a change in that regard, in that trappers are now permitted to carry that type of a weapon to humanely dispatch the animals. You could be more specific perhaps, if there is another area you wish to talk about.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I understand there has been a change with respect to trappers. There are some 2,000 trappers in our Province and trappers are allowed to go in the country or in the woods seven days a week. Mr. Speaker, the Mr. Minister has said Sunday hunting is not allowed for safety reasons. I would like to ask the Minister why this year he has allowed some 2,000 trappers to go into the country, into the woods carrying firearms, if safety is the reason, while not allowing big game hunters and other hunters to carry firearms on Sunday.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Lands.

MR. KELLAND:

A totally different issue, Mr. Speaker.

The Member, a former Minister responsible for Wildlife, should be well aware the issue of hunting and the issue of trapping are entirely different. I have

already answered his question.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister on a slightly different issue, it pertains to the PCBs in Labrador. I understand a test has been carried out on the burning of PCBs, and I understand that citizens there have asked, why do we not wait for the results of the test before continuing with the burning of PCBs?

The Minister is also the Member for Naskaupi and he is getting a lot of pressure from a number of residents there. Now, why does the Minister not ask the Premier and his Cabinet to immediately make a change to the regulations to make sure that the results of the test are known before any further burning of the PCBs takes place?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Lands.

MR. KELLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would have thought that particular question would have come from your colleague, the other critic for this Department.

It is a Federal jurisdiction, as the Member well knows. With respect to the operating of the PCBs incinerator the Member also knows we published and had created provincial regulations for the operation of the incinerator to increase public confidence in the operation. What the Member may not know, and perhaps he should do

a little more research before he asks questions, is that I am in correspondence with Lucien Bouchard, the Federal Minister, and have responded to the so-called pressure, as the Member suggests, from my District. I do not yet have a response from Mr. Bouchard on that particular issue, but a copy of that correspondence has been provided to the Concerned Citizens Committee in Happy Valley Goose Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Opposition House Leader has one minute.

MR. SIMMS:

Okay, Mr. Speaker, I will try to direct a short question to the Minister of Education, if I may. He is aware of the fact that I am going to ask him a question, because I had a discussion with him not long ago.

In Central Newfoundland there is a very important matter on the minds of every parent out there and every educator, and that issue deals with fees versus contributions in some of the schools there. The fact is the course fees listed in some of the school handbooks do not clearly spell out that these so-called fees are actually meant to be voluntary, and that they are not mandatory. I am not suggesting that parents stop paying the voluntary contributions, in fact, I encourage them to continue to support education, but my question to the Minister is this: Are parents who cannot afford to pay the course fee aware that they do

not have to pay it, and that it is a voluntary contribution, not only in Grand Falls and Central Newfoundland, but is this a case all over the Province?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Education.

DR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to give some background to my answer with your permission. I think my hon. friend knows that the major sources of revenue for school operation and maintenance in the Province - there are two sources really, Provincial grants, which in 1980 amounted to about \$41 million, and the other major source is school taxation, and last year the Province got \$28 million from school taxes.

Now that is not enough, and in the past school boards have - schools mostly, and I look around the gallery and I see a teacher and a principal and some students - have taken up the task of raising supplementary funds. They have raised, I think, an estimated \$5 million, would you believe? I am sure the House is not aware that at the school level two years ago, \$5 million was raised by parents and by teachers and by students. I appreciate the hon. Member's concern about losing that money. We need that money now. These funds are raised from every possible source: Tickets, door to door, all kinds of thons, and fees. I will get to the fees in a minute.

Yes, there are a variety of fees, and under the legislation, Mr. Speaker, fees may be charged for certain purposes. I can quote the section, you have that knowledge,

and the parents who are concerned in Central Newfoundland have that information as well, because I have indicated in letters that they have it.

The problem comes with the interpretation of the word fee. Fees may be charged for out-of-school activities, fees may be charged for consumables that the Department of Education authorizes, but there are some problems with the fee situation. I think a bigger problem, Mr. Speaker, is that these fees mean that people who are in richer areas of the Province have more money than students in poorer areas. That is the end result of this whole fee system.

I have started to examine it. We are in the process of doing two things, I would suggest: one is ensuring that in the future more funds are provided for the operation and maintenance of schools, so that students do not have to go door to door to raise money for the basics. We are going to do that. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we are going to develop a set of guidelines for school boards so that in the future, at least, school boards will have policy statements to ensure that fairness is provided to all.

Mr. Speaker, parents should be informed. Parents should be informed, and I have done this through the media in Central Newfoundland, that no child should be denied access to a program because of a school fee. We need the money, but no person should be denied access to a course or a program because they are unable to pay the school fees. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Question Period has expired.

Before carrying on with Orders of the Day we have some individuals and groups that we would like to welcome to the galleries today. We would first like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery the Sergeant-at-Arms from the Legislature in Nova Scotia, Halifax, Mr. Harold Long and his wife Mrs. Long.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

We would also like to welcome to the House of Assembly a group of forty-nine Canadian law and democracy students from Inglis Memorial High School in Bishop Falls accompanied by their driver Mr. Craig Luff and teachers Miss Marie Cook and Mr. George Saunders, who was just recently re-elected as Mayor of the town of Bishop Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation.

MR. GILBERT:

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a Bill entitled, "An Act To Provide For The Regulation Of Motor Vehicles Used In The Transportation Of Persons Or Goods For Compensation."

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Education.

DR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a Bill entitled, "An Act Respecting The Department of Education."

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a Bill entitled, "An Act Respecting The Department Of Social Services." (Bill No. 47)

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MR. DICKS:

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a Bill entitled, "An Act To Amend And Consolidate The Law Relating To Public Utilities."

Orders of the Day

MR. BAKER:

Order 14, Mr. Speaker.

Motion, second reading of a Bill, "An Act Respecting The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs." (Bill No. 29)

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MS VERGE:

Mr. Speaker, this Bill " An Act Respecting The Department Of Municipal and Provincial Affairs" is one that gives me and my colleagues here on this side of

the House great difficulty. In speaking about the principle of the Bill, which we are now debating on second reading, it struck me that for starters the name of the Bill is off the mark. Instead of calling this "An Act Respecting The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs" it seems, after reading Clause 6 setting out the powers, duties, and functions of a Minister or the mandate of this proposed new Department, it seems a more appropriate name would be An Act Respecting The Department Of Amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, that is because the powers, duties and functions, which are listed over three and a half pages, amount to such an amazing array of important public responsibilities. It is an overwhelming mandate. It represents responsibilities that formerly were carried out, or to use the Premier's favour word 'discharged,' by several Government Departments headed by a number of Ministers.

So here we have a Bill purporting to bring together or consolidate or amalgamate this host of public responsibilities. Now, Mr. Speaker, just look at it starting on page 6 of the Bill, Municipal affairs, local Government, housing, urban and rural planning and development, water works, water services to un-incorporated communities, cultural activities - including supervision of arts and culture centres, the Arts and Letters Committee, public libraries, historic resources, provincial archives, museums, archaeology, ethnology - I wonder if the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs even knew that he was the Minister responsible for ethnology - fauna and flora,

amateur sports, fitness and recreational activities, services for youth, state correspondence, standards - including metric conversion, communications. Again

MR. SIMMS:
Metric conversion?

MS VERGE:
I ask whether this Minister even realizes that he has a mandate for communications?

MR. SIMMS:
Oh yes, he knew that, I think.

MS VERGE:
And on and on. Interestingly, a part of the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs that has been operating since this Government took office in the spring, has been the Office of the Fire Commissioner, and support for volunteer fire departments throughout the Province. Now that is not reflected in this mandate. And I am wondering if that is an oversight or whether the Government meant to reflect in this Bill the actual composition of the hundreds and hundreds of public servants, and the multitude of divisions that now, at least on paper, or in theory, report to this Minister. Mr. Speaker, it is an absolutely amazing amalgamation of public responsibility.

Secondly, the one and only initiative of this Minister and this amazing Department has been to force amalgamation of over 100 municipalities throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, a Department composed of an amalgamation of everything but the kitchen sink, a Minister and a Department whose one big move in six or seven months, one

and only move, has been to force amalgamation of over 100 municipalities throughout the Province. So should this not be called An Act Respecting the Department of Amalgamation with a Minister of Amalgamation. Surely, that would make it clearer to the people of the Province, the people whom the Minister and the Department are supposed to be serving, what they are all about, it is the Department of Amalgamation, which is setting about amalgamating municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Government could carry this a step further. It is obvious that the new Premier has amalgamated in his own Office more power that has been exercised from that Office since the days of his old mentor, Joseph R. Smallwood. Mr. Speaker, this Premier has selected a record small Cabinet. The result is an over-loading of Ministers, such as the Minister of Amalgamation.

MR. TOBIN:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order raised by the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

MR. TOBIN:

There is not a quorum in the House.

MR. SPEAKER:

A quorum call.

Quorum

MR. SPEAKER:

There is a quorum.

The hon. Member may continue.

MS VERGE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying the Government might consider carrying this whole theme of amalgamation just a little further in their legislation. It is being done in practice, as I mentioned we have a Department of Amalgamation, with a Minister of Amalgamation, who is forcing amalgamation of municipalities throughout the Province.

We also have in practice, and this is what I am suggesting be put in legislation, since we might as well have the law accord with the practice. We have a Premier who has amalgamated unto himself and his Office-

MR. TOBIN:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order has been raised by the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

MR. TOBIN:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know the rules as it relates to when a quorum call is in the House and there are only nine Members here, how the procedure continues, please.

MR. SPEAKER:

Pardon?

MR. TOBIN:

There was a quorum call placed in the House, Mr. Speaker, with nine Members present and the bells did not ring for our Members to be brought in. Or at least we did not hear them.

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes, the bells did ring.

When the fourteen were present the House reconvened again. But the bells were rung, they were rung

three times by the Chair.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, so that we understand the rules and everybody is clear, it is probably a good thing that a quorum was called because I think that was the first one that was called. For the benefit of the new Members I guess it is a good opportunity to understand how the quorum call works. Any Member can ask for a quorum, as Your Honour knows, and Members do not have to remain in the House after that quorum is requested, that is in the rules. But my understanding is that the bells are rung, if there is no quorum present, the bells are rung, and that three minutes have to elapse before the Chair would count the House to see if there is a quorum in effect. And I think that is the point that my friend was making. I do not believe that three minutes elapsed, and that is what the rules say should elapse.

MR. SPEAKER:

Well, I must admit I did not follow the three minutes. I thought that when the quorum came the hon. Members would want to revert back and do the three minutes, that is fine by Your Honour, but I do not believe that it is a major thing that would cause a -

MR. SIMMS:

That is a rule.

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes, but if hon. Members want to wait the three minutes, that is fine.

MR. SIMMS:

No, Mr. Speaker, do not misunderstand me now. The rule is three minutes should elapse, so it is the first opportunity that this

has arisen, so perhaps it is a good thing that it did arise, not only for the benefit of us, but for the Chair as well. Your honour has said himself, he admitted he did not wait three minutes, and that is fair. But from now on, obviously, the rule is three minutes.

MR. SPEAKER:

I have sat here for a dozen years, and it is my recollection that we have not very often waited for three minutes. When the quorum came, we reconvened. But if the rules are that, his honour will take them, and we shall wait the three minutes. No, problem.

MR. SIMMS:

But that is what the rule is.

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes.

MR. SIMMS:

It is either we follow the rules, or we do not.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Are we going to start waiting the three minutes.

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes, we are going to wait the three minutes.

Would the Clerk count the House, please!

A quorum is present.

Before asking the hon. Member to continue with her debate, if hon. Members would permit me to welcome to the galleries fifty-two Level 2 students from Ascension Collegiate, Bay Roberts, accompanied by their teachers, Ed Neal and Claude Taylor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

MS VERGE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure I am one of a whole group of MHAs on both sides of the House who are glad to see another group of students in the gallery. The students with us this morning have witnessed an historic time in the House. Just after they arrived, we were actually silent for three whole minutes, and they glimpsed one woman holding fort alone on one side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone that what we are debating now is the principle of a new piece of proposed legislation advanced by the Government. It is called "An Act Respecting The Department Of Municipal And Provincial Affairs". We are supposed to be examining the principle of the bill, and, off the top, I expressed a serious concern on behalf of all my colleagues about the principle of the bill, for starters, about the name of the Bill and the name of the Department. The name is very misleading. The name really does not reflect what the Bill purports to do, which is to bring together or combine, or amalgamate under the power and control of one Minister, a whole array of weighty public responsibilities, responsibilities that have very little in common with one another. There are so many responsibilities that it takes three and one-half pages to list them all.

I suggested - and the Minister

smiled - that in the six or seven months that he has been trying to look after all these responsibilities, he probably did not even know that he was the Minister responsible for Ethnology. Perhaps I missed some news broadcasts, but I have not heard any statement by the Minister over the past six or seven months about ethnology, Mr. Speaker, nor have I heard any comment from the Minister about communications.

So, Mr. Speaker, it would be much better for the people of the Province if the name of the bill reflected what it is all about, which is amalgamation. It should be an Act Respecting The Department of Amalgamation. And that is not only because it has brought together this whole amazing list of important responsibilities; some people refer to it as the Department of Everything but the Kitchen Sink, but the Department of Amalgamation would be more succinct and more in keeping with the Premier's vocabulary, because the Premier likes to use multi-syllable words.

But the main initiative of the Minister and the Department, I would suggest the only initiative, has been amalgamation of municipalities throughout every part of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, while, obviously, the Government did not take proper care with the preparation and drafting of this bill, I pointed out that it does not include power and responsibility over the Fire Commissioner's Office or the Volunteer Fire Service of the Province, or fire protection generally, which is something the Minister and his Department have within their existing boundaries.

I do not know, perhaps the Minister did not realize that either. And, similarly, the Minister and the Department did not take proper care in researching and planning their municipal amalgamation initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the Liberal Party, when they campaigned for election last spring, did not even mention amalgamation. We can only assume that the thought had not entered the minds of the present Premier and Cabinet when they were seeking office last winter. Surely, otherwise, they would have highlighted it in their campaign literature. I have checked. I have a file called 'Liberal Propaganda', and you know, there is not one reference to municipal amalgamation. Presumably, it was not until some day after May 5, when the Liberals took over the Government, that a little bird, perhaps, flew down from the sky and planted the idea of municipal amalgamation in the minds of the Premier and the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, now that I think of it, that must have been after the House of Assembly closed for the summer at the end of June, because surely a Premier committed to fairness and balance would have mentioned municipal amalgamation when this Assembly met here last May and June. That would have been only fair to the people's representatives and the people, so it must have been sometime, maybe, on the July 1 weekend that the Premier and the Minister for Amalgamation were struck by a bolt of lightning, summer lightning, and were given this idea of municipal amalgamation, and in rash fashion, without taking time to do planning, without taking time to do homework, the Minister

of Amalgamation set off on the amalgamation trail.

The Minister had news conferences right across the Province. He came to Corner Brook and said the Government was going to amalgamate this list of municipalities. 'Yes, reporters, we will use force if we have to. Yes, it will be done and over with by the elections in November. Yes, we will use the Deputy Minister and ADMs, the Minister's own staff to carry out feasibility studies. They would all be done between mid-August and mid-September.' Mr. Speaker, I was planning to go on vacation between mid-August and mid-September, but I changed my plans and waited until the end of September, because I wanted to participate in the amalgamation hearings for the municipalities under the gun in Humber East. There were three on the Minister's list, Massey Drive, Corner Brook and Steady Brook, but in a matter of days Steady Brook was taken off the list - the Minister removed Steady Brook from the list. Now, why was that? Everyone in Steady Brook knows it was because a couple of prominent Liberals, one councillor and one member for Humber West, who live in Steady Brook, pressured the Premier and the Minister, so Steady Brook was suddenly given dispensation. Mr. Speaker, that was surprise number one. How could that be? Well, we all know on the West Coast, and the people in Steady Brook know why that was. Now, the Government tried to cover its tracks by saying that Steady Brook was too far from Corner Brook, separated by the Humber River and mountains, and it just would not be possible to bring the two together.

AN HON. MEMBER:

That is sensible.

MS VERGE:

Obviously sensible, but why did not the Minister think of that when he launched his initiative? Because he did not do his homework. Now, Mr. Speaker, while making that correction, why did he not go on to make other corrections? Why did he not remove from the list the three island municipalities in the district of the Member for Green Bay?

MR. HEWLETT:

They do not want it.

MS VERGE:

They are three municipalities separated by salt water, and, as the member has said, there is no chance that those municipalities are going to come together physically, short of continental drift. That is not likely to happen during our term in office, certainly not during the term of office of the Minister of Amalgamation. Then, Mr. Speaker, August 15 came. This was the time when I thought I would get away for a couple of weeks holidays. I am waiting for the hearings: No hearings. No information.

Mr. Speaker, by then the Premier had returned from his vacation, and the Premier decided to cut the legs right out from under the Minister for Amalgamation. The Premier said in no uncertain terms that Government will not force any municipality to amalgamate against its will, and that sounded pretty good to the thousands of people in the municipalities under the amalgamation gun. People breathed a sigh of relief. Now, not everyone heard the Premier go on to say, 'However, difficult cases may be referred to the House of Assembly. The Government will not force any municipality to

amalgamate against its will, but maybe the House of Assembly.' And as the students looking down here this morning can see, the Government has more Members in the House of Assembly than the Opposition. So who controls the House of Assembly? When the Government has all their Members in place - they are not this morning. I do not know where they all are. They are missing a brilliant speech. When the Premier is here they are all in place, and they are all sitting up straight with their hands folded, because the Premier is a stern task master - the Government controls what the House of Assembly decides. So here we have the Premier saying 'the Government is not going to force any municipality to amalgamate against its will, but the House of Assembly may.' What kind of sophistry is that? What kind of talk is that from a lawyer, perhaps a Philadelphia lawyer?

Now, Mr. Speaker, Members on this side have no difficulty with the principle of amalgamation. Amalgamation of municipalities in the past has come about with good research and planning. Municipalities have come together harmoniously, with the citizens of the municipalities feeling good about the merger, and I would like to illustrate by referring to examples in the District of Humber East and the neighbouring District of Humber Valley. Mr. Speaker, just four years ago, the municipalities of Pasadena and South Brook in Humber East, in the Humber Valley, amalgamated. That was done during the Peckford Administration, under the existing municipalities legislation. In that case, Mr. Speaker, the Government responded and worked harmoniously with people in the

local area. The Government had a feasibility study, but unlike this Government, did not designate a senior public servant bound to carry out the wishes and preconceived ideas of their political masters, the Government designated an independent lawyer to hold feasibility studies.

The commissioner was not given a time limit. The commissioner held public meetings in the two communities, gave people plenty of opportunity to participate, to have their say, to express their points of view, and there were people who championed amalgamation. But there were people, and many of them, who had grave doubts about South Brook and Pasadena coming together. Mr. Speaker, there had been a great disparity in populations between those two communities and, more seriously, a disparity in municipal services. Pasadena was then quite well serviced. South Brook, on the other hand, was not. It did not have a sewer system, yet it had grown to the point where a sewer system was imperative for the sake of public health - it had outgrown septic tanks. So, Mr. Speaker, all these points of view, worries and concerns were hashed out at the public meetings.

Mr. Speaker, the commissioner in reporting commented on potential positive aspects of bringing together these two municipalities, but also acknowledge the doubts and worries of many individual citizens. In the report he suggested that there be a local plebiscite, and, Mr. Speaker, that is what was done. The Community of South Brook, the smaller of the two, having many citizens expressing reservations about amalgamation, some downright

opposition to it, the Community of South Brook had a plebiscite and do you know what? The majority of people of South Brook voted for amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner in his report also underlined the inadequacy in municipal services in South Brook and recommended that should amalgamation come about, the Provincial Government provide extra funding to the larger merged municipality so that these services could be corrected. So with the time, with the independent commissioner working, with people being allowed to express their views freely and in their own time, and with a sweetener from the Provincial Government in the form of a commitment to provide the extra funding recommended by the commissioner, that amalgamation took place over four years ago; it took place harmoniously, the people who were against it had the satisfaction of knowing that the majority wanted it; the democratic process worked and it came about very, very nicely.

For the Municipal election that followed, that was in November of 1985, the council of then one merged municipality was enlarged to add two seats, and they were earmarked for representatives from the former community of South Brook. The second election since amalgamation, which took place last week, was for a council of the original size, because by now the two communities are being knit together.

Mr. Speaker, among the benefits of this coming together has been a greater efficiency in delivering public services. So that is a positive example of amalgamation, amalgamation that took place

during the PC Party's time in office, under the legislation that is still on the books. This Government had the opportunity to initiate and encourage amalgamations using the same approach, but regrettably they did not do that.

Mr. Speaker, also in Humber East is the Town of Steady Brook I referred to earlier, which, for a couple of weeks, was on the Minister of Amalgamation's hit list but then magically, because of intervention by a couple of prominent Liberals in Steady Brook, was removed from the list. Then there was the Premier's statement about the Government not forcing, however, the House of Assembly might.

Massey Drive is another municipality in Humber East, Mr. Speaker. That municipality has about five hundred residents; over 95 per cent of those citizens have signed a petition stating in no uncertain terms that they are opposed to amalgamation with Corner Brook. The Town Council has unanimously rejected amalgamation, so why are they being made to continue to go through the process initiated by the Minister? The hearings that were originally intended for mid-August to mid-September still have not been started; nobody knows when they are going to be started.

In the neighbouring district of Humber Valley, Mr. Speaker, the Town of Deer Lake, as well as the communities of Spillway, St. Jude's and Nicholsville, had on their own been talking about coming together. When the PC Administration was still in place, an independent lawyer was named to conduct a feasibility study. Now,

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Amalgamation, ironically, has upset the applecart in that coming together; he certainly set it back. Mr. Speaker, the Mayor of Deer Lake had to speak out publicly within the past week, asking what is going on? He had hoped to accomplish an amalgamation among Deer Lake and the neighbouring Municipalities by now, before the November elections, and surely that would have happened if the new Government had left in place the independent Commissioner, who had been appointed before the change of Government.

Mr. Speaker, on principle I am advocating that this bill be renamed so that it is a Bill Respecting The Department Of Amalgamation, so that it has a Minister of Amalgamation, all working for a Premier of amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, this Premier has amalgamated onto himself and his office more power than has been exercised by any Premier since Joseph R. Smallwood. And that is probably not surprising, Mr. Speaker, because the Premier began his political career as a Cabinet Minister with Smallwood, back in 1966; he was actually appointed to the Cabinet before he was elected, because that was the way Premier Smallwood operated.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier does not seem to have enough respect for his own Members, democratically elected, to choose enough of them to be in the Cabinet and share in exercising the powers, including those set out in this amalgamation bill. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot more I could say. I was only getting wound up. Perhaps I will

have another chance another day.
Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Walsh):

Order, please!

The Chair advised the House yesterday it would take under advisement some terms that were used in the Chamber yesterday. To make a ruling on the word 'misled', the House finds difficult, because you have to consider not just the word but the tone in which the word itself was used. The word itself, of course, is not unparliamentary, therefore, its usage and whether or not the individual using the term used it in a strong and direct manner would suggest that, in this particular case, the Member was deliberately misleading the House.

To read directly from Hansard the paragraph by the Member from St. John's South, "I do not think the hon. Member for Burin - Placentia West is addressing what needs to be addressed. He is definitely misleading the House. If the hon. Member would read the whole resolution, then I would concur that he is addressing it. But he did not read the whole resolution, he read a single part of the resolution and he is misleading the House." The reference was used twice in the actual statement made by the Member from St. John's South with regard to the presentation being made by the Member for Burin - Placentia West, in the fact that he was being selective in the words and the phrases revolving around the resolution and it was, therefore, a deliberate attempt to mislead the House. Because of the term being used, I therefore ask the

hon. the Member for St. John's South if he would withdraw the term misleading.

MR. MURPHY:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for St. John's South.

MR. MURPHY:

It certainly was not my intent to say anything unparliamentary. However, I did feel that when the hon. Member was taking a single issue in retrospect of the resolution as brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition -

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

At this point in time, I do not feel we should reopen the debate in terms of how the matter came about. The Chair is asking the Member for St. John's South if he would withdraw the term misleading.

MR. MURPHY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will -

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. MURPHY:

I will withdraw the term.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. EFFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take just a few minutes - I am not going to take the full twenty minutes, unless I am provoked into doing so by the

Opposition. I want to touch on a few points made yesterday by the Member for Burin - Placentia West, and by the Member for Humber East just a few minutes ago.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, to clarify some of the misleading or the untrue statements that were presented by both speakers. Probably it was because they just did not understand the issue they were talking about, which was, "An Act Respecting The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs." There are a couple of major points that we have to be concerned about, because the people of the Province have to be fully aware of exactly what is taking place.

Now, I sat in this House since 1985, in Opposition for a little over three years, and I must say we watched the Government perform and we watched the Government go into a regressive state, and we watched the Province fall backwards. To go back over the past seventeen years, I cannot see how this Province could have stood not one more year, but one more month of the former Administration, because it was going nowhere.

In her closing remarks the Member for Humber East said this Government should use the same approach as the former Administration on amalgamation and the Department of Municipal Affairs. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if we use the same approach that the former Administration used, then the Department of Municipal Affairs would be non-existent in this Province today, because the people were not in their right minds at all. There were a select few communities around the Province

they paid special attention to, and they were in their own Districts.

This Government is using the approach that all people within the Province, regardless of their politics, would be treated equally and fair. On a number of occasions, Mr. Speaker, and I witnessed it myself, when I took people to the Department of Municipal Affairs they were told there is no money; they were told there was no money and there were no services unless you were of the same faith or the same political views of that Administration. They were told out in the communities if they did not vote for that particular Government, they were not even going to be listened to in their requests for particular funds.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will not use that approach. This Government will perform so that all people in Newfoundland and Labrador receive equal opportunity, whatever services are available from the taxes they pay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

The other thing the Member for Humber East touched on was forced amalgamation, that this Government is forcing amalgamation on the people of the Province. I do not know where she is getting her ideas, or where she is getting her information. Probably it is from her own Government. I remember just a few years ago when the Town of Foxtrap, in Conception Bay South, did not want to become a part of Conception Bay South, and the people up there told the Government of the day so, and they took up a petition. At the end of

the day, they even went so far as to have a mock burning, and I think the dummy they used was made to look like the Premier of the day, to show their discontent with amalgamation being forced on them. That is what happened with the former Administration.

Then she has the nerve to stand in her place today and say that this Government is forcing amalgamation on the people. Where does she get her ideas? This Government is not forcing amalgamation on anybody. This Government is giving the people an opportunity to present their cases, to listen to the views of Government, to listen to the views of the councils and then they will decide if they want amalgamation. Amalgamation will not be forced on anybody. But the previous Government forced amalgamation on a community that did not want any part of it, and they expressed to it everybody in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

The other little point she touched on, she wondered if this Government would ask for a plebiscite on amalgamation?

I wonder would the same person stand and ask this Province for a plebiscite on Meech Lake? Would she consider that? Is it only fair when it is something that they do not agree with, or is it fair for the people of the Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, if that were to take place that all

Members opposite would find out how the people in their Districts really think and the answer that they would get. They would come in here in this House of Assembly and hold their heads down in shame because they are not representing the people properly. The right question is not being put to the people and they are expressing their own personal views in this House of Assembly.

The other thing she pointed out - and I have to touch on this because it is a bit humorous. I sat on the Opposition. I suppose I should have used the last two weeks, while walking around all day wondering what to do, I should have went over and taught them how to perform as an Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to sit down in this chair. It is difficult to stay awake for one thing, but it is difficult to listen to some of the questions. God Almighty, I have listened to students perform a mock House of Assembly out in some of the elementary schools in my District and I can tell you on a scale of one to ten they would perform ten against the Opposition we have sitting over there. There is no question about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

So, I put this out to the Members of the Opposition, probably over the next week, or whatever time I am outside of my duties as Minister of Social Services, they could call on me once in a while and I will tell them how to ask a

question. Probably, once in a while if they pointed a finger they could put some enthusiasm into it. The Member for Humber East said she was disturbed because she had intended to take a vacation this summer. It surprised me because I thought she was on vacation for the past ten years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

I am not saying that to be insulting, Mr. Speaker. I am saying that because I believe that. I was over there for three and half years and I did not see any evidence of the then Minister of Education, or the Minister of Justice at the time, that there was anything being done. Nobody in this Province witnessed anything. The Member for Burin - Placentia (Mr. Tobin) - and I can speak about that because for the last five months in the Department of Social Services he was either on vacation or in hibernation because there was nothing done in the Department of Social Services, and it will take me at least the next two or three years to correct and put in place the things that were not done over the last four or five years. The people of this Province desperately need some attention to be put on that Department just because these people, these former administrators who stand in the House of Assembly and have the gall to tell this Government who are here only six months that we are not performing well. For seventeen years we just kept going down and down until we reached the bottom of the barrel. It is unbelievable, the performance of that Government.

We are blamed for the fishery. We are blamed today for the fishery crisis in the Province. You cannot even recognize where you fell down. At least if somebody trips over a rock they recognize that the rock was the cause of them falling down. You cannot even recognize that. The fishery just did not happen overnight. The fishery was the cause of an Administration not knowing how to deal with it, not knowing how to present, to their colleagues in Ottawa what the people of Newfoundland were thinking. Not even having the ability of going out around the Province and listening to the people of the Province, as the Minister of Fisheries has done today on numerous occasions in the past two or three months. All they can do now is criticize what may happen in the future. They do not even have any conception of what is going to happen. They tried to dream up something that they would have probably done. Probably that is what they are talking about. Probably, the Leader of the Opposition, when asking his questions today and yesterday was talking about the ideas he was trying to implement over the last couple of years. The short-term, the twenty-nine days that he spent as Premier, probably those were the ideas that he wanted to put forth, but they were all thrown out on April 20, on election day, fortunately for the people of Newfoundland. Thank God for the wisdom of the people of Newfoundland who saw that they still had something left to get up and fight for.

Mr. Speaker, amalgamation in this Province is needed. I am from a very small District geography-wise. It has a large population, a population equal to

any other District in the Province, but geography-wise a small district. We are doing without services because the town councils in the individual communities cannot provide the tax base, and because of the way in which the system is set up now, it is unreasonable to expect a town council to provide services to the people of the communities when they do not have the tax base to do it and when they cannot afford the services. In the district of Port de Grave, for example, we have three fire departments. I am not exactly sure of the distance from one end of the District to the other, but I would say it is approximately six or seven miles. We have three fire departments. We have eight town councils, we have eight community halls, eight town council halls. The cost of just maintaining those halls, the cost of maintaining the fire departments. I mean, in no way can a community survive on its own (inaudible).

Now adjacent to the Town of Brigus, I will give you a prime example. Adjacent to the Town of Brigus we have a small community of Georgetown with no services whatsoever. On the other side we have another small community called Brigus Gullies with no services whatsoever, and that is how it has been right throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. You have a community with a town council which cannot provide services for the community in which they were elected, and the services that they need. Then you have a community right adjacent that have no services and doing without the bare essentials that they need. The Minister of Social Services has the wisdom to look at the needs of the people, and know that we have to come up

with an answer to be able to provide the services that these people need. You would think that after the number of years that they were in Government and were not able to answer the solution you would think that they would, at least, be able to come up and say, look, Mr. Minister, we failed. You are on the right track. We are going to support you in the interim to see if it can work, but give it an opportunity.

I mean services cannot be provided without the tax base. I will give you an example, we have a community out there which needs about \$4 million in water and sewer services. They are collecting \$90 per year per family, and they need to spend about \$4 million on water and sewer services. Now unless the Members of the Opposition can tell us that they have a money tree, and they can grab the \$20 bills every morning before they go to work, and they can pile it into a treasury and the people will get the services, there is only one other way it can come, it has to come from a tax base. And whether you charge it on your sales tax, whether you charge it on your income tax, or whether you charge it on a municipal tax, the taxes, their money, has to come in. You cannot expend. You cannot spend money that you do not receive. Now I know it is very, very difficult for Members opposite to understand that, because they spent an awful lot of money that they did not have, and they spent it on foolish projects, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

I need not say the name of it. Mr. Speaker, if we only had that \$20 million today what we could do with that money for the people of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

What the schools, what the students sitting in the galleries could do with the \$20 million.

When I went out on Monday morning and I spoke to students in my District, I went into the classrooms, and I went into the auditorium and I went into the principal's office and I saw the conditions that those students and those teachers and the staff members of that school have to work under, it would make you feel ashamed to be part of this Province and a part of any Government that would allow that to go on. And that is the result of the last seventeen years, but the result of the next seventeen years, Mr. Speaker, will be for the people of the Province, better conditions in the schools, better health systems, better social services, better municipal services, better for all people, all children, all the people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. You cannot just have one idea in mind, it has all got to be brought together, the concerns of the people have to be thought out in the proper way, in an administration that has a feeling for people, not a feeling for their own survival.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

That is what is happening, Mr. Speaker. A feeling for their own

survival, they had one thing in mind, treat the Districts who voted for them, so that they could get re-elected. But they did not realize that the people within their own District had a concern for people in other Districts, they had friends and they had family, and they were not going to be a part of a Government that only thought about their own concerns, because Newfoundlanders do not lose faith in Newfoundlanders, Newfoundland is one large community, Newfoundlanders work together, Newfoundlanders believe in helping each other, and you cannot treat one Newfoundlander fairly and see your nextdoor neighbour treated unfairly and expect them to accept it. That is not the way it happens, Mr. Speaker. This Province has been a Province that has survived on its own support, in support for each other for the last 300 to 400 years. And it is going to survive that way in the future and let what happened on April 20th be a lesson, that the people of this Province could not put up with it anymore.

Now, one other thing before I conclude, Mr. Speaker. The Member - and I am not quite sure of the point she was trying to make - the Member for Humber East (Ms Verge) was making some reference to an island up in Green Bay. Because they are islands they should not be amalgamated, is that what she was saying?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Three islands.

MR. EFFORD:

Three islands. I do not understand the logic behind that.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Humber River and (inaudible).

MR. EFFORD:

But what does it have to do with whether you live on an island, or whatever, that you should not be a part of amalgamation? How could you justify that? You should not be part of a Government. Newfoundland is an island. We are part of the Federal Government, are we not? A part of Canada? Because you live on an island off the coast of Newfoundland you should not be a part of a municipal government, you should not receive services, that you should not be a part of another community? I mean, you can share services, you can share a tax base, you can share all the ideas. We are part of a Government.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Why does not (inaudible)?

MR. EFFORD:

My goodness! If the people on the islands want amalgamation, they will get amalgamation, if the people in Steady Brook want amalgamation, they will get amalgamation, but it is not going to be driven down their throats like you drove Foxtrap down the throats of Conception Bay South. You people set that in motion, not this Government. It was the former Government that did that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the Members opposite that they should go back to the communities. They should not only talk to the members of the council in that area, they should talk to the people in the community. They should ask the people in the community about the services they are doing without and about the services the people need, and if they have no ideas on how to provide that service to the people, they should ask the

people. Because the people in the community know their needs for the future. They know you cannot get something without paying for it, and if you have to have a service, whether it be water and sewerage, or fire protection or health services, or whatever, you must pay for it. And out of that comes the word tax - t-a-x. And it cannot come from 100 or 200 people in a community. For shared services, you have the shared responsibility of paying taxes, to build a bright future through those services, and communities have to get away from the regressive state they have been in for the last seventeen years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. PARSONS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Member for St. John's East Extern.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. PARSONS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must compliment the Member for Port de Grave on a very fine speech.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. PARSONS:

I will touch on some excerpts from his speech a little later on. But, right now, Mr. Speaker, I want to again touch on the amalgamation issue.

Mr. Speaker, we had a debate in this House on Wednesday,

pertaining to the fishery, a debate about closing plants, about the reduction in the fishery. Here, we have the same Government who refused to vote on an all-plants-open resolution, trying to force amalgamation on the poor people of this Province.

MR. FUREY:

It is not forced.

MR. PARSONS:

The Minister of Development says it is not forced. Well, we have Bill No. 12 being introduced, and I certainly am going to see what is involved in it and whether it will give the Minister more power to push amalgamation down people's throats.

Mr. Speaker, this Province is made up of a great number of fishermen, a great number of middle-class people. And I have to go back to what the Premier said yesterday. He said, 'How can communities run on 2 mils?'

Is the Premier saying to this Province that everyone should be on the same level? Should St. John's, should Corner Brook, should Ming's Bight, should Fogo, should Flat Rock, should Pouch Cove, should all areas, Bell Island and the Southwest coast, whatever, be equal? Should there be equal taxation? Is this what the Government is saying? Are we going to close out plants? Are we going to put people in Gaultois out of work, and are we going to say, but you must pay your municipal tax?

We are going to amalgamate you, we are going to bring in several areas so we can easily, more easily I would suggest than the system that we have now, where you have to meet individual councils,

force taxation on a minority of people. That is what amalgamation is all about. It is bringing together. I say to the Minister, this cannot happen. It is impossible in some areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. Every one will agree that we are in hard times. The reason why our people came from Ireland, England, Wales, the Scandinavian countries and Europe was to fish, and it is in a dilemma; we are having problems in every sphere of action as it pertains to the Fishery. The Premier gets up and says two mils it is not enough. I agree that two mils is not enough, but how can you take five mils from people who really cannot afford two mils, and that is what we have in many areas of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When we talk about bringing in help for people who cannot get enough stamps, glory be to goodness, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about stamps that get you three hundred and fifty dollars a week. We are not talking about postage stamps, we are talking about stamps that give people the right to collect three hundred and fifty dollars maximum, that is if you have the top stamps.

Mr. Speaker, look, there are people here, we are all human every one of us, can any of us live on ten thousand dollars a year? Can any of us live on it? No, you cannot. How can you send children to school? How can you buy groceries? We have people doing it, a great number of people doing it, but still the Premier and the Minister are saying, in essence, we need more taxes. I agree we need more taxes, but you cannot take blood out of a turnip. It is not there to collect, and that is the reasoning behind amalgamation. The reason

is to have small groups so the Minister or his people, his staff, can go out and say to those small groups, Look, you have to come up with more money.

I asked before and I will ask the Minister again, will amalgamation cure the ills in this Province as it pertains to water and sewer? I suggest to the Minister that it will not. I suggest to the Minister that if all St. John's East Extern became one municipality, the situation will be ongoing as it pertains to water and sewer; the problems would still exist in Pouch Cove, would still exist in Bauline, Flat Rock and Torbay. Outer Cove, Middle Cove and Logy Bay are not in that scenario, because at the moment they do not have any services and they do not look forward to wanting any in the immediate future.

Mr. Speaker, it is only in Newfoundland, only in Newfoundland, because of the way we live, that people could survive on what they are getting as income. Mr. Speaker, we are living in glass houses. We are! We are living in glass houses, and I hope that one of these days the people do not start throwing stones. We are talking everyday here about the fishery, we are talking about amalgamation to grab more money, to go in there and haul out the people, to take it out of their pockets if necessary, we are talking about a fishery that is nonexistent in many areas. I think it was only last Sunday that they protested over on the Southside the closure of National Sea. Maybe it is in the proposals. Certainly it was not defined at the meeting NatSea had with the City Council whether or not NatSea will close. What are

you going to do with the fishermen? What are you going to do with the 600 employees? Granted, St. John's might be able to absorb it, but the point remains you have 600, including the fishermen, perhaps a 1,000 people whose life's blood is going to be taken away. This is what they survive on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I heard in listening to one of the news reports yesterday that the income tax from large corporations has decreased - not increased - and another \$27 billion should have been collected through that mechanism.

I know that Federally, and it is a Provincial thing as well, and I think it is a foregone conclusion now that big business people are getting away with murder, and although not directly involved as it pertains to the collection of corporation tax Federally, we certainly do receive some of the monies. Some of the monies come back in grants and transfer payments and whatever, and that is an area of concern. That is an area where this Government should be saying to the Federal Government, Look, we need more money. Step up your efforts to take more money from those big corporations. Even in this Province take the money from the big corporations. Get the money from them, do not try to take it out of the poor people of Newfoundland and Labrador who do not have it to give.

If the Minister is assuming or if the Minister presumes that he can take money, it is not there. That money has to go to children to go to school, that money has to go for groceries. In a province where perhaps a great majority, as I said before are within the

\$10,000 a year bracket, how in the name of goodness, Mr. Speaker, can you take part of that money for services? That is where the Government comes in, to help the poor, not take from the poor. And in many areas that is what the amalgamation deal will do.

Mr. Speaker, I said to the Minister before, and I have no bones about it, that there are areas where amalgamation will be good. What the Minister is doing is going to areas like Wedgewood Park. In Torbay the other night, another area, two men were running for the mayoralty down there. There is no doubt about it, the gentleman who won is anti-amalgamation, the gentleman who lost was pro. It is as simple as that.

MR. GULLAGE:

Were you anti-confederation?

MR. PARSONS:

No, not anti-confederation. Was I anti-confederation? Let me answer that. In 1949, all our Household was anti-confederation. Everyone in it. Everyone in it. My father was a diehard and a great man, and I stand here in the House today and say I would have voted with him at that particular time. I would have voted with him. And there are many of us here who are still diehards. I have changed. I am over here. I am susceptible to change. I can recognize the good change, the great change.

AN HON. MEMBER:

The real change is you.

MR. PARSONS:

Oh my, oh my! What changes have transpired since April? Oh my, oh my, oh my! Let us look at some of the changes. Oh my! Let us talk about the changes.

The new Government of fairness and balance, this new Government, bring in an Economic Recovery Commission. We were told here in the House by the Minister of Finance it would cost \$3 million. From all the accounts that I have now it has gone up to \$5 million. Now, I heard the Minister of Development today, when my colleague, the hon. the House Leader, was speaking, bring up the question of Sprung.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What?

MR. PARSONS:

It is in Hansard. I heard him, yes. And the Member from Gander, the hon. the Government House Leader brought up Sprung. Sprung! You know, this sprung is really after springing, and if it had been given a chance by the people who are now in Opposition - look, there were people over here, including myself, who had misgivings pertaining to sprung.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Why did you not speak up?

MR. PARSONS:

I did. I did. But we never had a chance. We knew there were problems in management, and when the new Minister, my colleague here on my right, went in Cabinet, he was not long straightening the thing out. But none of us are infallible. Do you know the guy who has the best chance of getting elected? The guy who does not do anything, because there is no one against him, they do not know what he is capable of doing. He might have a chance of getting elected. But this Government did many things. They saw the need.

The previous minister did his best in the interim to get Sprung on

the road. This was a new thing.

MR. R. AYLWARD:

(Inaudible) got shares in it now.

MR. PARSONS:

Sure, now everyone is looking at Sprung. What is wrong with Sprung now? Nothing. It was just a managerial problem, which has been rightified. There is no question about it. Sprung is viable. I think that has been proven now.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about Sprung - how many million dollars did the Minister of Development say this morning, \$20 million?

MR. FUREY:

No, I did not.

MR. PARSONS:

The Member for Port de Grave, \$20 million. We have \$5 million gone now on the Recovery Commission. And that is only start now. They are only here six or seven months, and the Minister of Finance has already pumped \$5 million into the coffers to pay for Dr. House and his committee. The only thing that confuses me is that this doctor did a Commission of Inquiry, a study on the employment and unemployment in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and it was a fabulous document, a document that was looked at and excerpts from it taken by other provinces in Canada. Why was that not used? Why was it not dusted off? Why was it not taken from the shelf, and say these are the problems? They have been identified by Dr. House. Why now another commission, another cost of \$5 million to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? What have they done? I mean, surely goodness, Mr. Speaker, after six months we should see some signs.

And still the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs and the Premier are trying to grab more money. For what? To pay for your commission? To pay for another commission, which is now up to \$5 million; you started off at \$3 million. The Economic Recovery Commission started off at \$3 million, and the cost of it is now up to \$5 million. We have it. It is there.

MR. FUREY:

Table it! Table it!

MR. PARSONS:

I do not need to table it when you know the truth. You know it is true. Oh, yes, the Minister of Development knows the truth. The Minister of Development has been accused in the House of only answering to that Commission. Now he should know that the cost has escalated.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing spoken to by the Member for Port de Grave was the cause of the dilemma as it pertains to the fishery. I did not want to touch on that at all, Mr. Speaker, because that is another day and another topic. But let me remind hon. Members on the other side that the dilemma started in the fishery in 1972 when that infamous article, document, agreement, whatever you want to describe it as, was signed in Ottawa by the then Liberal Government which gave France the right to take all the fish out, to rape 3PS; which gave France the right after 3PS was raped, finished, to come to 2J+3KL and take a complement of fish; the species was not named, and it could be cod. They have every right to take it and it was given away by the then Liberal Government in Ottawa. And if the Prime Minister at that time, the

hon. Pierre Trudeau, had had insight enough, foresight enough to say Look, 200 miles does not cover our Continental Shelf, we are not England, we are not the United States, we are not Iceland, where that situation was okay as it pertains to the 200 miles, that we needed the Nose and the Tail of the Grand Banks to be included, then this problem would not be with us today.

Let me before, I go on, Mr. Speaker, because it is relevant -

AN HON. MEMBER:

Where do you stand on Meech Lake?

MR. PARSONS:

On Meech Lake? There is not one, single thing wrong with it that I can see. Not a thing wrong with it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. PARSONS:

The Premier did a fine job in Ottawa. He has his rights.

AN HON. MEMBER:

At least he did not vote both ways.

MR. PARSONS:

That is right. You were against it, you were for it, you were against it. Let me go back to the Minister of Development. You were for it, you were pro to many aspects of Meech Lake.

MR. FUREY:

Pro?

MR. PARSONS:

Yes you were. I remember distinctly.

MR. FUREY:

I brought in an amendment asking for special status for women, and

you voted against it.

MR. PARSONS:

We will check Hansard on that.

Let me go back to what I was saying previously.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. PARSONS:

Let me go back to what I was saying previously. Who caused the dilemma in the fishery? I just outlined some of it. Then there was a Royal Commission, a Liberal Senator, Mr. Kirby. The Kirby Report. Boy it was held up. This is it! Oh, we have oodles of fish out there. There is so much out there we can give it away. It does not matter about the 1972 Agreement. There is lots of it. By 1988, 400,000 tons TAC - 400,000 metric tons.

Do you know what is out there? Mr. Speaker, this year it may be taken down to 125,000 tons. So there is the cause of the dilemma in the fishery: The Kirby's of this age, and the Liberal policy. That is what caused the dilemma in the fishery. The previous Government tried to do its best, and the previous Premier did his best, and this Premier. He was there but a short while, 29 days. Is it not too bad we did 48 per cent to your 47 per cent? It is too bad it was not spread out more evenly, then we could have been the Government. How great it would have been for Newfoundland. How great it would have been for the fishermen of Newfoundland. I am sure I speak for the majority of fishermen out there. How sad they are now in certain areas.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I would ask the hon. Member if he could tie this back in with the bill at hand. I appreciate that he, in his own mind, has a way of doing it, and I now would suggest that he bring it back to where we really are.

MR. PARSONS:

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I forgot for the moment, but I should have taken my seat when you stood.

Mr. Speaker, why I got sort of carried away was because the hon. the Member for Port de Grave touched on all of these topics and really what I am trying to do is refute.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs. I think it is true that he is a good Minister. There is no doubt about it. But, Mr. Speaker, he is a Minister of so many things, the department is split up into so many segments, he cannot control the destiny of the Department. What is he doing as it pertains to sports? What is he doing as it pertains to recreation? How many times has he come out and said, Look, we only have four Arts and Culture Centres in Newfoundland? This is a new Government of fairness and balance. What is he going to do? Is he going to say to the people of Labrador, Okay, the Arts and Culture Centre in Labrador City is not enough, we need another Centre in Goose Bay? Has he ever addressed this? I would suggest very strongly that he does not have time to address those situations. As he said to the hon. the Member for St. John's East the other day, there was no money for the LSPU Hall. My goodness! That is shocking! That is a shame! But the Minister did not have time to look into the

LSPU Hall. He does not have time. He has too many irons in the fire. His staff cannot even look at it.

Now lets us look at his staff. Two of his Deputy Ministers, I do not think they are in the Province right now. We have one Deputy Minister who is going around telling the people and explaining to people, and answering questions as it pertains to amalgamation. One Deputy Minister, I think I am right. I have not seen any of those enquiries being held. Where are they being held? When are they going to be held? Why did the Minister allow St. John's to defer their council elections?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Do you want an answer before (inaudible)?

MR. PARSONS:

He will answer. He will have the time.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. PARSONS:

I do not like that phrase, but that is beside the point.

Why did he allow St. John's to defer their election when the whole issue was the other areas that were supposedly being forced into the city council? When all those councils went ahead and held their election, was it not irrelevant? What did he base it on to allow St. John's to bring in that Bill 22? Every community that was supposedly involved with the City of St. John's held their election and they are all anti-amalgamation. They want no part of it. What are you going to do for Portugal Cove, put sidewalks down there? In the next

200 years they might go down there.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday I brought in a petition signed by 1,400 people from the town of Wedgewood Park and on election day, when the elections were being held, I visited all the communities, or called them consistently, within the region. There were a lot of people in one place, and that was Torbay. There were in excess of 200 people together for the final count and to a person they do not want any part of amalgamation. They do not want any part of it. Some people say we need more information. We are informed, let me tell the Minister. When I say, we, I speak for the people who elected me. We are informed as it pertains to amalgamation.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(inaudible) different from what you are saying now.

MR. PARSONS:

Hold it now. Let me address this with your concurrence, Mr. Speaker. Meech Lake: What the Premier said was he wanted to go back to the Trudeau years of the Provinces having little or no control and him being the God. Central Government.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Not true.

MR. PARSONS:

That is true. He wanted a stronger Central Government and I, for one, feel that more authority and more jurisdiction should be given to the provinces. Now, that is fine. That is his feeling. I have mine and I think this party have theirs. I am sure even if the Minister of Development, who spoke at length and who brought in an amendment - at the moment I forget what the amendment was.

MR. FUREY:

You voted against it.

MR. PARSONS:

I voted against your amendment because I do not see anything wrong with Quebec being a distinct society.

MR. FUREY:

But Newfoundland is a distinct society, too.

MR. PARSONS:

So can British Columbia say they are a distinct society.

MR. FUREY:

Well, why would you vote against it?

MR. PARSONS:

Because I do not see it. I could not care less if Quebec is a distinct society.

MR. FUREY:

It is something you have to look back at.

MR. PARSONS:

It is not. That is what you think, and you would like to try to force that down everyone's throat. That is not true. For Canada to be a country - a country - a group of provinces, Quebec has to be one. And I am prepared to go along with Meech Lake.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh, oh!

MR. PARSONS:

There is no cost. Only in the member's mind there is a cost. Quebec was always a distinct society.

Anyway, with their language over the years what is wrong with the Quebec being a distinct society? I am happy with it, because I feel

Meech Lake is right.

Let me go back to Wedgewood Park.

I know what the Minister of Development is trying to do. He is trying to get me to lose my train of thought. But he is not going to accomplish it. He wants to talk about Meech Lake, I am quite prepared. I have great respect for the Minister of Education (Dr. Kitchen), and I have great respect for the Minister of Development as well. But the Minister of Education -

MR. R. AYLWARD:

But not as much as for the Minister of Education.

MR. PARSONS:

Not as much. He is over there now listening attentively, not interrupting or not trying to change his mind.

MR. FUREY:

(Inaudible).

MR. PARSONS:

I am warning you if you keep it up I will have a lot of people over there going to vote against the Premier as it pertains to Meech Lake. I would suggest to you very strongly that you keep quiet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. PARSONS:

Going back to Wedgewood Park, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. AYLWARD:

He is in favour of Newfoundland having more power.

MR. PARSONS:

Sure he is in favour of Newfoundland having more jurisdiction over the fishery.

Sure he is in favour of the fishery being on the agenda at a First Ministers' Conference. The Minister of Education is in favour of it. I would not doubt but all those Members in front, and the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Carter) - I bet he is in favour of us having more jurisdiction over the fisheries.

MR. SIMMS:

He is a sort of Professor of Philosophy.

MR. PARSONS:

Ah, now we have to give credit where credit is due.

AN HON. MEMBER:

You have two minutes left so let us get on with the Bill.

MR. PARSONS:

Let us go back to Bill No. 22.

MR. R. AYLWARD:

It is nice for the Member for Pleasantville (Mr. Noel) to be with us too.

MR. PARSONS:

Oh the Member for Pleasantville. My goodness, he is with us.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who is that anyway?

MR. PARSONS:

Ah, never mind! A fine gentleman from Pleasantville. He is with us all the way.

Let me go back to the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs (Mr. Gullage). I brought in a document last week, 1,400 signatures, 98 per cent of the population. People say the old council down there confused the people. They came out and told them about all of the things that were anti as it pertained to

amalgamation. How much credibility do those people give to the individuals and give to the residents of Wedgewood Park, when they can be thrown to the wolves? You do not know what you are talking about, you are too ignorant to understand, we are going to have a plebiscite down there. I would suggest to the Minister that that is not the case. I also suggest to the Minister that Wedgewood Park and St. John's East Extern, in general, do not want any part of amalgamation. And I hope that the Minister will address the situation as I have brought forth in this hon. House. I mean, I am not here exaggerating, I am telling it as it is.

And with that said, Mr. Speaker, I know that we will get some time at a later date again. My time is just about up. Again I hope that I did straighten out some points, apart from the Municipal Bill, with the Minister of Development and with the hon. House Leader as it pertains to other issues such as that Economic Commission which already has grown from \$3 million, as was stated by the Minister of Finance (Dr. Kitchen) to now a \$5 million package. And I hope that the Economic Commission who is heading this Government, not subject to anyone, will bring in some proposals that will help the towns and the communities right across Newfoundland and Labrador. Put more money in their coffers to let them be able to pay the taxes that the Premier talked about yesterday, about unilaterally charging the people of Newfoundland and Labrador a rate that they can ill-afford.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Mr. Snow):

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:

What are you so anxious about? Every person in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, has the right to speak and express an opinion and view, and I quite frankly had not intended to participate to any great extent in this debate on this particular piece of legislation, but I was provoked by the Member for Exploits (Mr. Grimes), the Minister of Development (Mr. Furey) who constantly continued to interrupt my friend for St. John's East Extern (Mr. Parsons) and other speakers. And therefore there were a number of matters that they raised in a flippant sort of way that I want to touch on and I will in my thirty minutes of allotted speaking time.

Before I do that though I want to make reference and comment on the Bill and the legislation itself, if I may? I had a serious and legitimate number of comments to make with respect to the Bill itself, even though, the Bill is a minor piece of legislation because all it does in effect is repeal other acts and create this new act and create this new Department which will encompass all of these other things that were in other Departments. I mean that is all it does. And legitimately Members opposite could argue, if they wanted to, that the Opposition is just wasting time, because this is really a minor piece of legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, I see many of them over there

nodding in agreement, and I am glad they are, because that is precisely what we have been saying for the last three weeks, ever since this Legislature opened. If there were more legislation with something substantive in it, then obviously, we would not have to waste our time on these kinds of minor issues. But, since the Government has not provided those kinds of opportunities for us - they brought in a few the last day or so, I know that is what the Premier is trying to say, and we look forward to debating those at length, too. But, up until now, I would not be surprised if even the Premier would admit, that for the last three weeks, there have not been a lot of weighty matters on the legislative agenda, contrary to what we were led to believe when the House was called into session in the fall.

So, Mr. Speaker, Members on this side have had to take the opportunities presented to them to talk about matters of concern, matters that have been passed on to them by their constituents. And I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that all the matters alluded to by Members on this side in any of their speeches over the last three weeks have not been simply things we have thunk up in our own heads, or thought about in our own heads - 'thunk' is not a very good term, I am sure - not things we have developed in our own mind; they are matters that have been passed on to us by our constituents. For example, the pension issue. The Minister of Finance (Dr. Kitchen) tried to accuse the Member for Humber East (Ms Verge) of creating a furore over nothing. But he is, as he frequently has been since last June when this House opened, totally inaccurate and led astray. He should talk to his own

officials. And I know he loves to get up now; it is amazing how times have changed from back in June when you could not get him on his feet. Now, he loves to get up because he thinks he makes fantastic speeches of a partisan nature. He thinks he is one of the best partisan individuals over there. He may well be, and I am not interested, nor am I concerned, nor do I care whether he is or not, the point is, his accusation towards the Member for Humber East was very unfair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SIMMS:

Let me just tell the Minister, his accusation was very unfair. That Member had the legitimate right to raise the questions that she did, based on information passed on to her by some of her constituents. Now, she has the legitimate right to do that. Now, if the Minister of Finance does not recognize that, then I suggest to him that he leave the House, go out and sit in the common room and have a cup of coffee, if he cannot understand how the parliamentary system and democracy work. She had the legitimate right, and I resent anybody on that side of the House who would imply that a Member on this side should not have the right to raise concerns passed on to them by their constituents. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I will move on to some other points I want to make, but I had to make that point, because it was irritating this morning to hear the Minister of Finance.

With respect to this piece of legislation, the points have been made on a number of occasions. I want to re-emphasize them.

The issue of - and this is what the legislation is all about - the issue of cramming all of these other responsibilities into the one Department, in this case, is one that I do not support; quite frankly. I do not support it for a number of reasons. Other changes the Premier has made with respect to consolidation, I have no real difficulty with, but in this particular case, I must confess and must admit, it is not one that I can support. Now, I am not saying I will vote against it, or do anything dramatic, but I want to tell the Minister I cannot support it. The reason I cannot support it, among others, one of the main reasons is because of what I said. There are just too many onerous responsibilities being placed on the Minister. And I do not care if he is Superman. I do not care if he is Pierre Elliott Trudeau, whom the Minister of Development often likes to talk about. I do not care if he is the Premier himself, who is a Superman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, the Premier is a legend in his own mind.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Could we use that?

MR. SIMMS:
It is a new one. Yes, you could use that.

The Minister, however, is not in the same category. He is a fine person, a fine individual, a fine gentleman, and is working hard and is generally accepted, I think, by those groups who have met him. I have heard some pretty good comments about him, I must confess that. But I honestly cannot

believe that the Minister is able to really put all the time and effort in addressing all of these responsibilities that he wants to do or would like to do. Nor are the people in the Province - the groups in the Province are not happy with this amalgamation of this Department. Many of them are not happy. Recreation groups are not happy, they have lost their profile. This is a serious and legitimate comment, and the Member from Placentia knows it. Many recreation groups have talked about the loss of profile, for want of a better word.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Name them.

MR. SIMMS:
I can name them, I can name them. Groups out in our area in particular have mentioned it to me on many occasions, individuals who are involved. Cultural groups are not happy because they have certainly lost their identity.

You can make jest of it and fun if you want, but I am telling you these are legitimate concerns. They have been expressed publicly in fact in some cases, in the case of recreation groups. Cultural groups, and groups of that nature have lost their identity. That is one point.

MR. NOEL:
What do you mean, lost their identity?

MR. SIMMS:
I am quite willing to let the Member for Pleasantville get up and speak for thirty minutes afterwards if he wishes to express his views. I would like to hear them as a matter of fact, I would like to hear them.

The Minister has the responsibility of meeting with all of these recreation committees and groups around the Province, and there are probably hundreds, there are certainly dozens of recreation committees and recreation groups who always wanted a meeting with the Minister. There are hundreds of councils in the Province and the Minister has met with quite a few of them. I am sure he has not met with all who would like to have meetings. There are youth groups and youth organizations, Four H and all of these other youth groups and organizations who would like to have a meeting with the Minister and cannot, Mr. Speaker. There are library boards all over the Province for which the Minister has responsibility who would like to have a meeting with the Minister, would like the Minister to come out to their area and sit down with the library board and have a meeting and discuss their concerns and their problems. There are dozens of boards of that nature. There are Arts and Culture Centers around the Province that the Minister should be visiting and seeing what their concerns and problems are. I do not know if he has been to them all, I am sure he has been to some. But he should be back again, he should be back a second time. Seven months have gone by now, that is my point. You do not have time to do all of these things.

Now in addition to all of those responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, as the Bill says, he has the responsibility for overseeing the inspection of all Municipal records, dealing with all books, all records, all papers, all documents, books of record and account, all bank books, all assessment, all collection rolls,

all other papers and matters. He has got the responsibility for the operation of water works in the Province, he has got power and responsibilities over all the boards that are appointed under the legislation. All the committees that are appointed under the legislation. He is the -

MS VERGE:

But not fire-fighting. They left that out.

MR. SIMMS:

- but not fire-fighting. Fire-fighting has apparently been left out of this, we cannot find it in the legislation. The Minister will address that when he closes the debate. He is the registrar-general for the Province. He is responsible, Mr. Speaker, also according to the legislation, for the preparation and publication of all stats, and all reports, and all records, and bulletins, and pamphlets, and circulars. Responsible for the collection, the compilation, and analyzing, and recording of all statistical information. Undertaking, promotion, or recommendation of measures for the development control, Mr. Speaker. He is responsible for communications. As my colleague pointed out, I am sure he is not even aware he is responsible for flora and fauna in the Province. He was not aware of that, for God's sake. He did not have a clue. I would not, I am not suggesting for a moment that there would be a large number of groups out there that would want to meet with him on that topic, but there are some, no doubt, that have an interest in that area.

So, Mr. Speaker, my point on that, number one point, is that the Minister, not withstanding his

capabilities, and his ability and his personality and all of the rest of it. I am not talking about anything like that, I am not talking about him personally, but he cannot physically carry out all the responsibilities that he has under this big conglomeration, this big amalgamation of all of these other activities. He cannot possibly do it, Mr. Speaker, therefore I cannot support the idea of this particular piece of legislation. It is not a big issue with me, I am not going to kick up a big stink or make it dramatic, but I am going to express my views and my opinions on it as I am entitled to do. Mr. Speaker, if I may I also want to just touch briefly on the recent Municipal elections that were held last Tuesday. I will just make a few brief comments on it. I always enjoy, as anybody in politics would, watching the returns of any electoral campaign and municipal elections campaigns are no different in my view, and one of the difficulties that I had of course throughout the evening, particularly as it applied to the central Newfoundland area where I have the most interest, was that they were having difficulty getting their results and returns, I do not understand why, but I remember calling out there around ten o'clock, two hours after the polls are closed, talking to the radio stations out in the area, and they had not received results from those communities nearby even, two hours after the polls had closed, and I do not know if the Minister can tell me whether or not they have updated their - perhaps if I can get the Minister's attention, he could nod even, saving time - have the people responsible for handling the results on election night during municipal elections, have

they updated their equipment or mechanism for doing that in recent years, do you know in this particular election was there any big improvement to updating their equipment, because, as I was saying, I do not know if he heard me, but I was saying that in several parts of the Province, listening to reports on radio for example there were a lot of comments and I presume complaints, but certainly comments about the lateness in the results and how tardy the results were, it is not a big issue, but I mean it is an issue that should be pointed out, I wanted to make just that comment, but I have always enjoyed watching the results. I heard this morning with some interest, it makes you wonder about the system, the Councilor who was elected in Point Leamington on Tuesday just passed during the municipal elections resigned this morning, three days later, which makes it rather interesting and you wonder why, I do not know if the Premier heard this story. He is nodding, he is aware of it, and I understand his main platform was that he had to be elected Mayor or else he was not going to stay on the council. I find it a bit unusual I suppose, but it is up to the individual himself, I guess, if he wants to. I am not sure if it is fair to - and I am not talking about this particular individual - but the issue, the point, I am not sure if it is fair to the people of the community, nor to the Government or whoever is responsible for now having to oversee another bye-election. Or do they take the next one on the list. I do not know if that is provided for in the legislation. Does the Minister know if it is provided for in the legislation? I do not believe it is so there would have to be the expense of

another by-election. So some strange things happen, there is no question about that. But all in all watching the results and listening to the results was an interesting exercise. Now I did hear, I believe I heard the Minister, and he can tell me if I was incorrect but I believe certainly in interviews that he had given the day after or whenever, I think he implied that there was a good deal of interest, a lot more people involved this time than before, implying I guess there were more people running for office, and I suppose somehow saying that his Ad campaign of a full week before, promoting the Minister on radio and in newspapers was probably one of the reasons for that. I have no doubt that is what he would say, but, did he imply and did he say that there were more people involved, and more people running and all that kind of thing this time than ever before, am I misquoting him or taking him out of context, because if I am I will apologize immediately. I do not think he is going to tell me anything, he is not going to tell me anything, is he? He is not going to nod or shake?

MS VERGE:

He has not compiled those statistics yet.

MR. SIMMS:

Okay, alright, well then, I will have to continue to say that I heard that you had said that. Now if you did not, then all you simply have to do is say no, I did not and I will apologize, but he is not saying that, so I will assume he said it. Now I understand from reliable sources Mr. Speaker that in fact there were less people involved as candidates in this municipal

election than before, less, fewer, fewer well fewer and less is not quite the same in the Government House Leader's mind. Mr. Speaker I know there were more elections, is that what he is trying to say, more elections, is that what he means.

MS VERGE:

Fewer is for people and less is for sugar.

MR. SIMMS:

All I know is there were not more, there were not more candidates as the Minister implied. The Minister implied there were more candidates in this municipal election than every before and that is not accurate, that is my point. Or, I presume that it is not accurate, if it is he can tell me. In fact, I understand that there were about 300 less, somewhere in that area.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:

I got it from a fairly reliable source, but I would not stand by it or swear by it. But I understand there were about 300 less candidates this time around. My point is this, Mr. Speaker, I fear that one of the reasons for that then was the confusion that existed. You heard it and the Minister may want to try to vehemently deny it, but I mean you cannot deny what you hear on the news directly from people who are interviewed. And there were people interviewed from all over the Province on all the radio stations, and on the television screen and every thing else. One of the consistent comments that was made was that there had been confusion created because of the amalgamation issue. Which the

Minister of course drew out of his back pocket back in June or whenever it was, shortly after he was appointed Minister and ran with, without having the total support of his Cabinet colleagues, as I understand. But certainly, probably, the support of the Premier, but I do not know. Maybe he did not because the Premier came back and chastised him and slapped him on the wrist and told him to take a couple of weeks holidays, get out of town or whatever, I do not know what he told him. Nevertheless, the point is that there was confusion.

MS VERGE:

The Premier contradicted him publicly.

MR. SIMMS:

Well, I did not want to say that. I did not want to embarrass the Minister too much. The Premier did contradict him publicly, there was no question about that.

The point is, that there was confusion, Mr. Speaker. And that is very unfortunate. As a matter of fact, just as an aside, I noticed the Minister's ad in the newspaper about elections. You have seen the ad no doubt because the Premier was probably investigating it, wondering how come he was doing that, as he is not supposed to do those kinds of things. But I think the ad said something to the effect that 'You are electing a council for the next four years.' I think the words specifically said 'You are electing members to council who will serve you for the next four years'. Now that is a bit inconsistent with what he said on the public media that night and the next day when he was questioned, I think, specifically about the Mount Pearl situation

where he said, they may not in fact have elected council members for four years, last night. That is what he said indirectly because he said there may be an election there six months from now, or a year from now. So there is a considerable amount of inconsistency in what the Minister was saying in his newspaper advertising and what he is saying publicly, that is fairly clear to, not only in Mount Pearl, I suspect there are other towns and communities who have some concerns as well.

I want to ask the Minister this, and then I want to get off this topic and get on to a couple of others. With respect to voting, and the regulations governing voting. Who is eligible to vote in municipal elections? I wonder did the Minister or has he received any representation from any communities or the Federation or anybody like that, I do not know at all, representation about lowering the age of eligible voters?

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:

Never received any representation. Has he ever thought to bring it up in any discussions or anything like that?

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:

It has not been discussed at all, I see.

Because I have had some young people who were involved in election campaigns -

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:
Pardon?

University students, my friend from Windsor knows all about the university students who he tore apart here one day and then had to publicly apologize. But young people 17 years of age for example, who have been involved in election campaigns. I know the Liberal Party for example, I believe, I understand in your constitution allows people to participate in the nomination process from the age of 14 years and up, as I understand it. The Government House Leader nods in agreement, yes, that is the case. Ours is as whatever the regulations are for voting. You have to be an eligible voter, that is what ours says.

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:
Provincially, yes. Federally, I think they all have 14 years or something. Yes, and I believe the Liberals do too, Federally.

Nevertheless, my point is these young people have a great interest in the electoral process and want to get involved. I certainly would not advocate lowering it to 14 years. Perhaps the Minister might want to raise it sometime when he talks to the Federation just to see what their thoughts are on it, of lowering the age limit to 17 years. There might be a good bit of interest in it and a good way to get young people more actively involved in the municipal electoral process in particular, to help create some interest in the municipal electoral process.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to move on quickly to a question that was thrown at me by the member for Exploits who has now left his seat, and that is unfortunate.

AN HON. MEMBER:
He is leaving for Botwood.

MR. SIMMS:
He is in Botwood? He was here just two minutes ago.

AN HON. MEMBER:
He is leaving for Botwood.

MR. SIMMS:
He is leaving for Botwood? Okay.

Nevertheless, he asked me about my position on Confederation when the member for St. John's East Extern was speaking. He is trying to get us to say something, I guess. This is part of their strategy, their plan of attack. They are no doubt building up some kind of a strategy. They have had caucus meetings and are burning the midnight oil until twelve or one o'clock in the morning, I suppose. They have to get some strategy to attack that crowd over there, to make them appear as if they are anti-confederates, or something. I have a feeling that is what they are up to. It may be unfair to suggest that the Government caucus would be that mischievous, but they may well be. Nevertheless, the member for Exploits did shout across and ask me, What do you think about Confederation? Do you think we should have been in Confederation? All that kind of stuff, really good questions. Well, I want to say to him here, and I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say it publicly so that it is on the record if at any time there is any doubt, there have been many times, many, many times,

particularly in the years that I have been involved in public life, the last eleven years or so, there have been many times when I feel, and felt, that we would have been much better off had we not been in Confederation. I do not mind saying it. There have been many occasions in the past when we have been driven into the ground by forces outside this Province, in particular federal governments and so on. We have not been given our just rewards with respect to the ownership and development of our resources, and there have been many other occasions and incidents when we just have not been treated fairly nor rightfully. I say to the member for Exploits, if he wants to know how I feel about Confederation, let me tell him that I have mixed feelings, and I have had mixed feelings for years, particularly those years I have been involved in public life. There have been lots of examples where an awful lot of Newfoundlanders have felt the same way, lots of examples. Now, having said that, let me tell you also, of course, that the benefits of Confederation, I do not think, can be argued. There have been lots of benefits from Confederation. I was born before Confederation. I was part of the baby-boom. I think that is what they call it. There was a big story on television last night; the baby-boomers are those forty-three to forty-six, and I just meet the criteria, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health no longer meets the criteria. He is forty-eight. I want to make it clear that there have been benefits from Confederation. I am not saying that. But I also do not mind saying, and I say it to the member for Port de Grave, I would not be surprised if he felt that way many times, when we have

been driven into the ground by forces outside this Province and not given our just reward and our just benefits and rights, particularly with the fishery. And there are many times when I have felt that we would have been a hell of a lot better off had we not been in Confederation. So I do not mind saying it. I make no bones about it, and I would not try to cover it up.

When the Minister concludes the debate - I only have a few minutes left - I would like him to tell me, since he is the Minister responsible for the metric system in Newfoundland, is the Government considering taking action similar to the Province of Nova Scotia, I believe? Is it the Province of Nova Scotia that have banned the metric use, or something?

AN HON. MEMBER:

He does not know.

MR. SIMMS:

Well, perhaps the Minister can clarify that. Because if he is the Minister responsible for the metric system in this Province, then surely he knows all about that.

MS VERGE:

Ask him our many centimeters are in an inch?

MR. SIMMS:

Yes, we will ask him some good questions like that.

But I would like him to tell me, has this Province or this Government addressed that issue, or is it an issue for them? Since he is the Minister also responsible for the metric system, is the Government considering, as I think Nova Scotia is - perhaps the Premier knows. Has not

Premier Buchanan made a big issue about that and decided not to accept the introduction of the metric system in that Province or something? I do not know if the Premier knows that or not.

PREMIER WELLS:

If he is asking me, I can only express an opinion. Frequently the Conservative in Nova Scotia take backward steps, so it would not surprise me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MS VERGE:

I would not disagree with that.

MR. SIMMS:

Since the Premier has made that point, there are lots of people who would agree. But there are also a lot of people who would also say that there have been Liberal Governments noted for taking backward steps, and this one in particular has taken a considerable number of backward steps in the last six months from what its election promises were.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SIMMS:

But that is another day's debate.

MS VERGE:

That is a conservative problem in Newfoundland, and so is he.

MR. SIMMS:

The Minister is responsible for Youth Services, a very important part of his department, and perhaps one that is also suffering from a lack of identity.

MR. GULLAGE:

(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:

I am telling him now. The groups involved in Youth Services have some excellent programs, as he knows. One of my favourite ones is the Duke of Edinburgh Award Program. I am sure he has familiarized himself with that program, and I would urge the Minister to participate in that program as often as he can. The 4-H Program is another excellent program under the jurisdiction of his Department and his ministry.

Now, I only have a couple of minutes left, Mr. Speaker, so I have to touch on three issues for Grand Falls very quickly. One is the water treatment plant. The Exploits Valley Services Board met with the Social Policy Committee, Chaired by the Minister of Education, some weeks ago now, and I would like the Minister to tell me where that is. The Chairman of the Social Policy Committee said that morning that it would probably go to Cabinet, and we will see what happens with it. So I would like a status report. That is probably my question right now?

I want to know the status of the \$1 million contribution towards the regional recreation facility to serve Windsor, Grand Falls, and Bishop's Falls, which was committed by the previous Administration and nothing has been heard from this Administration. I met with some of the Members of that Committee last weekend, during Armistice Day weekend, and they are quite concerned about it. I told them I would raise it at the first opportunity. The other issue, of course, was amalgamation, but I do not know if I have time. How much time do I have now?

MR. SPEAKER:
Four minutes.

MR. SIMMS:
Oh, I still have four minutes! I can talk about amalgamation for four minutes, no problem at all.

I asked the Minister in the House the other day two questions on amalgamation, two specific questions. One was is the Minister prepared to provide a commitment to the communities involved, Grand Falls and Windsor, on funding for the capital infrastructure funding that is required for Windsor, in particular? Is he prepared to again give a commitment up front? I believe he said no, he was not prepared to give it up front. Then I think he did say in response to further questioning from me that before any decision was made on amalgamation, the Government would indeed advise the communities what the Government is prepared to do with respect to capital funding up front. I think Hansard will show he said that. I want him to confirm that for me today, because I have been hearing conflicting stories from other sources and I am uncomfortable with it.

The other question I asked him was how he feels about the town of Grand Falls - in this case I do not know what Windsor might do - undertaking a plebiscite. I am not asking him if he would approve it, because he does not have the authority to approve it. It is up to the town. If they wish to take a plebiscite in their own community on amalgamation or any other issue, they can do it without the Minister's approval. I am just wondering what his views are and how he feels about that approach.

After all the discussions have taken place, the Minister and the two town councils have agreed on, or disagreed, or whatever, on the information, and that information is then made public to the people of the town of Grand Falls, they would then be asked whether they wish to amalgamate still through a plebiscite. If the results of that plebiscite - and here is my key question - if the results of that plebiscite were to be negative, would the Government then still feel as strongly as they have felt in the past number of months about forcing amalgamation between Grand Falls and Windsor, if the town of Grand Falls, through a plebiscite, decided that it was opposed to amalgamation?

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will finish. I think my colleague from Kilbride has a word or two to say.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Member from Kilbride.

MR. R. AYLWARD:
Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is worth getting started today, for five minutes. I do not know if people want to close now. I can adjourn the debate or keep going.

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible).

MR. R. AYLWARD:
Okay. We will have a few words today. I was for a very short time, certainly not for very long, Minister of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I was not really there long enough to get my feet wet, to set any policies, or to implement any of the plans that I would have liked to have brought into that

department, but I was there long enough to know how complicated a Department it is.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Would the hon. gentleman (inaudible)?

MR. R. AYLWARD:

Okay. Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn the debate until Monday.

MR. SIMMS:

Have you been asked to do so?

MR. R. AYLWARD:

Yes.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member was -

MR. R. AYLWARD:

I was asked to do so.

PREMIER WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member does not mind, I would like to have just a few minutes. I will use up the few minutes that are here and he can speak on the next day. We have five minutes on the clock, and I can say what I need to. The hon. Member does not mind.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, to that point of order.

PREMIER WELLS:

It is not a point of order.

MR. SIMMS:

It had to be a point of order. The Premier had no right to rise unless it was on a point of order. So he rose on a point of order. It was not a point of privilege, was it?

The Premier wanted to know if he

could use the last few minutes and in return for that the Member for Kilbride would still have thirty minutes on Monday or whatever.

MR. SPEAKER:

It is agreed by the House.

MR. BAKER:

There is no point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:

There is. It would require unanimous consent.

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WELLS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There were a couple of points raised by hon. Members during the debate that I feel I should address; two only that I want to address. One is the suggestion that we have a super Minister. I agree. I think that we do have a super Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER WELLS:

Having given him all that credit, and I do not want it to go too far to his head, I would have to say that any one of the Ministers could do that super job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER WELLS:

The point is, Mr. Speaker, we reduced the Cabinet from twenty-three to fifteen. That is all that is necessary.

MS VERGE:
Seventeen.

PREMIER WELLS:
It was twenty-three.

MS VERGE:
Seventeen under Rideout.

PREMIER WELLS:
It was twenty-three down to fifteen.

When we sat in Opposition we raised the issue, and for the very brief period, the few days that they formed the Government, they had a Cabinet of, I do not know, seventeen or so - nineteen, was it? That is right, it was nineteen; they cut it back to nineteen under great pressure from us. We put it back to its proper proportions, fifteen.

They run the Government of the United States with twelve people in the Cabinet. We need twenty-three to run Newfoundland and Labrador? That is utter nonsense.

The Minister has all of those duties. He is the Registrar General, and he has all those duties, but he has officials to discharge the duties. To convey the impression that the Minister is not attending to all of the duties assigned to him under the Act is totally incorrect. We do not need to burden the taxpayers of this Province with all the extra expense of an additional eight ministers that are totally unnecessary. We sought election on the basis of that being one of our planks and it was totally endorsed by the people of this Province, as is evidenced by the fact that there was a switch in where people are sitting on this side of the House. That is the

one point I wanted to make.

The second point I wanted to make was the question that was raised by the hon. the Member for Grand Falls who just spoke about plebiscites in Windsor and Grand Falls.

We are going to have fairness and balance in Windsor and Grand Falls by one means or another. We have said that the Government would not exercise the power that it does have under The Municipalities Act as it existed before, without any changes to it, as it has been for years. The Government could by Order in Council force it, have a secret debate upstairs in the Cabinet Room and order the amalgamation of Grand Falls and Windsor. We have said -

MR. SIMMS:
(Inaudible) to the House (inaudible).

PREMIER WELLS:
It does not have to come to the House for ratification. It would be an Order in Council and we would order it, we could order it. We have said, we will not exercise that authority, okay?

Now, we may well, we could well, although I do not expect we will bring it into the House. But if the people of Grand Falls do not want to amalgamate and bring about fairness and balance on that basis, then we will introduce legislation in this House that will provide for the collection of all of the commercial and business and industrial taxes in Grand Falls and Windsor by a single authority and allocate it on a per capita basis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

PREMIER WELLS:

Because one way or another we are going to have fairness and balance.

I acknowledge the clock, Mr. Speaker. I only need a few more minutes, but I will take it on Monday and finish it, and then the hon. the Member for Kilbride can speak.

I move the adjournment of the debate, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House at its rising do adjourn until 2:00 p.m. on Monday, and that the House do now adjourn.

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

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Mr. Short, (Lib)	St. George's
Mr. Simms, (PC)	Grand Falls
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