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Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker (Lush): Order, please!

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

Mr. Woodford: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for Forestry and Agriculture. In view of the fact that the Minister has set up the dairy quota allocation procedure, a procedure referred to by many in the industry as just a witch-hunt, and in view of the fact that the Minister has a history of interference in the industry since some seventeen or eighteen months ago, would the Minister now confirm that he has instructed the Newfoundland Farm Loan Board not to issue any loans to farmers who would want to increase their dairy herds until the study is finished, and that this action by the Minister is especially hard in those difficult times?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the first instance, Mr. Speaker, setting up a review of the quota allocation was not considered by the industry or anyone else as a witch-hunt, and in the second instance the setting up of such a quota allocation review had the total support of the industry. I wanted to correct those two misrepresentations, Mr. Speaker. And furthermore, I have given no such instructions to the Farm Loan Board, not to process loans from the dairy industry.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

Mr. Woodford: Would the Minister confirm for the House whether he has also written the FCC, the Farm Credit Corporation, asking them to do the same, and outline his reasons for doing it? And I would ask the Minister if he understands the drastic implications this could have for the industry in the Province?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, unless the hon. member is aware of something that I am not aware of I can say to him there was no such letter. Maybe he should produce a copy of the letter and table it, because no such letter has been written as far as I am concerned.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

Mr. Woodford: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister now confirm for the House that his interference with the industry over the past months would, number one, jeopardized the viability of smaller farm operations, and two, it will mean losses in 1990-91 for one of the most viable industries in the Province, and that his actions are ill-advised and ill-timed?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: No, Mr. Speaker, the Minister will not confirm any such thing. As a matter of fact, I would ask the House to consider this, that anybody who was interested in public affairs in

this Province during 1987 and 1988 could not open a newspaper unless there was a major controversy with regard to the dairy industry. You had producers against processors, consumers against everybody. So I ask the member, when was the last time in the past two years that he saw references to that kind of turmoil and controversy in the dairy industry in Newfoundland?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

Mr. Woodford: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. There was no trouble to open the papers during this past several months to see what controversy there was in the industry in the Province, I will tell you that.

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister; now give a commitment to the House today that when his Committee, the Dairy Quota Allocation Committee does report to him, that he will make this report public?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, I will wait until I get the report from the Quota Allocation Committee and then decide whether or not it is appropriate or necessary to make it public in the House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. The Minister is

no doubt aware of questions raised during the Hughes Inquiry about the unusual circumstances and unanswered questions about the death of a Mr. John Thistle at Mount Cashel, in 1967. Further questions, the Minister will recall, were raised about that incident again last week but the police and the Department of Justice officials have declined to provide acceptable answers at least - I suppose I could use that word - to the family and to the media who have been inquiring on that matter. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister could advise the House why officials would be unwilling to provide the appropriate information requested by family and by media on this particular matter?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Dicks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not really sure what the hon. the Leader of the Opposition's questions intended. Is he suggesting that we should release any materials relating to a police investigation to the public? I do not want to not answer them, I am just not sure what he is looking for that the Department of Justice should furnish in this case.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, maybe I will be able to help the Minister by asking him two or three direct questions.

Mr. Dicks: Sure.

Mr. Rideout: The Minister is no doubt aware from information that now, at least, is public - I do not know what might be on file

internally, but the Minister is no doubt aware that Mr. Thistle was diagnosed as an epileptic and was on medication for ten years prior to his entry to Mount Cashel.

In view of the fact that the rule at Mount Cashel at the time was that Brothers were in charge of the dispensation of medication, and it had to be administered to the recipient by a Brother, is the Minister concerned that the autopsy showed no sign of any medication in Mr. Thistle's body, thus leading medical experts to conclude that Mr. Thistle had not been administered appropriate medication at least three days before his death and possibly longer?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Dicks: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say with respect to the hon. the Leader of the Opposition that I am not sure that the House of Assembly is really the place that we answer questions concerning police investigations or deaths. I would like to make a general comment which maybe helpful, though.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Dicks: Excuse me. As the hon. the Leader of the Opposition knows, this matter, as he suggests, was brought up at the Hughes Commission. The police worked very closely with the counsel to the Hughes Commission and it is my understanding that all the materials were furnished and information was provided as it came forward, and the police were in a position to determine what if any investigation should go forward. To deal further with the matter on specifics, I think,

would not be proper in this case, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Rideout: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on a supplementary.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, with respect I must say to the Minister that these questions have been posed publicly by the family and by people in the media. So therefore, in my view, if the answers are not forthcoming, it is certainly appropriate to ask them in the House. Now, let me ask the minister this: in view of the medical reports on the lack of any sign of medication in the body of the victim, is the minister concerned that the lack of medication could have been a factor in the death of Mr. Thistle, and wouldn't the minister agree that that particular question ought to attempt to be answered definitively one way or another?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Dicks: Mr. Speaker, questions have not been posed to me as minister prior to the member bringing them up in the House today, so I cannot confirm that questions are being posed to the Ministry of Justice or elsewhere concerning the matter. I am always concerned when there is any public suspicion raised as to the cause of death, but frankly I leave it to the police to carry out the investigations. I would not want to suggest any conclusions that could be drawn from what the hon. member suggests were the results of an autopsy. With all due respect, I do not

think that the House of Assembly is the proper place for comments on what may in fact be a police investigation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition on a supplementary.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, again, with respect to the minister, those questions as I am asking them today have been posed to the ministers officials and to police by family and members of the media and have not been answered. That is one of the reasons why I am posing them here today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. As I understand it there is only one potential living witness to Mr. Thistle's death, and that person was never questioned, according to the public information that I have access to, was never questioned by the investigating officers of the RNC when they carried out their investigation of this particular death. Wouldn't the minister agree that it ought to be appropriate to question that person as to what light that person may be able to shed on the circumstances surrounding Mr. Thistle's death, in view of the fact that this was the only person, according to public information, or the last person who saw that gentleman alive?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Dicks: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I have concerns about discussing this in public. I will try to deal with the hon. members question. I am not in a position to either confirm or deny which witnesses were, in fact,

questioned. As the hon. member suggested, there was a police investigation carried out and I will not suggest what conclusions one might draw from these questions. But I will inquire into the matter. If the family have any questions it may be proper to raise them. I do not think the House of Assembly is a place where the Minister of Justice or the police should report on investigations that have been done or the current state of them. There are other remedies that are available at law that might include inquiries which have been ordered in the past and these sorts of measures. But frankly it is not for the Minister of Justice to bring to the House of Assembly the results or the nature of ongoing police investigations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition on a supplementary.

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say to the minister again that the family and members of the media have tried to get answers to those questions just recently. This was an investigation that allegedly took place in 1967.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that it has been alleged by the only living witness in this matter that Mr. Thistle did not die in his sick bed in the sick room assigned for sick people at Mount Cashel as was reported by the police investigation, but was, in fact, found dead on the floor of the laundry room. Isn't the minister concerned that the true facts surrounding this particular incident, whatever they might be, ought to be ascertained and questions answered definitively

for the sake of the family and for everybody involved once and for all?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Dicks: I do not disagree with what the hon. member is saying in essence. I mean, the department is always concerned as to the state of any death that may be questioned. What I am suggesting is that the House of Assembly is not the proper place to bring these forward. If a particular person has a concern surrounding the death of an individual, the proper way to handle that is to go to the police and lay a complaint as regards to any suspicion. There was an autopsy done. As the hon. member suggests, it did come before the Hughes Commission. I have indicated that the evidence brought before the Hughes Commission has been co-ordinated with the police for suitable and appropriate follow-up investigations. And I am not, in a position or should I confirm or deny whether any such investigations are ongoing.

But I would suggest to the hon. member that it has not been raised with me personally. He indicates that it has been raised with officials of my Department. That may be, I do not know to whom the matters were raised. But I would suggest to the hon. member that if the family had been in touch with him or any person has grounds for proper complaint, they should lay it before the police and we would ensure that a proper investigation is followed up.

Mr. Rideout: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader

of the Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I think this is probably the sixth question, and for the sixth time I say to the Minister that the family and others inquiring into this matter have attempted to get the answers from officials in the Department of Justice and from the police and just have not been able to get them. So that is why the questions are being raised here in this Assembly, and the Minister is responsible.

Mr. Speaker, finally let me ask the Minister this, in view of the concerns that have been raised on this matter by the family, since it came to public light during the Hughes Inquiry, and questions raised by the media, would the Minister not agree that the only way that the air can be cleared now on this particular matter is to have a provincial court inquiry? And would he not agree to call such an inquiry? A judicial inquiry, I guess, would be normal in the case of circumstances surrounding a death of this nature so that the questions can be answered definitively once and for all and so that people out there in society will not be living under the cloud of perhaps some kind of cover up that still continues to surround the whole Mount Cashel incident?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Dicks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the member already pointed out, this came up before one large scale inquiry in the Province, and

it may in fact be addressed by that inquiry in its final report, and I cannot prejudge that.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Dicks: Well the hon. member says, no. I do not know why he would say no when he said it has been in evidence before him, and I have not seen the results of the Commission. I do not know why he would come to another conclusion.

Mr. Rideout: (Inaudible) to have another look at it.

Mr. Dicks: Well the hon. member seems to suggest that he knows the answer and apparently he is suggesting to us that there is a police investigation.

The second part of the question, Mr. Speaker, is that we would have to determine first of all whether or not this would be addressed by the Hughes Commission, because we obviously do not order two judicial inquiries of any sort into the same incidents. There are many reasons for that.

Secondly, the normal process before the Crown ever orders a judicial inquiry, and this came up recently in two matters that had been as well in the media, is that the police investigation is completed first. It is then forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions who then makes a decision on the basis of the evidence as to whether or not a judicial inquiry is warranted. At this point in time I do not know that the police investigation has yet been completed. And if and when it is completed it may well be forwarded to the Department of Justice and the decision may be taken either for or against a judicial inquiry. All I can say

at this time is I do not know that the results of the police investigation are completed, and it would be premature to say whether or not any additional inquiry other than the extent to which the Hughes Commission may deal with it would be warranted.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Last week I understand that he met with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Amusement Operators representing forty companies who employ 180 people, who have told me that as a result of the decision by Government to permit Atlantic Loto to exclusively operate coin operated amusement machines that their businesses will be severely affected. Can the Minister advise the House, in view of these representations, if the Government is reconsidering its approval to Atlantic Loto?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have listened to the representations made by the group that you refer to and are looking into what they are saying. But it would be premature to say that we are considering changing our recommendation or terms of reference of Atlantic Loto.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, let me ask the Minister then, why has Government agreed to require lounge owners to remove video

poker machines installed by members of this association that met with them?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I will have to look into that. This is the first I have known that Government is requiring anyone to do anything of that nature. But we will check into it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister if he is concerned that the maximum size of this payment of \$500 may encourage excessive gambling in the Province?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: We are looking at that as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister, has the Minister caused inquiries to be made about the allegations made to him concerning the American owner of the company which has sold the video gambling equipment to the Atlantic Loto?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: No comment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: No comment?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you very

much, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the Premier. He will remember that yesterday toward the end of Question Period I asked him a question about the abolishment of the Ombudsman office. And the question was: will this legislation go before one of the legislative review committees? And early in his answer he gave some confusing information once again, or contradictory information. Early in his answer he said, yes it will go to a legislative review committee. And then towards the end of his answer he said, the answer to your question is no, we will not.

Will the Premier tell me, will it or will it not go before the legislative review committees?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member is obviously talking about two things. The second answer addressed a second question, a second aspect, and I will get it now and I will read it if the hon. Member is unable -

An Hon. Member: Page 16.

Premier Wells: Page 16, okay.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: Page L-16, is it?

An Hon. Member: L-16, yes.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: Monday's. Yesterday Monday?

An Hon. Member: No.

Premier Wells: Twenty-sixth of November?

An Hon. Member: Yes, that is right.

Premier Wells: Well, I do not see that. There is a question - oh, I am sorry, I see it now, yes.

An Hon. Member: Anyway, what is the answer?

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, he is wasting time in Question Period!

Ms Verge: Yes or no.

Premier Wells: The answer is, like all legislation, Mr. Speaker, or virtually all legislation, it will go before the Legislative Review Committee. But what the "no" is to, is that no, the Legislative Review Committee would not be permitted to waste all kinds of funds taking it around the Province.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: But that is what I said. Now that is what the "no" was to, and that is what the hon. Member is talking about. So if he is going to quote me he should quote me accurately -

Some Hon. Members: He did!

Premier Wells: I am sorry, he did not. The record is very clear, I am sure. Mr. Speaker, in case there was any error in what was said, I will review it now in a minute to see, in case the member has any doubts. That piece of legislation will likely be a piece of legislation simply to repeal the existing Act. So there is no necessity to go around the Province and do a detailed examination and waste untold -

An Hon. Member: And play politics.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: If the Member for Grand Falls feels he has the answer, then he should give it to the member directly in the caucus room and not waste the time of the House. I will give him the answer from the Government's point of view.

Mr. R. Aylward: (Inaudible) next week.

Premier Wells: If they do not want it, I will sit down, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, when the Premier has a chance to review the question he will see that I asked one question but he gave two contradictory answers to the same question. On Thursday, November 22, I asked another question about the office of the Ombudsman, and the Premier will find his answer on Page L9. It says, and I quote: 'If anyone were to go back and look over the reports filed by the Ombudsman over the past five to ten years one would see that it is a total waste of the \$400,000 it costs each year.' Mr. Speaker, in the Budget presented by the Minister of Finance in April of this year he said there would be a saving of some \$236,000. Is this another gross miscalculation by the Minister of Finance, or is it another gross misrepresentation of the facts by the Premier in order to justify abolishing this office?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: I will get the figures, Mr. Speaker. Speaking off the top of my head I understood the cost of the

Ombudsman's office was about \$400,000. But if that was in error, I will correct it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No matter what the savings, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier, whether the savings be \$236,000 as stated in the Budget or \$400,000 as stated by the Premier, do these savings include the possibility of having to buy out the extra six years of the contract the present Ombudsman now has?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I will try and get the exact cost of the Ombudsman's office but my guess is, and this is only a guess and I will check it, that the \$236,000 referred to the balance for this year, because we intended to do it earlier.

Mr. R. Aylward: What it said in the Budget was \$236,000 annually.

Premier Wells: Well, if it is annually that is the figure and the \$400,000 figure was wrong. I will check it and find out.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Premier checks he will see that his figure of \$400,000 is an exaggeration to try and justify his -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. member is on a supplementary.

Mr. R. Aylward: I note that the

Premier did not answer the question of whether the savings of \$236,000 would include the possibility of having to buy out six years of the present Ombudsman's contract. Would this saving include the obligation of honoring the pension of the Ombudsman, which would be one-third of his salary for the first ten years and two-thirds for his second ten years? Is this included in the savings of \$236,000?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I have the estimates for 1990 and the \$400,000 was not an accurate figure. The actual amount budgeted for the year was \$236,200. Where does the Parliamentary Commissioner operate from?

Ms Verge: The Legislature. His office is -

Premier Wells: I am very much aware of that.

Ms Verge: - on Elizabeth Ave.

Premier Wells: On Elizabeth Avenue. So, Mr. Speaker, that is how important the fellow is. Nobody even knows where he is. Mr. Speaker, the amount involved on an annual basis is \$236,200.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has now confirmed his exaggeration to try to justify this move. It is obvious that the Premier and the Government have given very little thought as to why they should abolish the Ombudsman's Office. Will the Premier confirm, will he

admit that the real reason for the abolishment of the Ombudsman's Office is that he considers the Ombudsman, as characterized by the Minister of Health in debate, Mr. Speaker, a Tory hack and this is the only way he could see to get rid of the Ombudsman, and to continue his political witch-hunt through the public service?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: No, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely not. That is an utter fabrication. One has only to look at the reports of the Ombudsman over the last number of years to see it. Now what the Minister of Health expressed as his personal view is his personal view. But I can tell the House, Mr. Speaker, and through the House the public of this Province, that that was not in any manner a consideration for the Government in making this decision. The consideration for the Government in making this decision was similar to the consideration we had when we eliminated eight ministers. You might want to call them hacks if you wanted to that were put in there -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier Wells: We reduced the Government Departments, Mr. Speaker, from twenty-two down to fourteen.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, we reduced the number of Government Departments from twenty-two, plus a Premier, twenty-three, which the former Premier had. I do not mean the Premier who was there for a few days. I am not talking about

that; there was not time to get a Government in place. I am talking about the former Government, Mr. Speaker, that had -

An Hon. Member: Your nose is growing again.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Order, please!

A question has been asked and hon. members should do the courtesy to the Premier of hearing what the answer will be.

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, what motivated the Government was eliminating all things that were, strictly speaking, unnecessary and not making a significant contribution. Eight ministers of the Cabinet were unnecessary, we eliminated them. It eliminated eight deputy ministers, and so on, and a number of assistant deputy ministers. We are in the process of eliminating unnecessary automobiles, Mr. Speaker. We are doing exactly the same thing to eliminate the unnecessary expenditure. We eliminated unnecessary press aides for ministers - there were some fifteen.

Mr. Rideout: Yes, you did so, and hired (inaudible).

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier Wells: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there were some fifteen press aides that tracked around behind ministers wherever they travelled and carried their bags and wrote their messages for them, and they were travelling around. So we eliminated all of those things,

and that is what motivated us in eliminating the office of Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Rideout: (Inaudible) and ministers over there never move without them.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Fisheries, who is just back from a meeting with the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Atlantic counterparts where he recommended a total allowable catch of 170,000 metric tons. In light of that, can the minister inform the House, as a result of his meetings and his recommendation, whether or not the people in the towns of Grand Bank, Trepassey and Gaultois can expect their fish plants to reopen in 1991, or will we indeed see more fish plant closures?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that question, quite frankly. I can only say this, Mr. Speaker, that I think it is quite obvious now that the total allowable catch is going to have to be reduced. In fact, the Harris Panel Report made such a recommendation. Scientific evidence points to the need for a further reduction in the TAC. The Dunn Report, recently tabled by Eric Dunn, confirms what the others are saying. If the TAC is allowed to remain at its current level, that of approximately 200,000 metric tons, Mr. Speaker, I do not think the future of the fishery is going to be very bright, and for that reason the Province feels it necessary to

recommend a reduction in the TAC.

Now I realize there will be some social implications, upheavals maybe, but, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to start trying to rebuild the fishery. And while the social problems are important too and none of us can ignore them, I think what is more important at this point in time is that we give the fishery a chance to rebuild to a point where at some time in the not-too-distant future it will be able to provide a decent living for those who are in it. And not like it is now, by the way. It is not even providing a quarter of a living for them.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the Minister. In light of the fact that the Minister recommended a total allowable catch of 170,000 metric tons, which is some 27,000 metric tons less than last year, did the Minister or the Province make specific recommendation as to what sector or sectors would receive the cuts, the reduction, in fish allocations? I want to ask the Minister that. It was only last week he said that the Scandinavian longliner allocation should be reinstated and the Resource Short Programme should be reinstated. But, yet, when you go and recommend 27,000 metric tons less than last year, what recommendations did the Minister make to the Federal Minister as it pertains to the cuts and where they should come from?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, the Province did not make any specific

recommendation as to where the cuts will come, but certainly we would be hesitant to support any move on the part of the Government to tamper with the inshore allocation; we all know, of course, that that is an allocation that is there for the inshore sector. In fact, I am happy to announce today, Mr. Speaker, that this year, despite all the bad news we have been hearing, the inshore allocation will be almost caught in its entirety. For example, I am told 107,000 metric tons have to date been caught, which means there is a buffer of 8,000 metric tons.

Now I would certainly not support any attempt on the part of the Government to tamper with the inshore allocation, because I think they deserve to retain that allocation, that amount.

Mr. Speaker: Question Period has expired.

Before moving on to the next item of routine business, on behalf of hon. Members I would like to welcome to the public galleries today eighteen Grades XI and XII students from the Seventh Day Adventist School here in St. John's, accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Ian Cheeseman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Notices of Motion

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Development.

Mr. Furey: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act To Reconstitute Newfoundland and Labrador

Development Corporation Limited And Certain Divisions Of The Department Of Development As Enterprise Newfoundland and Labrador Corporation".

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Verge: Oh, only a year and a half.

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 Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law". Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, pursuant to Standing Order No. 50, debate and further consideration of second reading of Bill No. 38, "An Act Respecting The Creation Of Regional Service Boards Throughout The Province", standing in the name of the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, and any amendments to that motion for second reading of Bill No. 38 shall not be further adjourned, and that further consideration of any amendments related to second reading of Bill No. 38 shall not be further postponed.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, November 22nd, the Member for Kilbride asked about a letter written by The International Organization of Ombudsmen and asked if I would table the reply.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table today the original letter written by Mr. Stephen Owen, President of the International Ombudsman Institute, together with my reply of July 5th, 1990 which spells out in detail all of the reasons why the Government proposed to abolish the office of Parliamentary Commissioner as being unnecessary, the duties being taken care of by the Members of the House. It is not necessary for me to read it, it will be available.

Mr. Simms: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Simms: I wonder if the Premier would take the opportunity on a point of order to tell me or tell the House when he intends to fulfill his promise or commitment to provide the House with the information that we asked for, I guess last week sometime, quite a while ago, on the breakdown of overexpenditures in the \$120 million deficit. He said he would get it. We have not had it since, and that is days and days ago.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: To the point of order, the hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it will be provided.

Petitions

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand to present a petition signed by ninety-two persons from Green Bay, mostly from the Robert's Arm - Triton area. As a matter of fact, the Mayor of Robert's Arm signed this petition and signed as Mayor.

The prayer of the petition is as follows, Mr. Speaker: Because an expenditure freeze in the health care system will mean layoffs and bed closures, we, the undersigned residents of Green Bay District, petition the hon. House of Assembly not to approve such a freeze.

Mr. Speaker, this petition today brings a total of near 500, I think, who have sent me their petitions protesting cutbacks in the health care system. The Administration of the local health care board in Green Bay has submitted one impact statement to the Minister of Health, and there have been, I understand, discussions on that and possibly there will be another impact statement with another configuration of how the \$600,000 or \$700,000 minimum will be saved next year.

The first calculation by the Administration would close twenty-four senior citizens beds and the only two children's beds at the Springdale hospital. There is another configuration that would involve downgrading the Springdale hospital to a clinic, with nursing home beds attached,

and I am given to understand that could possibly provide the type of savings that the Government requires. Obviously there would be some job losses, but not as bad as if the entire hospital itself were closed.

Mr. Speaker, Christmas is coming. A lot of public servants, not only in my district but throughout the Province, certainly have other things on their mind than the Season of joy and goodwill: their concern for their employment, their jobs, and other citizens are concerned as to the level of public health services in their area.

The one thing I think particularly cruel about the way this Government has gone about making its budget for next year is the degree of uncertainty they have generated out there in the general public. Certainly the subject matter at hand here has been the subject of a considerable discussion in Green Bay, and Springdale in particular. Hon. members on Monday last, when I presented the petition, showed me a copy of the front page of a local newspaper, where the mayor of Springdale was not in favor of my petition campaign. The petition I presented on Monday I sent around to the 1,200 households in Springdale as a household mailer, and that has certainly been the subject of much discussion since then.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, discussion on this and uncertainty on this will continue until such time as this Administration makes some final decisions. I would certainly hope that decisions, whatever they are, the degree of pain etc., will be communicated to the people involved long before a

budget comes down in probably February or March of the year 1991.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I have signed this petition, I support its prayer, and I ask that it be tabled and referred to the Department of Health. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was just -

Orders of the Day

Mr. Simms: Orders of the Day with nobody here at all?

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House adjourn until tomorrow at 3:00 p.m.

An Hon. Member: Call order 1, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Order 28.

Mr. Speaker: Order 28, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting The Creation Of Regional Service Boards Throughout The Province". (Bill No. 38). This is an adjourned debate. The hon. the Member for Menihek.

Mr. Rideout: The hon. the Government House Leader calls for closure and then he can't be here to call the Orders of the Day.

Mr. A. Snow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Regional Service Boards Bill, Bill No. 38, we have been debating for a couple of hours now. We have not had a tremendous amount of debate on it, but I am pleased to have the

opportunity to debate this bill. It is something that concerns Municipal Government. I have been involved with Municipal Government for a number of years in Labrador City. I think it is commonly referred to as the first level of government, and I think it is probably aptly named or referred to as the first level of government, because that level of government is, in my opinion, the most important level of government that we have in this country today, the level of government that is right down there in the trenches, so to speak, with the grass roots of this country, delivering services to the people and they are living day to day with the cares and the concerns of the people and delivering the services that the people utilize every day of their lives. That is why I believe it is unfortunate that this regime has seen fit to do what they have done in restricting debate on this particular bill.

I am sure there are a tremendous number of people on the other side of the House who would like to speak. There are people on the other side of the House who have had a greater amount of experience than I have had in Municipal Government, and they have a tremendous amount of respect earned from their particular electorates over the numbers of years they have been involved. I think of people such as the hon. the Member for Placentia and the hon. the Member for Carbonear, who has served in Municipal Government. I believe even Eric the Red himself has served, the hon. Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs. Even the President of Treasury Board, he has a tremendous amount of experience. I am sure that if he

were to speak and all these members were to speak from the experience they gained at this first level of Government, municipal government, they could see some of the flaws that have been expressed to them by their electorate and by councillors with whom they served over numbers of years. I had, as I mentioned earlier, the opportunity of serving on a town council in Labrador City for eighteen years, ten of those years were on a LID -

An Hon. Member: What is that?

Mr. Simms: Local Improvement District.

Mr. A. Snow: Yes, that is a Local Improvement District - and eight years in the council, four of which I was a mayor. That particular first level of Government, I always believed, is probably the best municipal government in this Province, and they have expressed concern to me and they have expressed concern to this regime about what they are doing, what this particular bill could do to municipal government in their area.

Now other people have spoken on how this bill could affect particular areas they represent and they have experience with. My experience in municipal government has been in Labrador City and Wabush. I feel that I have garnered quite a bit of knowledge, having served on this council and working with our sister community, Wabush, on a number of committees and bringing regional services to the area.

I have been involved in that, so I feel I have experience that I should be able to share with other people in this House and in this

Province, and I am sure other people have done a similar type of thing.

Now the town council in Labrador City has operated over a number of years and, as I have suggested, earned a reputation of being one of the most efficient in this Province. It is an affluent community, yet they have a very efficient and progressive council, with new ideas, and they also showed prudence in being 'good managers of the taxpayers' money. And I believe that is why they are probably one of the more outspoken councils with regard to this particular bill and how they see this can affect them. And I readily agree with them.

Some people have suggested that there may indeed be a hidden agenda for this particular bill. In other words, what is being said is that this regime is attempting to do something through the backdoor that they could not do or would not do or did not have the face to do up front. They have been devious. They have connived a way or contrived a way to do what they have wanted to do since day one, and I will attempt to show the people of this Province how this is being done.

The minister has suggested that the intent of the regional service boards is to operate under the auspices of the municipal councils, and the intent is not to have it driven by the Province and under the auspices of the Province. Now that is what the minister said when he spoke in debate on this bill. Ordinarily what the minister would say you would have to take and suggest that well, that is undoubtedly a fact and we should listen to that and believe him. But I am finding

a lot of people do not believe that. When the Committee heard reports submitted to them by numerous councils, people of knowledge in the municipal communities in the Province, they disagreed. Because this is not being driven by the councils, it is being driven by the Province, in the fact of how they are going to do it.

Section 3, and I quote, 'The Lieutenant-Governor in Council by order, on the recommendation of the Minister, may create a region and establish for that region a regional service board for the purpose of providing regional services in accordance with this Act; and that he shall in the order referred to in Subsection (1) designate the boundaries and select a name for the region to be administered by the board established under this section.' Now this is something he talks about that is going to be driven by the municipalities. That is what he says when he gets up and speaks in public debate, yet in the bill he says we are going to ram this down your throat. It does not matter if you do or do not want it, it does not matter if the people are against it, it does not matter if these duly elected people, as an example, in the District of Menihek were to be opposed to this regional service board being rammed down their throats, it is only if the czar of municipal government in this Province says, I think it is necessary. Do it. Then it will be done.

So it is not being driven by the municipalities, it is being driven by this regime; it is being rammed down the people's throats, and that is unfortunate. Because as I have suggested, I believe and a

lot of people around this country believe, that that level of Government, the municipal government, is the first level of Government and the most important level of Government we have. And we should not be running over that level of Government with the hobnail boots of this provincial regime, this Provincial Government.

Now this regime has seen fit to do this in a dictatorial manner. The least this regime could have done would have been to do it -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) regime?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: What are you waiting for?

Mr. A. Snow: I am waiting for them to shut up.

Now, the least they could have done -

An Hon. Member: We will be doing the same for you.

Mr. A. Snow: Will you do it in silence then, please? The least they could have done would be to have a referendum. When they are going to impose regional government on an area, what they have to do is have the support of the people. And that is why they need to have consultation, feasibility studies, not just running in and imposing their authority without any consultation, without any feasibility studies, and no public hearings. They are just going to go into any area and say, I think it is necessary. Because I live in St. John's, I think it is necessary for the people in Wabush and Labrador City to have this

type of regional government, or have this regional board. That is what they are saying, without any studies, without any consultation with the councils, and without any public hearings. What they are suggesting is that they know better than any level of municipal government in this Province. They know better, they suggest.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. A. Snow: I will agree with the hon. Member for Exploits, they do not know better. He agreed they did not know any better. He suggests that this regime does not know any better than any level of government. They do not know it as well as the first level of government, as municipal governments. So I agree with the Member for Exploits. It is just the Cabinet alone that would establish these regional service boards, and that is unfortunate.

The other thing a lot of councils are disagreeing with in this is the number of people who would be appointed and how they are going to be appointed. Cabinet alone, or the Minister, determines the number of the board members. Again, there is no consultation with the councils, there is no consultation with this first and most important level of government.

The other thing they are talking about is the appointment of a Chairman, and they go along to suggest how they will appoint a Chairman. They do not talk about how they are going to consult with the councils; about how they are going to have public hearings; about any consultation with the grass roots of any municipality or of all the municipalities concerned. They say, no, it is going to be if I think it is

necessary. If we in our plush offices in St. John's think it is necessary for you to be governed in a certain way we will deem it necessary and then force it on you. We will ram it down your throats. Because you have elected us to go to St. John's and do what we think is necessary.

And this is unfortunate. Because what is that going to do to municipalities in our Province? It is going to make the municipalities upset, that is what it is going to do. There are a lot of municipalities out there now that agree with regional services. An awful lot of municipalities out there. The problem with it is -

Mr. Efford: Do you agree with it?

Mr. A. Snow: - the problem with this is that it gives the Minister the total authority to ram it down their throats. They want to be able to participate in the Government. They do not want just to have a responsibility of paying the bills. Because they know what may happen. There are a lot of people out there suggesting that what can occur is that this is also a method of this regime ducking out under a responsibility that they have had in other areas, such as in recreation. Some people have even suggested that they are going to be able to get out from cost in policing, they are going to pass this over to municipalities in this Province. Some people have suggested they are going to do the same thing with fire services, fire protection, that may indeed find it necessary to have a regional method, this regional board would encompass fire protection and force this payment down the throats of municipalities.

Because they can do it with this bill. That is a fact. They can do it. And the people on the other side know it. And the municipalities out there around the Province know it and realize it. That is unfortunate.

Because that is another abdication of a responsibility that these people, that you people on the other side of this House, were elected to do. We have just seen another abdication now. We have seen one abdication of responsibility when you gave up the opportunity of economic development that should have been entrusted to the Minister, the Department of Development, and passed it willy-nilly over to a bunch of academics and political hacks appointed around the Province to administer the economic development of this Province.

Now we are seeing a method, this bill could indeed be another method of getting out of a responsibility of delivering certain services that a Province now delivers out in other areas of this Province. Such as in my area where I live. We have had the opportunity over the last five or six years of having an arts centre, a Provincially funded arts centre. It was something that the area strived for for many years. And I am sure that if you were to check the attendance, that during performances up there you will find that per capita it has a higher attendance rate than any arts centre in this Province. So the people do use it. And it is Provincially funded. And of course the people of Menihek greatly appreciate it.

But what some people are apprehensive about is that this

particular regime may now find the method of putting this, the funding of this arts centre, now over into the responsibility of the municipal governments through a regional service board and making the councils, or the taxpayers of Labrador City and Wabush, pay for the operation of this facility through this Act. The councils will then just become a rubber stamp for tax collecting. That is what can happen and people are apprehensive about this because they realize what this can do to municipal government in this Province. Because of how we have seen this regime operate, how they do things. They have a centralist idea of how things should be operated, and no concern for how government services should be administered and delivered to rural areas of this Province. Places outside - when I say rural areas, I am talking about places outside the overpass.

The Minister says during the debate that it gives total authority to the municipal councils involved. Now this is totally untrue, as I just suggested. The only role that the municipalities will have with this bill is to nominate the candidates for the appointment. Every other part of the bill is the responsibility of the Minister. The Minister is the one who has all of the authority, and he appoints the people, he appoints the chairman, who, by the way, it is possible he will not even be a member of a local council, he will be an independent person, I guess we could possibly assume from that he could be some political hack who has absolutely no experience, no faith from the electorate of the area that he would be servicing, the area that he would

be delivering a service to. He would not have the faith that councils would have or a councillor would have. He would merely have the faith of the politician sitting in St. John's, that is the only faith that that person could have.

April 21, there was an awful lot of faith stopped I can tell you that.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the reasons why a lot of people in this Province are upset and disappointed with this particular bill that is being proposed. They are upset because they recognize how this bill is going to run roughshod over their duly elected councils. This bill, some people suggest, can make councils merely tax collectors or regional service boards throughout the Province. I find this, as other people, distasteful. They feel that it is not going to do anything for municipal government in this Province, in the sense of the municipal governments having earned the faith of the taxpayers, of the electorate over the last numbers of years. Since Confederation we have had in this Province a lot of people not willing to run for municipal councils in rural areas of this Province. And I believe that this bill is going to perpetrate that feeling throughout this Province and I think that it is going to drastically affect the quality and the number of people who will offer themselves for municipal government in council.

Now the hon. Member for Eagle River can sit down there and yell and scream and whine and do whatever he wishes, but I would hope that he will get up and speak to this bill after and then he can

add into the debate anything that he wishes.

Mr. Dumaresque: My name is George (inaudible) I am calling on behalf of Alex Snow.

Mr. A. Snow: No, I am not doing a public opinion. There is a survey being done seeing what some of my constituents would like in getting cards.

An Hon. Member: My name is George.

Mr. A. Snow: It is not George, it is Wats in the computer, the computers name is Watson and he is calling on behalf of Alex Snow, and I will be willing to share the program with the hon. members opposite, it works really well. It allows us opportunity for a constituent and a member to be able to be in touch with more constituents and I am sure that I know people on this side of the House, especially me, who would like to be able to do that. I know that some of the people on the other side of the House do not want constituents to call them, or at least my constituents, because we have seen Cabinet ministers that will not accept long distance telephone calls, and they are proud of it. Yet they are told that if they have a fear that a service is gone or a wrong being done that there is some suggestion that we will do away with the Ombudsman's Office and call an open line program because that is free, but you have to pay to call your cabinet minister. That is totally unfair. Anyway, I have digressed a little bit, Mr. Speaker, so I will get back to the bill at hand. I feel this bill gives much too much power to the Minister and it is totally unnecessary. Some of the things I can agree with in the sense that

there are cases in this Province where we should have certain regional services incorporated and delivered by a board or delivered regionally so to speak rather than duplication, but I do not believe that the Government should have the authority to ram down the people's throats in other areas of this Province what they deem is necessary. I think they have shown themselves as being distant from the people since they have been elected and what they deem as necessary here in St. John's may not be necessary in Labrador City and Wabush, or in any other area of this Province where this bill could, and would, impact upon. For those reasons I know I will not be supporting it and I know that the people in this Province, in most cases, do not support this bill. It is a bill, as I suggested, that is going to do a lot of damage to municipal government in this Province. It is a time now where municipal government has been gaining a lot of respect in our Province and I think this is going to set it back because councillors that have been elected to serve in this Province by the electorate have gained the respect of their electorate and now they are going to see that this bill, this Minister, and this regime is going to ram down their throats services or costs to the people that they do not necessarily want to bear the burden of, and that is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Carbonear.

Mr. Reid: I want to make a few brief comments in support of the bill. Most of my hon. colleagues in the House know and realize that

I was mayor of one of the larger towns for seven and a half years in the Conception Bay North area and I am familiar with the efforts, not only on behalf of this Government, but by the previous Government, if I remember, under the hon. Hazel Newhook when I was President of the Federation of Municipalities, and we discussed it at length, the possibility of sharing services within communities in certain areas. In fact, if I remember correctly, I think it was in 1985 or 1986 that we talked about the possibility of sharing in Conception Bay North and we had several meetings in the area on the idea of tendering for salt and sand together, tendering for paper, for gas and oil, and for all kinds of things. I have no problems with trying, in certain areas of the Province, to bring communities, town councils, and local service districts together in purchasing, and whatever they can, at cheaper prices. But, then, there has to be some organization, or body that spearheads that with the authority to do it, and I think this particular bill does that. Just let me give you an example of some of the things that we have run into in Conception Bay North for a long, long time. I was Chairman of the joint councils of Conception Bay North on two separate occasions and how often did we discuss the problems that the smaller towns in our area were having as it compared to the accessibility of monies as well as services by the larger communities as compared to the smaller ones. Out in my area alone, in Conception Bay North, we have an arena located in Bay Roberts and we also have an arena located in Harbour Grace which are separated approximately by ten miles. The

Harbour Grace arena supplies and services Carbonear and the North and East, I suppose, area of Trinity Bay and down the Northshore in my district as far as Bay de Verde. The total expense and operation of the Harbour Grace stadium is borne, as I know for certain, Mr. Speaker, by the people of Harbour Grace, and that stadium has been utilized I suppose for the past 25 years or 30 years by everybody in the whole area.

And it has not been fair to the town council of Harbour Grace over the years to have to be saddled with the burden of finding the expenses to operate such a facility. Bay Roberts Arena was something that was built I suppose no more than seven or eight years ago and they are also saddled with the same responsibility. If there is a debt within the arena or within the stadium the town council of Bay Roberts has to absorb that debt. And it is not right, because people from all over Conception Bay North use both those facilities. And I do not think it is right for one community to have to bear recreation facility costs like we are in the Conception Bay North area.

The Minister was told last week in Carbonear that the Carbonear Swimming Pool now serves almost a population of close to 40,000, draws from a population of close to 40,000 people. But if the Carbonear Swimming Pool takes a loss in 1990 and 1991 the town council of Carbonear has to borrow that cost.

We have been lucky I suppose to a certain extent in Conception Bay North that we have had some really good councils, councils that had

foresight as well as hindsight, in trying to address economic problems in the area. And the Conception Bay North joint mayors association, or joint council association, is a pretty active association as I am sure the one on the Burin Peninsula is and others. But for years we have been a pretty active group, or they have had a pretty group, that was looking at all ways of trying to make life that much better or easier for the people living in the Conception Bay North area.

And just a few years ago under the previous administration there was an incinerator built in the Harbour Grace area and that incinerator serves, as far as I know, the people from Brigus right to Salmon Cove which takes in, I would think, about 25,000 people. Maybe I might be up on that number but it services about 25,000 people and at the same time that 25,000 people are spread between, I think it is something like fourteen or fifteen communities.

And the way that incinerator works is basically that all the communities that use the incinerator, even though it is located in Harbour Grace and it was funded by Harbour Grace in the beginning, all the communities in that area have a representative on what we call the Conception Bay North Incinerator Association. And they operate as a formally corporate body that looks after the maintenance and operations of that particular incinerator and the representatives from the various town councils are responsible then back to their own councils on increases and taxes and expenditures and so on.

So that particular system works in the Conception Bay North area.

When I think, and I look sometimes, and just recently I noticed in the paper that a lot of communities around the Province and especially in my particular area - because I take note of those before I do of others - are now tendering for salt and sand or have tendered in the last month or so for salt and sand. And I remember going to a meeting one night of mayors of Conception Bay North and bragging about the wonderful deal Carbonear got on salt and sand as it compared to other communities. We were paying a lot less per ton for salt than any of the other communities and of course the reason that Carbonear was paying a lot less was because Carbonear was buying more. And our tonnage cost was a lot less than some of the other smaller towns.

Now if that be the case, Mr. Chairman, why can't we as a group of communities in Conception Bay North get together to do things like that? I know it is the Act already that a number of communities can possibly do that. But I have found, and as I started to say, my hon. friend from Gander, when she was Minister, found that yes, it was a good idea but quite often we had problems finding the proper mechanism or the proper, I suppose, avenue to be able to address these concerns and actually bring savings to communities. Because if you had one or two or three not agreeing or agreeing - it did not matter - and somebody else not agreeing then it made things more difficult. And of course in the end I suppose it diminished the services to the people we were talking about or representing.

One great thing that is happening in Conception Bay North in 1992 is

the Summer Games. And it is a great thing as far as I am concerned. I was born in Carbonear and like I said I was mayor for a number of years. And one of the great things that is happening, and it is not really the fact that we have got the Summer Games, it is the fact that Harbour Grace and Carbonear are working together to put together the summer games. And to have Harbour Grace and Carbonear working together as my hon. friend for St. John's East knows, is it or East Extern, Harbour Grace and Carbonear have for, I suppose the past 200 years, have not had what you call a workable relationship and now all of a sudden, in 1992, thanks to the previous Government of course, we can bring in the people of Carbonear and Harbour Grace and get them to work together to put off the Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games, and it is happening.

Mr. Simms: What is going on in here?

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, not only in recreation, not only in salt and sand, paper and gas and oil and all the other things that each community I suppose, in the Province have to tender on and pay heavily for, but there is another area that concerns me and has concerned me for some while.

If anybody would leave tonight and drive from Roaches Line to Salmon Cove they would find an abundance of Fire Departments. Now, I am not saying that there is anything wrong or there is an over abundance of Fire Departments in the area, but let me go down through it, Mr. Speaker.

You arrive, after you leave Roaches Line and you end up in

Clarke's Beach or South River, or North River, that whole area is serviced by either the Bay Roberts Fire Department, which is a fair size Fire Department, I think they have two good pumpers, two new pumpers and a van and other equipment, but then that same area is sometimes serviced, if I am not mistaken by Cupids or Brigus Fire Department because they have one as well.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Reid: Just in that little area there, as soon as you come off Roaches Line. When you leave that you come across the beach in Bay Roberts and into Spaniard's Bay and there is a Fire Department in Spaniard's Bay, and Spaniard's Bay covers Tilton too, by the way, which is a small community over there.

You leave that and Upper Island Cove has its own Fire Department, you go over the hill from Upper Island Cove about a mile to a mile and a half and you get into Harbour Grace and they have their own Fire Department and of course Harbour Grace has one of the top Fire Departments in the Province, next to Carbonear, one of the best. You leave Harbour Grace which is approximately three kilometres from Carbonear and you come to Carbonear and Carbonear has an abundance of an abundance of firefighting equipment, in fact I think they have one of the best aerial ladder trucks in the Province, which we purchased some years ago, along with three pumpers, vans and all kinds of equipment.

You leave Carbonear and go over the hill a mile and a half from there, you go to Victoria and they have got a Fire Department, then

you go to Salmon Cove and they have got a Fire Department. Great, wonderful. I think it is a wonderful thing, but my personal feeling, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a lot of money, there is a lot of maintenance dollars, there is a lot of capital dollars gone into Fire Departments in the Province, not only in the Conception Bay North area, but in the Province in general.

And you have this host, and I wish and pray and I have often talked about it when I was Mayor of Carbonear, to various Government officials and to others about the possibility of getting maybe one or two central fire stations in the area and maybe being able to man them like they are doing now in Conception Bay South, somewhat on a part-time basis or whatever by full-time fireman, and when I say a part time basis because I believe that the Fire Department is not manned in the night-time. I think they are doing twelve hours or something like that. And with that said, Mr. Speaker, what an opportunity we will have in the Conception Bay North area, to probably look at all these particular services and maybe, maybe come up with something better than we have right now.

This particular bill, as far as I am concerned gives the authority to the Minister as well as to all the municipalities, and there are a lot of municipalities out there waiting, waiting for this bill to go through, because I think they see an opportunity to make services in their area much better than what they are right now.

Now, I will agree, Mr. Speaker, that there are places in Newfoundland today, that probably will not want this, probably not

interested in it. There are isolated communities in the Province which will not be able to be served by a local service or a local authority and a regional service board. I have no problems with that and I am sure the Minister knows and realizes that.

There are some questions that the Opposition has raised with regards to public hearings and consultation and the right of the Minister to appoint and so on, but I do not have any problems with that because I believe that the Minister, when this bill goes through, if there needs to be amendments to the bill later on, that those amendments will come. I am sure that the people of Newfoundland, the municipalities, the mayors, the Federation of Municipalities and all the other groups who represent all the municipalities in the Province, will make representation to the Minister some time, be it this year or next year and that bill can be amended and I do not have any problems with that.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, basically to make those general comments and honestly say to you that I believe, as an experienced, somewhat experienced I suppose, municipal politician, that I think that a regional service board in the Conception Bay North area, that would take in a large chunk of my district, would certainly be well appreciated as well as, I know that a number of councillors in the area and mayors included have already made representation to me on it.

I do not think the people of Carbonear have anything to fear on this one, I have talked to a number of people out there and they think it is time. They want

help, they want help in Carbonear to help pay for some of the sports facilities, the recreation facilities which we have there and which we have been offering to other people in the area for a number of years without any assistance, and I am sure Harbour Grace and the Harbour Grace Stadium, the Bay Arena in Bay Roberts, they would certainly welcome some assistance from other communities in the area and from the people who are using it as well.

So I stand in support of the Minister in this particular bill, and I think that in all sincerity that this Minister has enough feeling for the towns and communities around this Province to make sure that they are consulted after this bill goes through, that they are consulted and there will be hearings, I would think individual communities will come and they will have hearings with the Minister and the Minister will listen and the people in his Department will listen to all the concerns which will be put forward.

I rise in support, Mr. Minister and I encourage some of my colleagues on the other side, who have had experience within the municipal field, to support this bill as it is. If we need to make changes in it we have lots of time to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) force closure so you got our backs up now.

An Hon. Member: That is not

closure.

Mr. Hearn: I did not intend to speak on this bill until the Member for Carbonear got up and had a few words. Some of the points he made, seemingly ones that were probably given him by the Minister to try to gloss over what is really happening in the bill, because he emphasized sharing, and there is no one in the House who will disagree with the fact that there should be a lot more sharing. I think we have seen a lot of it in the last few years. It is not only what is happening in relation to municipalities. We are seeing a lot more sharing in other areas also. The Minister of Education will tell you that there is more sharing going on today than ever before in history, and it is not forced sharing, it is encouraged and promoted. What the Minister is trying to do here in Bill 38 is to force sharing. I say to the Minister that is not the way to go about it because if the Minister is going out with his heavy hand and wheeling the big stick and making councils and areas co-operate and work together when they are not prepared for it, and when perhaps they are not ready for it or do not want to do it in some cases at this stage, then the Minister is going to get a lot of backs up against him. However, if he would encourage, promote, and use various incentives, then undoubtedly the sharing that so many people want will come about with a lot of support. The former speaker, the Member for Carbonear, when he was finishing said that the Minister would consult with the various areas after the bill goes through. Now, we have all seen how this Government consults. They consult and then they do what they want to do.

anyway.

Mr. Gover: School boards.

Mr. Hearn: Yes, exactly. And I am glad that the Member for Bonavista South is on our side when he sarcastically says school boards. What he is really saying is that the Minister went out and did not really consult with the school boards. He acknowledged their presence, but then he did what he wanted to do. And the Member for Bonavista South, I will say to the Minister of Education, said that, not me. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has the same intention. He went out before the amalgamation process and consulted, but did he do what was suggested to him by the council for different areas, of course not. The Minister came in and did what the Premier said, centralize. That is the operable word of this Government: centralize. There is a centralization tendency here carried over from the former liberal administration back when we had the old centralization policies. We see it in the Department of Education where the Minister of Education is trying to centralize all power into the department so that they can run it all under their own hands, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs is doing exactly the same thing. And to talk about salt and sand as it compared to other communities, we were paying a lot less per ton after consulting. Now how foolish does he think any municipality out there is to say to them go along with this and when we put it all in place, the Minister will consult with you. The Minister should consult beforehand, listen, and follow the suggestions and instructions of the experienced people in the field, especially in

rural Newfoundland, who know a lot more about municipal politics than the Minister.

Perhaps the Minister should consult carefully with the Member for Placentia, an experienced Mayor from a rural area where amalgamation is appropriate, maybe not forced amalgamation but certainly encouraged and promoted amalgamation, as the member has been trying to do for awhile. To force amalgamation as this bill is doing, then I think the Minister is asking for trouble. When the Member for Carbonear uses the word consult he should go back to his own collective agreement when he was a teacher, where the word consult or consent led to at least one strike and caused an awful lot of aggravation through a number of negotiating processes. Written in the teachers' agreement is that Government has to have the consent of the Newfoundland Teachers' Association to make certain changes in their pension plan. Luckily so, I say now to the Member for Carbonear.

Many times governments of all different stripes have tried to change that word consent to consult. They would consult, but then do what they wanted to do anyway. And this is exactly what the Minister intends to do. You can consult anybody about anything. That does not mean you are going to do what the other people suggest. The word consent, having their consent to make changes, gives them a lot more say in the process in consultation by the Minister, especially a well-meaning Minister, I would say, in his own right, but a Minister of this Government which consults but then goes ahead with its own plans anyway. Consultation is only a sham.

In discussions in relation to the bill the Minister says the intent is to have the regional service boards operate under the auspices of the municipal councils. That means really have the councils run the show. If that is the case, we ask the Minister, as the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday, why does he not put it in writing? Why does he not do what the President of Treasury Board did with the Libraries Board, put it in writing to them? The facts are the regional service boards established under the bill will be directed by the Province. Cabinet on its own authority may designate any portion of the Province or any region. There is no requirement at all to consult with the municipalities or anybody else. We heard today from the Member for Carbonear what is going to happen, they will consult after the bill goes through. That is like locking the barn door after the horse gets out, I say to him.

There is no word on feasibility studies. Where are the public hearings? You just cannot take Newfoundland and cut it up into little geographic blocks and say, you are a unit. It does not operate that way, especially when one looks at the way the area has developed over the years. In any one geographic area you might have strong communities, well-organized, who have spent a lot of time and money, who have contributed greatly to setting up a solid infrastructure in relation to libraries, in relation to firefighting equipment, in relation to fire halls, in relation to recreational facilities, and in relation to public buildings. You might find other communities very close where the same thing has not happened at all, where there has been very

little local initiative or organization. Where is the equality there? How are you going to work those things out unless it is done beforehand?

There are animosities built up between communities, as the Speaker well knows, in certain parts of the Province. And if you just say you have to get together, this is it, then before they get a chance to discuss and work out their problems locally, they are forced into co-operation and quite often that co-operation never comes.

Cabinet alone establishes these boards. It is not done with the help of municipalities. Cabinet has the power to establish the board. The Minister even determines the number of board members. The Minister appoints the Chairman. And if we just want to change for a minute and look at hypothetically perhaps what might happen if the Minister sets up a number of regional boards throughout the Province, the Minister determines the number of people on each board and the Minister selects the Chairman, or Chairperson, of each board. What if the Minister did what the Member for Conception Bay South did during the recent municipal elections and went out and actively got involved in trying to get her own people involved on council? What would happen if the Minister appointed people solidly of his political stripe, who would not rock the boat even if they thought it was necessary, who would kowtow to the Government? What would happen if we had a whole number of little fiefdoms out there, with Sir Eric at the top, and they all coming in paying homage and supporting the Government regardless of what the

Government did?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: It is not a possibility? I assure you it is a very, very solid possibility. Because what we are really doing here is giving the Minister of Municipal Affairs complete control over what goes on right across the Province; because he is handpicking the Chairpersons of all the regional boards, he is determining the number of people on all these boards. And if he were any kind of person except who he is, I would say I would be extremely worried about it. But, then, when I think that the Minister himself is not going to have the final say in this, I do get extremely worried about it. Because we could have all the municipalities right in the palm of the Government.

Of course, the municipalities are a little too smart for that and they are not going to go along with it, I am quite sure. Because they see what is coming down the pipe now. They see the Department of Municipal Affairs and they see this Government gradually trying to slough off all the responsibilities to the different agencies in the field: to the school boards, to the libraries boards, to the hospital boards, and now to the municipalities. They will abdicate their own direct responsibilities to the people and say to them, it was not us who raised your taxes. Maybe we did not give the municipality, maybe we did not give the school board, maybe we did not give the hospital board the money that is needed, but, I mean, they are the ones who make the decision so do not talk to us, talk to your local board, talk to your local

municipality.

And who gets stuck in the middle? The municipality in this case gets stuck in the middle. The regional board: You are now well organized. You have a large geographic area. You have x number of taxpayers. Tear down your three firehalls and build one. You have a waste of money out here. You do not need your two recreation centres, just develop one. If you do not have the money to support them all, well, then, that is your problem, do not talk to us. And this is exactly what this Government is trying to do, centralize, regardless of what effect it might have on people, especially when we deal with people in rural Newfoundland.

I am not sure whether the Minister is aware of it or not, but scattered throughout this Province we have a number of small, some of them very small, communities, some set off geographically to themselves, some in an area where amalgamation could be successful. But regardless of where they are geographically, we have some small communities, exceptionally small in some cases, which have as many facilities, as many necessities along municipal lines as anywhere in the Province. Some of them are better off in relation to services than the larger centres. And because they are well organized and because they have a history of contributing and because they have a history of taking advantage of different programmes, they have services to compare with St. John's or Corner Brook or Gander or anywhere else. And they pay a fair amount less. And they are paying their own way in a lot of cases. We may have others that are not paying their own way, but

there are those examples out there of how it can be done. So bigger is not always necessarily better. Bigger quite often, and we can go to schools or we can go to municipalities or anything else, all depends upon the individuals who are involved. And if you have good administrators, you have good organizers, you have good people, good volunteers in a lot of cases, then whether it is your fire brigade or its your council or its your school board or your small school, you have -

An Hon. Member: Small is beautiful.

Mr. Hearn: Small is beautiful a lot of times, and it very practical a lot of times, and it is very economical a lot of times.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) philosopher (inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: Not always. Sometimes, you know, we do not see the forest for the trees, and sometimes it is good to philosophize. Because some of the people in this Province who are less aggravated, who have less to worry about in line of the taxes they pay, are the people who live in small communities, who work very closely together. And I can take any member into a few communities like that, communities of 300 people who have the services they need and who contribute, all of them equally, and share in the provision of the services to the individuals in that town or community.

So, consequently, I say to the minister, before he starts forcing areas to get together, he should start thinking carefully. And I say to municipalities they should look carefully at somebody bearing

gifts, because the towns of Grand Falls and Windsor saw what it was like to have somebody come bearing gifts, and they got quite a surprise when they opened up the package. In this case, it is the minister.

I mentioned that the minister had the power to pick, select the number of members on these regional boards; the minister had the power also to select the chairman. The minister appoints the board members from councillors nominated. Now the minister can ask for x number of nominees, and the minister, as undoubtedly the minister will do under direction, will take the nominees who he or she feels - he feels in this case, while he is still minister - undoubtedly will co-operate most with the minister and Government, and that is extremely dangerous. That is a lot of power to give one person, and perhaps it is unfair. And maybe I am being unfair to the minister, but the danger is there. And if the minister is not the person of principle everyone thinks he is - I am sure this minister is, but how much control does the minister really have, or how much does he have in this Government? Because if he has any, he has a lot more power than any other minister. Because everyone knows who runs the show in this Government. The ministers just do as they are directed.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: And the Member for Exploits should not say a thing about it, because the Member for Exploits has been told to sit and keep quiet and say nothing, or he will not get his promotion. He has already had his car taken away, and then he had his jeep taken away. I do not know what

else they are going to take away.

Mr. Matthews: (Inaudible) take the chain off his bike.

Mr. Hearn: They might take the chain off his bike the next time around.

Whatever powers these boards might have, the powers of the board are prescribed by the minister - no provision for consultation. So the powers being prescribed, the number of board members being selected just from nominations made to the minister, the chairperson being selected by the minister, what a chance for a setup! Then, as I said, the minister sloughs off his responsibility to the areas. When there is a shortage of funding and belts have to be tightened, the grants are cut and services are cut, where is the blame being put? Put on the boards. And who is going to say nay? Nobody. Because everybody is handpicked by the minister. If there was ever a set-up bill, Mr. Speaker, to enable Government to do what this Government wants to do, centralize, then this is the bill. And they are attempting to do it, and in doing it get as little flack as is possible, and doing this by making sure they have complete control over the local boards. It is a sham and a disgrace for the minister to be talking about oh, so much power in the hands of councils, and councils will have say. If that is the case, and if the minister believes it, and that is the way it should be where any amalgamation takes place, and I say again, it should not be forced amalgamation. But if the Minister intends to give the councils power, then put it in writing. The Minister might have every good

intention in the world. The Minister may not be the Minister in two months time; he might be the Minister of something higher. Any Minister who takes on a work load like this Minister deserves to move up. I do not know where you move up in this Government. I think perhaps the Minister is in the highest pinnacle that is there because looking around, anything else would probably be a downturn for him. But the Minister may not be the one in charge and he might have all the good intentions in the world, but as I say to him, once it is in writing then, of course, the law is the law, the act is the act. It will be interpreted literally. And who has all the power? The Minister, whoever that minister might be. So perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the Minister will - before they try to ram this through, and already we have been given notice that the Government intends to invoke closure, unfortunately, for the third time already in this session when only nine people have had a chance to speak to it yet. In fact, only eight had spoken when the Government gave notice of closure. Now, I presume what they are trying to do is to cut off debate so that people out around cannot really see what is entailed in this bill. What it is doing is taking away the powers that councils have. It is not giving areas more powers, it is taking away any powers that they might have. The powers will be vested not in regional boards, which will control the destiny of the small communities around them, it will be vested in the hands of the Minister who will tell the self appointed people on the regional boards what this Government wants done out around. I think people should be extremely wary of that. Hopefully, as I said, Mr. Speaker,

in the next few days as we continue to debate the bill, the Minister will look at changing it; will look at putting in the bill in writing the right for municipalities to have the power to make the changes necessary, but also to remember that in the implementation that forced amalgamation is not going to work. There is absolutely nothing wrong with having legislation dealing with amalgamation with regional boards perhaps where the people of the areas want it to happen. There are areas where we can be much better off if we co-operate. But it can be done through encouragement and promotion rather than by forced amalgamation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Simms: What do you mean had the question? Sure you are giving notice of closure. What is the point in us not debating it. If you are going to give closure, we will wait and see if you are going to give closure.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on this legislation, on this bill from a number of perspectives not the least of which is my own observations at the beginning and my own reflections at the beginning of this legislation, having had a chance to study it fairly thoroughly, having had a chance to serve on the committee for a time, having had a chance to sit at the public hearings that the committee held and heard the views of a number of representatives from all over the

Province. So, I think I have had a chance to reflect on the bill as good as most members if not better than most members. I would say that there are a few members on that side in that same category including the esteemed Chairman of the committee. But I will get to the committee a little later on in my remarks.

An Hon. Member: How long are you speaking?

Mr. Simms: I am here for quite a while.

Mr. Speaker, first of all if one reads this bill, if one reads the legislation and if one took the time to look at the current existing municipalities legislation, the Municipalities Act, one would have to ask the question: why, in fact, is this new act necessary at all? That, I think, is a question that would pop off the top of anybody's head if they read this bill, if they reviewed the current municipalities legislation, the bill and the law that are already in place. If one does that, Mr. Speaker, one will clearly see that the intent of this bill, the Regional Service Boards, is already provided for in many, many ways and in most respects under the current Municipalities Act. Let me give some examples just to further strengthen my argument. Provisions in this legislation for the preparation and content of regional budgets are very similar in the Municipalities Act and in this Act; very similar in that instance. Both Acts contain similar provisions, provisions for the preparation and the publication of financial statements and auditors reports. All of that is contained in the Municipalities Act already.

Secondly, statements concerning long term and short term borrowing, for example. If you look it is quite similar in both pieces of legislation, in both Acts, except that the regional service board legislation does not provide for issuance of bonds or debentures. That basically is the only difference. Mr. Speaker, the requirement for the preparation of the five year capital budget, the five year capital budget forecast, are basically the same in both Acts, in the regional services board and in the municipalities legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, as a fourth example, conditions governing the expenditure of money raised by guaranteed loans are similar in both pieces of legislation, except, again, that the regional services board does not provide for bond and debenture issues. I can go on, Mr. Speaker, but one would have to say, I think, if he or she read both Acts, the existing law in the Municipalities Act and this regional services board, you would have to ask the question, why is this Act necessary? In my own view there is really no need for this particular bill in its present form. I really honestly do not think that much thought went into the development of this particular piece of legislation, because, as I said, the intent of this legislation, and the legislative provisions of this bill are really similar, particularly to Part 3 of the Municipalities Act. Have a look at Part 3 of the Municipalities Act and I think you will find that there is much, much similarity in what is being proposed in this legislation and what is already in existing legislation. So, why is the Act necessary, that is the question? The current Act, the municipalities legislation gives

Government, including the Minister of Social Services, God help us, but he is part of the Government and we have no choice but to accept that, but it gives Government the right and the authority, all the right and authority they need to delineate regions around the Province, to appoint and to elect councillors, and to assign appropriate powers to regional councils. That is already in the municipalities legislation, and in that Act there is broad flexibility allowed in order to tailor and fit the needs of each council, or regional council. It addresses, and can address, the wishes of councils and municipalities in a particular region, or the residents. The only major, major difference is that under the Municipalities Act before regions can be delineated, before powers can be given to a regional service board, etc., etc., there is a requirement in the Municipalities Act that says there must be feasibility studies and public hearings under the Public Inquiries Act, and that, Mr. Speaker, is the glowing difference between this Act and the existing law, the Municipalities Act, that is the big difference. No feasibility studies, no public hearings. So again since there are so many similarities you have to ask the question, why is this Act necessary? If indeed one of the major differences and the only significant major difference at the outset is the fact that no hearings are required.

Well I say to you, Mr. Speaker, the major difference in The Municipalities Act and in this bill, The Regional Service Boards, the major difference and the substantive difference is in the arbitrary powers that are given in

this bill to the minister and to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. That is the substantive difference in this bill and the current municipalities legislation. And the powers have been alluded to by representations that we have received as a Committee on the road, the concerns that these people have about the powers that the Minister will have. Indeed I think the report of the Government Services Legislation Review Committee tabled by my hon. friend, the Member for St. John's South, who chaired that community said 'the following is a summary of the most common opinions', and the first one that he identified or the Committee identified was the bill as drafted would concentrate too much power in the hands of the Minister and the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

So the comment I made a moment ago is not simply my comment, it is the comment of the Committee chaired by the Member for St. John's South, including two other Liberal members, members of the Government, who made it clear this was the major concern or one of the major concerns and opinions expressed at the public hearings. Now, Mr. Speaker, that leads me to ask the question, why then did not the Committee make recommendations to address that particular concern? It is a reasonable question. You have identified it, the Committee identified it as a major concern, yet of the recommended amendments by the Government members, the majority on the Committee, because they were not all agreed to, including the minority, they did not include major amendments that would allay the concerns of people who expressed that opinion.

Now mind you the minority Committee did, the minority members on the Committee make other substantial amendments, an additional eight or nine or whatever it was to address the concern that most people put forth at those public hearings, that this bill gives too much power to the Minister, and to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. So the Committee recognized it, the Member for St. John's South, as Chairman, recognized the concern and the opinion that was expressed. However, there was nothing done about it. Nothing purposed to allay those major concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I had occasion, as I said, to sit on that Committee and during that point in time - what time did I start, Elizabeth? - during that point in time -

An Hon. Member: Sit down your time is up!

Mr. Simms: Oh, no, I say to the member, I am just starting - during that point in time we heard as I note from reading the Committee's report, I think it was twenty-one presentations, and I know there have been comments flicked across from time to time about saying, you know, there is another 380 or 400 communities or municipalities that did not attend the public hearings. Well that may very well be, and I do not think any of us on the Committee expected 400 municipalities to turn out, no matter how much concern their might have been. Nobody expected that kind of a turn out. But I would say that twenty-one presentations is a reasonably good turn out. Let us not forget that one of the major presentations we received as a Committee was from the

Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, and a lot of municipalities had assumed that the Federation was going to make a presentation and speak on their behalf, and they did. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, I will get to it in a moment, if you will read the brief presented to the Committee by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities they made certain recommendations that this Committee report did not address - did not address. The minority Committee report, I think, addressed some of them. I am going to get to those eventually, because I think we would all accept that the Federation of Municipalities does speak, to a certain extent at least, on behalf of the elected municipal governments in this Province. And if they make some recommendations which they feel are important and significant and seen as an improvement to the legislation, then we as legislators should listen to those people. And unless there is some major reason why we cannot pursue those amendments or those changes, we should move the changes, we should make the changes.

But it will be interesting to see if the Minister is prepared to accept amendments. I know that some amendments will be accepted; I have no doubt the amendments recommended by the Committee's report, the majority, I have no doubt that those amendments, for example, will be accepted by the Government. I have no reason to expect that they will not accept the amendments proposed by their own members on the Committee. Whether they will accept the amendments moved by the other members on the Committee is another question. But I cannot

for the life of me, if I could only find it here -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

I wonder if the hon. Member would just allow me a few minutes to introduce some people whom we have in the gallery.

Mr. Simms: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On behalf of all hon. Members I would like to welcome to the House of Assembly nine students from Cabot Collegiate, Bonavista, accompanied by their teachers, Violet and Wayne Lodge, and bus driver, Edgar March.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, you are not allowed to refer to people in the gallery and things like that during debate, so I probably will not, but I am almost prepared to let the Member get up for a few minutes and say a few words in the debate to allow his constituents an opportunity to hear him speak in the debate and attack the Opposition. I am almost tempted to do that, but under the rules I cannot do that just now, because I will lose my time.

An Hon. Member: Do it. Do it!

Some Hon. Members: By leave.

Mr. Simms: No. Well, the other thing is it interrupts your train of thought, if I were to do that. That is the other reason.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)
assuming you do not speak.

Mr. Simms: Oh, no, I cannot be unkind. I cannot be unkind. There are other things I could say, but I will not. The Member for Bonavista South is a fine gentleman and a fine individual.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simms: Unfortunately, he is a Member of the wrong political party. Other than that - Anyway, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I have no reason at all to believe that the amendments proposed by the Chairman of the Government Services Legislative Review Committee will not be accepted by the Government, no reason to believe it in the world.

For example, let us listen, just let us listen to some of the major recommendations made by the Committee, the majority members of the Committee, which are the three Liberal Members in the Government - the two Conservative Members on that Committee did not agree with all of these and wanted others.

Mr. Murphy: They did agree with them.

Mr. Simms: They did agree with these, I guess. There were no major objections, but there were a lot of others they wanted which the majority members would not give, so I expect the amendments to be accepted by the Minister in Committee stage.

For example, I cannot see the Minister or the Government neglecting to accept this very significant recommendation made by the Committee, and I refer to recommendation E in the Committee's report. They

recommend, Mr. Speaker, that the Government consider introducing amendments to provide for, E, that the word 'deleted' in subclause 17 (3) be replaced by the word 'debited'. Now, that is one of their major recommendations and I have no doubt - I have no doubt - that the Government will accept that amendment.

Here is another major one: That the deadline for submitting budgets be abandoned from December 31st to November 30th. I think they will accept that. I have a funny feeling the Government will accept that amendment.

Now none of those amendments have much to do with the major areas of concerns we heard - the major areas of concerns - but some of the other amendments proposed by the minority members on the Committee would do a lot, I think, to alleviate a lot of the concerns and opinions expressed by those people who attended our public hearings.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just before I get carried away with the time, I do not want to lose my opportunity to move an amendment.

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Simms: I want to move an amendment at the present time, in second reading of this bill, which, if in order, and I have no doubt Your Honour will rule it is in order once he has had a chance to look at it, that would then give me, I say to members opposite, another thirty minutes to speak in the debate, just so you would be aware of it and familiar with it.

Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, before I get on with the

rest of my comments, I want to move, seconded by the Member for Torngat Mountains, that all the words after the word 'that' be deleted and the following be substituted therefore: 'Bill 38, An Act Respecting The Creation Of Regional Service Boards Throughout The Province be not now read a second time, but that it be read a second time this day six months hence', which is the famous six month hoist.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Maybe we can recess briefly and check the amendment to see that it is in order.

Recess

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The Chair has ruled that the amendment put forward by the hon. the Opposition House Leader is in order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader speaking to the amendment.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, the amendment is, of course, that this bill did not receive enough thought and consideration when it was first put together in the view of the Opposition, and in view of the representations received from around the Province and so on, it was felt that the only responsible approach we could take as an Opposition is to give the public even more time to consider what is in this legislation, give the minister, in particular, more time to reconsider the approach that he has taken with this legislation,

and simply defer the second reading basically until next spring. There is no apparent urgency, and certainly when the minister introduced the bill on November 1, I think it was, there was no reference in his speech that we could find which addressed the urgency required, so thus the reason for the six month hoist.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking to that six month hoist amendment, obviously we are still dealing with the same topic and the same issue of the regional service boards legislation, and I want to say to the minister, for example, in his statements on November 1, when he introduced the bill - I think it was then, if not it was some other time when he and I were exchanging comments across the House with respect to the need for this legislation - the minister made reference to the Exploits Valley Regional Service Board. The minister will recall that no doubt, and I think his words were to the effect that the Exploits Valley Regional Service Board wanted this bill. The minister can confirm or deny if that was in fact an accurate quote of his, and I believe it was. Unfortunately, he is not paying attention to the debate, I guess, and cannot acknowledge for me, but I do not want to quote him wrong.

I was hoping I could get the minister's attention just for a brief second, because I do not want to quote him out of context or quite him inaccurately. But I believe somewhere throughout the course of the debate, either in his introduction or when he and I were exchanging comments back and forth, somewhere he made reference to the Exploits Regional Service Board, and that they wanted this bill. I believe it is correct to

quote him as saying that, in making reference to that. I do not want to say he said it if he did not say it, but I am quite sure he did. I was just hoping that he would acknowledge yes, he said that.

Mr. Gullage: May I ask him a question, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Simms: Yes. I give leave, sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

Mr. Gullage: I would have to check back with Hansard to see exactly what I said, Mr. Speaker, but certainly if I did not say it I probably should have, in the sense that the Exploits Regional Service Board requires the legislation so that it would have a legal corporate entity in place to enable them to borrow money in the name of a board that would represent the member communities, the three - two towns now - the two towns that are in place. So I am sure they would want the legislation. I cannot imagine they would not want the legislation, because I fail to see how they can proceed much further as far as developing the services that are required in the area, and the member knows what they are, without an incorporated board. It is virtually impossible to do so.

An Hon. Member: Is that true, Len?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: I hesitate to ask the minister has he read the brief presented to the Legislative Review Committee by the Board, presented by Mr. Terry Goodyear as

a matter of fact, the Deputy Mayor at the time, a member of the Board? Because if had read the presentation it would be fairly clear to him that they certainly were not all excited about this legislation. And I will go through some of the quotes for him just to make sure, to refresh his memory. Because if he has read it, he probably read it weeks ago, so I want to refresh his memory.

The other point I will make is this, and we asked the Exploits Regional Service Board, in fact, Committee members will recall, we asked directly the members of that board, when they made their presentation, if they wanted this legislation and their answer was that in their view, there was no particular reason to have this legislation for them, all they require, because they have operated fairly well for eleven years I think it is, but all they would require, and you are right they need to have some legislative authority, but they would be quite happy with a simple piece of legislation for their particular operation, their board, their regional service board that has been in effect for eleven years. And that was one of their main points. But is all-encompassing piece of legislation, which puts everybody in the same category, in the whole Province, is not required by the Exploits Valley Regional Service Board, and hopefully the minister will have to admit that.

Mr. Gullage: It is not just being done for them.

Mr. Simms: No, I realize that. But one of the main reasons it was done was because of the need for some authority for the Exploits Regional Service Board which,

perhaps, is one of the best examples of a regional service board that could operate in the Province. It is certainly one of the longest boards; I suppose Metro Board is considered to be a regional service board of some sort, but the Exploits Regional Service Board is probably one of the best examples you could find. Here is what they had to say about this legislation - and I am making the point because the minister has said in the past they need this, they want it, and so on and so forth, and that is not quite accurate. Now, Mr. Speaker, it is important, of course, to give some brief background to the Exploits Regional Service Board, because of its experience. What happened was that in 1979, eleven years ago, a board was established called the Exploits Regional Water Supply.

An Hon. Member: How many?

Mr. Simms: Three towns, the towns of Windsor, Grand Falls and Bishop's Falls. And that is when they all began using a common water supply.

An Hon. Member: One water supply.

Mr. Simms: One water supply, yes, a common water supply. In 1979, those three communities started using a common water supply. They had a fairly elaborate intake system, they had sixteen kilometers of water main, and they had a chemical feeder building, which all, as a unit, had to be operated and maintained.

So, the creation of that original board in 1979, eleven years ago, was the initiative of the three towns, themselves. They did it themselves. They drafted up a constitution which specified what the financial input of the

individual communities would be. A short time later, they changed the name of the board to the Exploits Regional Service Board, because their mandate was broadened to not just deal with water supply, but to include incineration. And, Mr. Speaker, in 1989, again their mandate was expanded to help the region in its efforts to obtain a sewerage treatment operation plant for the three communities. So, it is called the Exploits Regional Service Board, in place eleven years, with a good deal of experience.

The board is made up of two elected representatives, councillors, from each of the three communities, and those six members, each year elect the chairperson. They decide who the chairperson, from within their own ranks, will be. They draw up a budget each year, and each town is billed for its share on a per capita basis. That is the way they deal with it. The Town of Grand Falls acts as the administrator of the board, because - the member asked earlier - the board is not incorporated and cannot legally enter into agreements with the provincial Government, and so on.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) municipal.

Mr. Simms: Yes. So, by agreement, the Town of Grand Falls handle all the administration. There is no remuneration for members of the board, separate from anything they are entitled to as a councillor, nor is there any remuneration, by the way, I might say to the Member for Placentia, who shows some interest in this, there is no pay or remuneration for the person who acts as the

administrator. That person happens to be the Town Manager for the Town of Grand Falls.

Mr. Speaker, I will not go through all the details of the Exploits Regional Service Board's presentation, but I would suggest to member's opposite they might want to get it. Because they clearly have made the point they don't need this legislation. They need legislation for themselves, but they don't need this particular legislation. And they had the same concerns as expressed by other municipalities at the public hearings throughout the Province with respect to the legislation. Because we did press them and say, 'Yes, we understand you need some legislative authority, and all that. What about this particular piece of legislation? Can you give us your views on that?' And they did.

I just want to conclude with recommendations made by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, which I commented on briefly earlier on in my comments. I mentioned some of the major recommendations they had made which have not been addressed by the Committee, and which I hope the Minister will consider when we get into Committee stage on this particular bill. One of the major recommendations made by the Federation of Municipalities is that a further subsection be added clearly setting out that the participation of municipalities be entirely at the discretion of the individual municipal councils. Now that is a recommendation of the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities. I do not see it in the recommendation of the majority report of the Committee. Now surely if the Federation of

Mayors and Municipalities, or whatever it is called, make that as a major recommendation, in fact it is the first one they make in their presentation, then that must be one that the Minister must consider. And hopefully he will when we get to Committee, so that we can move an appropriate amendment. They want to see a section added which says municipalities will only be required to participate if they so desire. In other words, they will not be forced to participate. Now, that is from the Federation of Municipalities. I am sure the Minister is aware of that.

An Hon. Member: Very much so.

Mr. Simms: Very much aware of it. But he obviously does not agree with the recommendation, or at least he has not given any indication of it to my knowledge, and the Committee has not made a recommendation to change it.

Moving to another recommendation which I do not think has been accepted, or there has been no indication yet that it has been accepted, is the recommendation that would allow the board to select a Chairperson from among their own members. Such as that exists now in the Exploits Valley Board. That is the second recommendation made by the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities in their presentation. So neither the first recommendation as an amendment, nor this second one as an amendment, that the members themselves chose their Chairperson, have been accepted, have they? I am not quite sure on the second one. No, it does not say. It is not recommended by the Committee, so maybe the Minister can address that and tell us why

he is not going to accept that, or if, in fact, he is. Simply because the Committee did not recommend it, the Minister still may be prepared to accept such an amendment in Committee. We will have to wait and see. But we have no indication from him that he is prepared to do it. About the one person I can find, or at least one in particular who took the time to write the Committee, who disagreed with the suggestion that the Chairperson should come from among the elected councillors on the board, is the outgoing Mayor of St. John's, Mr. Murphy. There was some comment made, I think by Andy Wells, who made the presentation on behalf of the city, that maybe Mr. Murphy is looking for a job as the Chairperson of this particular Committee down the road - who knows? Anyway, the point is that was a major recommendation not accepted.

Mr. Speaker, there were also a number of others I want to get to, but I know my friend for St. John's east Extern - these are important amendments, and hopefully somebody else will pick up on them later on tonight, or whatever. There are a whole number of amendments proposed by the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities that have not been addressed.

Mr. Hogan: You were so anxious to speak for a long while, why are you in a hurry now?

Mr. Simms: Because my friend for St. John's East Extern, I say to my friend for Placentia, will not be able to join us tonight as we sit here in this hon. House. I am assuming members opposite are aware that we will be sitting in this hon. House tonight. They are not aware? Well, I have just told

them. I have stolen the thunder from the Government House Leader, I guess. My understanding is that the Government House Leader intends to force another sitting tonight on the members of the House. My friend from St. John's East Extern will not be able to be here, and I want to give him a chance because he is an experienced personality at the municipal level, being a former Mayor and all the rest of it. I want to give him thirty minutes or so to speak to this bill. We will have lots more people to talk later on tonight, and we will have a chance to get back at it then. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Parsons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to be able to say a few words on Bill 38, the Regional Service Boards Bill, Mr. Speaker. I suppose I will have to go back and say what my concerns are, as this bill is presented in the House. I, in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies started, Mr. Speaker, in a minor way to become part of a municipal government. I think it was in 1970, Mr. Speaker, that we first tried to incorporate the town of Flatrock and without success. We met with some opposition and people were reluctant to even think about the taxation aspect of it. Also depriving themselves of some of their lifelong rights and privileges, I suppose, which really after the fact did not materialize. But people were leery about it. They looked at it as another form of government that would be there perhaps in some instances to hinder rather than to

help.

But, Mr. Speaker, between 1970 and 1975 we sort of kept the thing ongoing and in 1975 we were incorporated. And, Mr. Speaker, needless to say, although sometimes within these past fifteen years I have looked at it with some disdain and saying, I wonder if I made the right move, because I suppose I played a leading role in Flatrock's incorporation.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs reminds me, that I played a major role too with the municipal boundaries. And I agree that I did but I would also would like to go on record here, Mr. Speaker, as saying that the present Minister of Municipal Affairs even played a more major role than I did. Because he was the one man commissioner. And I must say to him though with all due respect that many of the recommendations that I made and many of the houses that we visited and people who we talked with - he did accept my recommendations. And the other thing, Mr. Speaker, in a more jovial light, although we did it in a very serious manner - we had a lot of fun in some instances in what was related to us by some of the senior citizens as it pertained to boundaries. And I think that most people here will understand what we are talking about. There is a lot of history; tradition and old anecdotes and whatever especially in rural areas of Newfoundland.

But, Mr. Speaker, from Day 1 I became the Mayor of Flatrock which was a job I held for ten years.

An Hon. Member: Mayor for ten

years, were you?

Mr. Parsons: Yes. Mayor for ten years. And, Mr. Speaker, I often look back at things that have happened for me in my life span and say, I think that becoming Mayor of the town of Flatrock was perhaps one that sticks uppermost in my mind. Because I think there were 450 people who voted in that election and when, naturally, the way it was done at that particular time, was the man with the highest vote became the Mayor. And I think there were 450 votes cast and I received all the votes except eleven. And there was one family who were anti-incorporation and they had eight in family, so I often wondered, the thing that worries me to this day, is who were the other three. Eight of them were the one family. I could never figure out who the other three were.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: The hon. Member for St. John's South is reminding me that there must have been three Liberals in Flatrock at that particular time. I, for the life of me, can't come up with the names. But, Mr. Speaker, that has changed. When I won the nomination for the present position that I hold now there were no dissenters at all in Flatrock. I received 100 per cent. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if those three people who voted against me at that particular time - perhaps they passed away, or I think, perhaps, I had enough of influence on them to change their minds.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, getting into a more serious vein. From the time that I started down there it always seemed to me that there was

someone proposing a regional type of government. And, Mr. Speaker, although today I am speaking to the amendment which calls for a six month delay in the implementation of this bill, Mr. Speaker, the six month respite or the six month hoist, as it was called by my hon. colleague from Grand Falls, would only be to me a little respite whereby Government could reconsider their options and reconsider what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I am a firm believer, not because I am a Progressive Conservative Member, no matter which side of the House I would be on, and naturally there is only one side I could be on, but at any rate, Mr. Speaker, there is no way that I could conceive the idea of another tier, another layer, or another part, another Government organization. Mr. Speaker, this to me is a very nervous situation for many people out there. What we are creating, Mr. Speaker, is... say, we just go back to basics, and say there are certain people applying for a permit in a municipality. Right now the municipality has to make the decision whether or not to give that permit. Mr. Speaker, what you do with the regional authority is that that permit, if there was any dispute over issuing of the permit, could go to this regional body and this regional body would then make the decision.

Mr. Speaker, we are a Province of less than 600,000 people. We have municipal government, which in many instances is a new system of government to the people of this Province. Mr. Speaker, now what we are introducing is another tier of government. Where is the money going to come from to pay this other tier of government? And the Minister of Municipal Affairs and

anyone else in this hon. House can look at me today and say, look that is nonsense, there will not be any great amount of money spent with this regional authority. And I say that is hogwash. Hogwash, Mr. Speaker.

When you create something there is no way that you can stop that creation from snowballing. More bureaucracy that we do not need.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: And the bureaucracy costs money. Mr. Speaker, I will go down on record as saying today in this hon. House, that after this Bill 38 is passed and because of the numbers in the House, I do not think there is any way that we can defeat the bill. But it can be looked back in Hansard many years to come - I may not be here, I may be gone, long gone, and the people will be saying out there, look, we are paying for another form of government, another tier of government that we can ill-afford.

The other thing that annoys me, Mr. Speaker, and I just do not understand, cannot comprehend, is that if all those delegations of power goes out beyond the Minister's department certainly the Minister's department staffwise will have to be cut drastically because a lot of the work that was being done by the Minister's department will then be taken over by this regional council, the regional service boards.

So, Mr. Speaker, in essence, all the expertise that we have over in municipal affairs or a great number of them, there will be no need of them. Mr. Speaker, I also have to interject here is that in

some instances, from the experience that I had with the Department of Municipal Affairs, that some of the experts in that department, and I am not trying to be critical, but what I am saying is, as far as I am concerned, the truth, and other people have expressed it with the same sentiments that many of the people over there who came from not within Newfoundland, and I do not hold this Government responsible for that, I think it was done by all governments, but we had experts come in, and those experts were ill-advised. I remember distinctly at one meeting with the former Premier, two Premiers ago, when we had a meeting with the hon. Brian Peckford, when he was Minister of Municipal Affairs, and one of the experts from Municipal Affairs told us at that time that he was an expert in the field and we almost could not question what he was saying.

Mr. Woodford: Point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please!

The hon. Member for Humber Valley on a point of privilege.

Mr. Woodford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, in Question-Period, I asked the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture four questions. My first question, Mr. Speaker - I will not read the whole question, I will quote just the last part of it.

'Would the Minister now confirm that he has instructed the Newfoundland Farm Loans Board not to issue any loans to farmers who would want to increase their dairy herds until the study is finished,

and that this action by the Minister is especially hard in those difficult times?'

And, Mr. Speaker, the response from the Minister, and again I will only go down to the last part of it, I will not take up the time of the House and go into the whole answer. And in the last part of it said, Mr. Speaker: "And, furthermore I have given no such instructions to the Farm Loan Board not to process loans from the dairy industry."

Now, Mr. Speaker, on the first question pertaining to a letter to the Farm Loan Board - I have that letter, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to quote just one paragraph. The letter is addressed to Miss Donna Kelland, Chairman of the Newfoundland Farm Loan Board. I quote one paragraph: in view of the circumstances I hereby instruct your Board to defer all applications from licenced dairy producers who are applying for a loan to increase their herd sizes over last year's level. This is to be effective as of October 3 1990 and until such time as the review is completed. All other matters will proceed as normal.

An Hon. Member: Signed by?

Mr. Woodford: Signed by Graham Flight, Minister of the Department of Forestry and Agriculture. Not only is the letter dated October 19 requesting that this be done, Mr. Speaker, but it was also asked to be made retroactive until October 3.

Mr. Speaker, my second question to the Minister was: 'Would the Minister confirm for the House whether he has also written the FCC, the Farm Credit Corporation, asking them to do the same, and

outline his reasons for doing it? I ask the Minister if he understands the drastic implications this could have for the dairy industry in the Province?'

Now, Mr. Speaker, again I will table the copy of the letter sent to FCC. Mr. Terry Jones, Farm Credit Advisor, Farm Credit Corporation. And I quote just from one paragraph, Mr. Speaker: in view of these circumstances I am requesting the cooperation of the Farm Credit Corporation in this matter. Specifically I am requesting your Corporation to defer all applications from licenced dairy producers who are applying for a loan to increase their herd capacity over last year's level. To be effective as of October 3 1990, and until such a time as the review is completed.

An Hon. Member: Signed by?

Mr. Woodford: Signed by Graham Flight, Minister of Forestry, and Agriculture.

So I will table those two documents, Mr. Speaker, for your perusal. And I would also like to say at this time, Mr. Speaker, that if I as a Member cannot get up in this House and ask questions of Ministers opposite regardless of their Department, and can't expect an honest and forthright reply in answer to my question then as far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that is wrong. That breaches my privileges as a Member in this House. No Member who gets up on this side of the House and asks a question - not one expects a member on the other side to mislead them in any way, shape or form. If the Minister does not want to answer it, he does not have to; if he wants to look into

it further, he can; but, if he answers it, and in answering, misleads the member and the members on this side of the House, to me, Mr. Speaker, that is a breach of my privileges as a member, and not only mine, but the privileges of each and every member, all members in this House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if Your Honour so rules that I have established a prima facie case, I would move the necessary motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I would say, before I get into dealing with the point of privilege, that I had intended to rise at the earliest possible opportunity to serve notice on the House that I may have inadvertently - it depends on how you interpret the member's questions - I may have inadvertently, and certainly, unintentionally, provided what one could argue was wrong information. And I say to Your Honour, I intended, at the earliest possible opportunity, and I was thinking in terms of tonight, when the House rose, when I knew whether or not I had inadvertently - because, Mr. Speaker, obviously, there is no point of privilege.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Flight: No! Mr. Speaker, I have the hon. member's question. The hon. member's question is

this: Would the Minister now confirm that he has instructed the Newfoundland Farms Loan Board not to issue any loans to farmers who would want to increase their dairy herds, until the study is finished?

Now, Mr. Speaker, here is what the letter said: 'In view of these circumstances, I hereby instruct your board to defer all applications -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Flight: - to defer all applications from licenced dairy producers who are applying for a loan to increase their herd size over last year's levels.' Now, Mr. Speaker, instructions with the letter - it was understood, and, of course, we can get more letters if we have to, that any applications into the system prior to October 3rd when the review started, were to be dealt with normally and be allowed to flow; and, even if there were applications made to increase herd size, what the letter was instructing the two farm loan boards, Mr. Speaker, was to defer all applications from anybody - and, to deal with this point of privilege, it might take a little explanation.

There were certain producers in this Province, Mr. Speaker, who were sitting on quota three times what they were producing. For years, Mr. Speaker, there were producers - and let me give an example number: Somebody with a 750,000 litre quota had been producing less than 200,000, and this was going on. So, Mr. Speaker, the advice from the Quota Allocation Committee and the Chairman of the Agriculture -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, nobody interrupted the hon. member when he was making his point, and I ask for protection for the few minutes I have.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

An Hon. Member: Nobody interrupted him.

Mr. Flight: Nobody interrupted! I consider this a serious matter, Mr. Speaker. I have never misled, nor do I ever intend to mislead this House. And I have no reason to mislead the House and to have a point of privilege on an answer, for what appears to be a tempest in a teapot. I would have stood, Mr. Speaker, and any hon. member knows, as soon as I was aware that I may have inadvertently - depending on how one interprets the question, Mr. Speaker; and I am pointing out the reason that the two Farm Loan Boards were told to continue to process applications that were not received prior to the setting up of the study. It was because, Mr. Speaker, the Agricultural Products Marketing Board was concerned -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Flight: - that people who had sat on quota for years would suddenly rush out and buy the cattle they required, and the Farm Loan Board was instructed not to take any applications from licenced farmers to increase their herd size over last year.

And, if you want to deal with the question, Mr. Speaker, whether or not the question, itself - and the question was straight - not to increase any loans to farmers who would want to increase their dairy size. The letter says: I would instruct your Board to defer all applications. Not to - I did not tell them not to issue loans, I said, defer applications, and deal with the applications and issue the loans after the review is complete if that particular producer is so entitled. I mean, that is the issue, Mr. Speaker, so it is -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: So, Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any more defense needed to prove there is no point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I did not deliberately -

An Hon. Member: Games.

Mr. Flight: They are playing games, really. I may have inadvertently -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Flight: It depends, Mr. Speaker, on the interpretation one puts on the letter. It depends on the interpretation that one puts on the question asked and the answer given. My last point, Mr. Speaker, to -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: It deals with the question asked and therefore deals with the point of privilege. And this letter went out on November 20, a week ago, to Mr. Eric Rumbolt, Chairman of the Newfoundland Milk Marketing Board: thank you for your recent letter outlining your comments with

respect to my letter of October 19 to the Newfoundland Farm Loan Board and the Farm Credit Corporation. The intention of my letter was not to prevent producers who had plans in place or applications in prior to October 3 from carrying forth. Producers who can document to us that this was the case, their applications will be considered in the normal manner. It has always been the intention to maintain the status quo for the duration of the review.

The Milk Marketing Board knew that, the Loan Boards knew it, everyone involved in the dairy industry knew it. And this is still our intention. Please be assured that any request to the Farm Loan Board will be reviewed on an individual basis to decide if the application should be deferred until the review is complete or it should proceed as normal.

So, Mr. Speaker -

Some Hon. Members: Resign, b'y, resign!

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Some Hon. Members: Resign!

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. Flight: There was no intent, Mr. Speaker, to mislead the House. Depending how one judges the tenor of the question and then one judges the answer one will see that there was no intent to mislead the House. And in the event there had been, Mr. Speaker, it was my full intention at the first possible opportunity to outline for the House that I may indeed might be perceived as inadvertently and certainly not

deliberately placing wrong information on the table.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, if ever there was an example of a Member being caught out in this House we have just witnessed it here today.

The minister, in answering the question today during Question Period, challenged the Member for Humber Valley to produce the letters. The minister was that confident he had not written the letters. And anybody who reads the transcripts - which I am sure Your Honour will do in making Your decision - reads the transcripts of Question Period and then reads the letters, will clearly see that the member misled the House. There is not much question about that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I want to point out for Your Honour's edification some quotations that I hope will help Your Honour in making a decision on this very serious and important point of privilege.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the minister just admitted, himself said, that he did not mislead the House, he may have been playing games. That was his own quote. Mr. Speaker, if playing games is not interfering with the ability of a member to do his job in this House, by not answering questions properly, then I don't know what is a good example of contempt of Parliament.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago members opposite

pleaded with us to be quiet. Could members, especially frontbenchers, do the same thing?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Furey: (Inaudible) be honest.

Mr. Rideout: That is what we are talking about, honesty, truth to the House.

Mr. Furey: That is why you are at (inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: I wonder why you slipped 20 per cent?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

The Chair wants to remind hon. members that when the Speaker stands, there should be silence in this House.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All we have seen is an example of hypocrisy, I guess, again. They were there two minutes ago telling us to be quiet and now they are yelling and shouting.

Let me make my case, Mr. Speaker, if I might. I want to refer Your Honour to Beauchesne, 6th Edition, paragraph 26(2) on page 12, and remind Your Honour, who needs no reminder, of course, that 'A question of privilege is a question partly of fact and partly of law - the law of contempt of Parliament...'

Let me refer Your Honour to paragraph 92, page 25, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite can try to slough it off as long as they want, but will I tell you this is

one of the more serious points of privilege I have ever seen. Paragraph 92: "A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a Member must relate to the Member's parliamentary duties..." That is a valid point of privilege, interference with a Member, in respect to his parliamentary duties. And if ever we saw an example of that, Mr. Speaker, it was today. The Member for Humber Valley asked legitimate questions in Question Period. And the answers were given, but they were given falsely. It is quite clear. So paragraph 92.

Paragraph 69 I refer to Your Honour to help your Honour in making this decision, which I think he will see quite clearly is a case. Should members opposite decide to get up and argue that this is a difference of opinion or something of that nature, let me read paragraph 69. "The Speaker, has reminded the House, "It is very important ... to indicate that something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless the comment actually impinges upon the ability of Members of Parliament to do their job properly." Again, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear. The answer given by that minister to that member today impinges upon his ability to do his job. If he is not going to get the right and truthful answers, how can he do his job? How can any of us expect to do our jobs?

And finally, Mr. Speaker, paragraph 97, where it says, and I will conclude with this, because that is three references, which I think might be sufficient. Paragraph 97 says, "The Speaker

has stated: "While it is correct to say that the government is not required by our rules to answer written or oral questions, it would be bold to suggest that no circumstances could ever exist for a prima facie question of privilege to be made where there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers..." Mr. Speaker, I think the Member for Humber Valley has very clearly proven that there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers. The minister has not gotten up and apologized, he has not gotten up and said that he did not deliberately try to deceive members, he said, 'I was playing games'. That is what he said, Mr. Speaker. That is what he said a few minutes ago.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simms: So, Mr. Speaker, obviously the way for the government is to get up -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

Mr. Hogan: (Inaudible) the House.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, did you hear that? That is another point of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, obviously the best way for the Government -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Simms: Obviously the best way for the Government to try to defend itself from this indefensible act is they shout, yell and interrupt, as they are

doing now, interject, or to get up and make some argument that this is a difference of opinion and all the rest of it. But, Mr. Speaker, facts are facts and Beauchesne gives Your Honour, I think, lots of guidelines to allow him to make the same determination as the Member for Humber Valley has, and that is that his privileges as a Member of this House have been breached. And we would support any motion he would put forward, should Your Honour decide to rule in his favour.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is obviously not a point of privilege. The facts were explained by the Member for Windsor - Buchans. I find it interesting that the Opposition House Leader, when he reads his references tends to read the same two or three references to points of privilege all the time that never really have any bearing on the case in point, and he pronounces them with such dignity and such force that one assumes that he is actually saying something. But they actually have no bearing on the case in question. And not only that, Mr. Speaker, but he tends to take little parts of paragraphs. For instance, his last quote, on paragraph 97, he was trying to infer that this meant something other than what it actually does mean.

While is correct to say, and I will quote, Mr. Speaker, in its entirety, 'While it is correct to say that the government is not required by rules to answer written or oral questions, it

would be bold to suggest that no circumstances would ever exist' - and that is true - 'for a prima facie question of privilege to be made where there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers...' - he stopped there, as if deliberately attempting to deny answers was what this deal with it. It is not what the paragraph deals with at all, because it goes on to say '...answers to an hon. Member, if it could be shown that such an action amounted to improper interference with the hon. Member's parliamentary work.' So the question in point -

Mr. Simms: I read that.

Mr. Baker: No, you did not read that.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Baker: Check Hansard tomorrow and find out who is right.

Mr. Simms: I read it out.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

Mr. Baker: He stopped half way through, Mr. Speaker, to try to give an impression that something was said that was not in fact said. And there is no point in this stupid shouting across the floor; because it is simply a matter of checking with Hansard to see who is right.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) read it out.

Mr. Baker: And I am right. I am right!

Some Hon. Members: You are wrong.

Mr. Baker: Well, we can check and see. Let us not go, you know, it is my ball, no, it is my ball, that is childish.

Mr. Simms: Well, if you are going to make an argument, and accuse somebody, do it right.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I am telling exactly what happened, because I read along with the hon. Member and I know where he stopped, and he did not read the rest of it.

Mr. Simms: I did not stop, I read it.

Mr. Baker: Now, Mr. Speaker; the question here -

Mr. Tobin: I suppose you will go up now and try to change Hansard.

Mr. Baker: - has to do with a deliberate attempt to interfere, or whether this interfered with the Member's parliamentary duties. I would say to Your Honour that there was no interference with the Member's parliamentary duties; he can still go ahead and do all of his duties as he has done for the last number of years, and there has been no interference with his duties.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, in the answer that was given by the hon. the Minister of Forestry, he indicated he had given no instructions not to process loans for the dairy industry, and he has not given instructions not to process loans for the dairy industry. What he has asked is to simply, from the point of October 3 on, defer consideration of applications made after that point if the applications tend to increase the dairy herds. Now it was a very specific request. It

did not have an effect on loan applications that were already in progress that may in fact have increased dairy herds. It had no effect on that up to that point of October 3, it was simply a moratorium until the study could be done. And it was not simply cutting it off and people are never ever going to get loans and that kind of thing, so the hon. minister said, 'I have given no such instructions to the Farm Loan Board, not to process loans to the dairy industry, which, Mr. Speaker

An Hon. Member: He did not say that.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Baker: - is a correct statement. There is a deferral of some loans. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the minister's -

Mr. Warren: Come on! He told a lie, and that is it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

Mr. Baker: I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the minister's statement was correct, that in fact he did not instruct the Farm Loan Board not to process loans from the dairy industry. He did not do that. There was a very specific instruction to defer some of the loans.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, is that members opposite might argue that that is a fine distinction, but it is a very real distinction. Also, Mr. Speaker,

there is no indication that the member's ability to carry out his parliamentary duties were prevented. That he has been prevented from carrying out his parliamentary duties, there is absolutely no indication of that. So I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that on that basis there is no point of privilege.

Mr. Rideout: To the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition, to the point of privilege?

Mr. Rideout: To the point of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to speak to what I consider to be a very, very important point of privilege brought up by our colleague for Humber Valley. The first thing I want to say, Mr. Speaker, in response to the argument made by the Government House Leader is simply this: it is fundamental to the operation of any parliament, and this parliament is no exception, that members be able to accept without equivocation the truthfulness of a statement made to the House by any other member. That is fundamental to the operation of this place and every other similar place. If a member, in this case the Member for Humber Valley, cannot depend on the truthfulness of an answer, in this case by the Minister, then that member cannot fulfill any of his parliamentary duties. If any member of this House cannot trust the truthfulness of an answer given by another member, none of us can fulfill our parliamentary duties. That is fundamental to the operation of this place and this system, I say to the Minister.

Now, let me review briefly for the Minister what took place. The Minister of Forestry and Agriculture, in a very lame manner, tried to say it is the way you interpreted the question. Well, let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, directly from today's Hansard, the first question as related to the Newfoundland Farm Loans Board. The first question was, had the Minister instructed the Newfoundland Farm Loans Board not to issue any loans to farmers who would want to increase their dairy herds until the study is completed? - Until. That was the question, Mr. Speaker. The Minister skated around that by saying the member did not put that in this question, that the member had asked whether or not the Minister had asked to have loans stopped before the farm loan board. But 'until the study was completed' was specifically in the member's question.

Now specifically the minister's answer, Mr. Speaker. One must know the specific question and one must know the specific answer, and the specific answer is this: 'And furthermore' - the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture speaking - 'I have given no such instructions to the Farm Loan Board not to process loans for the dairy industry' - no such instruction.' That was question number one on the Farm Development Loan Board, Mr. Speaker. Question number two was on the Farm Credit Corporation of Canada, FCC, and the Member for Humber Valley said, I ask the Minister the same question. Has he written the FCC asking them to do the same, and outline his reasons for doing so? The Minister answered this, and these are his specific words, having been asked now for the second time whether he had written

the Federal Crown corporation to ask that loans not be approved. Here was the response. The Minister said, 'Mr. Speaker, unless the hon. member is aware of something that I am not aware of, I can say to him that there was no such letter.' Can you be any more definitive, Mr. Speaker? 'Maybe he should produce a copy of the letter and table it, because no such letter has been written, as far as I am concerned.' Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Humber Valley has taken up the challenge, and he has produced copies of both letters which indicate that the Minister has deliberately, yes, deliberately I can say that and we will put down the motion if the Speaker so rules, but the Minister has deliberately misled this House.

There are a couple of other points I must make, Mr. Speaker. The President of Treasury Board, the Government House Leader, in his rebuttal, on behalf of the Minister said that the Minister only asked for the deferral of some loans. Mr. Speaker, the letter to the Newfoundland Farm Loan Board said this, "I hereby instruct your Board to defer all, a-1-1, all applications - not some - for loan funding. The Minister said the letter to the Farm Credit Corporation only asked for the deferral of some loans. Mr. Speaker, I say to Your Honour and have here for Your Honour to pursue as evidence that the Minister in his letter said: I am requesting your corporation to defer all, a-1-1 applications, in other words you do not deal with any applications, they are all under deferral and they all must be deferred.

An Hon. Member: You are doing it again!

Mr. Simms: You said some.

An Hon. Member: You are doing it again.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

An Hon. Member: Read the rest of the sentence.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

Being it is after 5:00 o'clock, unless members want to call it 5:00 -

Mr. Simms: A point of privilege does not adjourn the House does it?

An Hon. Member: No leave.

Mr. Simms: I do not think you can interrupt a point of privilege.

Mr. Rideout: I do not think so.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. On we go.

Mr. Rideout: Now, Mr. Speaker, the member wants me to read the whole sentence, I will. 'To defer all applications for licenced dairy producers who are applying for a loan, to increase their herd sizes over last year's level. That is the case - the Minister was saying some.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simms: You said, some.

Mr. Rideout: Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to make one other point in this submission to you. Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of the Milk Marketing Board is it, it is called?

Mr. Woodford: The Newfoundland Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Rideout: The Chairman of the Newfoundland Milk Marketing Board, wrote the Minister on this particular matter regarding his letters dated October 19.

Mr. Matthews: He got copies of the letter.

Mr. Rideout: And he got copies of the letter. And the Chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, Mr. Speaker, said this to the Minister, it says, 'In our view those loan applications should be considered in the normal way. The Newfoundland Milk Marketing Board cannot fully support your instructions to the Newfoundland Farm Loan Board or your request to the Farm Credit Corporation to defer all applications for producers for loans to increase herd capacity over 1989 levels until such time as the review is completed.'

And here is the kicker from the Milk Marketing Board, Mr. Speaker, 'The Board feels that by fully supporting your instruction, the request to the mentioned financial institutions, the Newfoundland Milk Marketing Board could very well be leaving itself open to liable action by producers for any lost revenue that could have been realized from those loan approvals.'

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the evidence before this House that the Minister deliberately mislead this House in answers to those questions today. I want to bring to Your Honour's attention another similar situation which happened in this House. I do not remember the date, but I am sure we all remember the incident. Back a number of years ago when the then Member for Trinity North, who was Minister of Transportation

at the time, a colleague of ours, when that member told the House that he did not use a government vehicle to move a private boat. That is what was told to the House, Mr. Speaker, and we know what course of action was taken.

Mr. Simms: He said no.

Mr. Rideout: He said no. It was found that the Minister had -

An Hon. Member: How can you tie that together?

Mr. Rideout: It was found that the Minister had lied to the House, I say to the member!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: And he had no choice but to admit it. And this Minister has done the same. The evidence is on the Table. The evidence is before His Honour, and this Minister, Mr. Speaker, has no choice. He had two opportunities today to -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Do you mean to tell me the Minister cannot remember signing two letters only a couple of weeks ago? He had two opportunities today to admit that he did sign the letters; he had two or three hours this afternoon to come into the House and make amends if he was intending to make amends. Mr. Speaker, the Minister deliberately mislead this House and no member on either side of this House can operate if we cannot trust the word of the Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

It is unparliamentary to say that a member -

Mr. Rideout: Not yet, Your Honour, with respect.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members that I have heard sufficient and I will ask the hon. the Leader of the Opposition if he could clue up, please.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I will quickly bring my remarks to a conclusion. But it is up to Your Honour to decide whether it is a prima facie case. We are making the charge; we are making the allegation, and the allegation and the charge is that the Minister deliberately mislead this House in answers given in this House today. And by so doing, that Minister infringed on the rights and privileges of every member of this House to do their job, the job that they were elected to do. A Minister does not have to answer, Mr. Speaker, but when a Minister answers or any other member speaks it must be the truth, and the evidence here is that it was not the truth and we are prepared to move the appropriate motion if Your Honour so rules.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The debate has dragged on considerably on this issue. I think the Chair has heard sufficient, but we have to allow the Government House Leader to speak. There have been no new points raised that I can see, but I will allow the Government House Leader to clue up very quickly please.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just very briefly because we are past five o'clock and it is a serious matter that's brought up

and I understand that on points of privilege the clock does not matter.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a lot of smoke and mirrors, shouting and screaming, as if the louder you bawl the more correct your position is. I do not intend to get involved with that and I felt I should apologize for my interjection to the Leader of the Opposition but I could not really let him get away with doing exactly the same thing that the Opposition House Leader did with Beauchesne. And that is read half a sentence, he - and I apologize to him for doing this, Mr. Speaker, - he read half a sentence and he said, I hereby instruct your board to defer all applications, and then he stopped, as if that was the intent of the letter.

And the intent of the letter was to say: from licenced dairy producers who are applying for a loan to increase their herd sizes over last year's level. Which is a restriction which goes back to the original point that I made. That what happened is: the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture has instructed the Loan Board to defer - not cancel - to defer some loans. And some loans being -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: Well, if the hon. Member does not understand what he reads let me explain it to him. Not all loans, but some loans. And specifically, these loans. Okay? The loans that have to do with increasing the dairy herd size. But not all loans.

The answer that was given -

Ms Verge: Read all the question.

Mr. Flight: The question was to defer applications.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

The Chair has stated that unless there are new points - what hon. Members have been doing for the longest time is debating the issue as if there was a point of privilege. The point of privilege is just to state how the Member was interfered with, and once that is made then the Chair will make a decision. And now we are engaging in debate, so I would ask the hon. Government House Leader to please clue up quickly.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of what the breach of privilege is, I am trying to get a handle on what it is. I am assuming that Members opposite are claiming that there was some interference with the ability of the Member from Humber East to carry out his Parliamentary duties. I understand that is the argument that is being made.

Mr. Speaker, if that is the argument then I would say to Your Honour that there is no way that this interferes with the Member doing his Parliamentary duties. Beauchesne, paragraph 24, in terms of a definition, indicates that Parliamentary privilege has to do with Members being interfered with in such a way that they could not discharge their functions in this House.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here in essence is a difference of opinion

-
Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: No, a difference of opinion concerning an answer given to a question. The Minister has indicated, and I have read out from Hansard for Your Honour -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. Baker: The answer given by the Minister at which he said: furthermore I have given no such instructions to the Farm Loan Board not to process loans in the dairy industry. Now, I say to Your Honour that is a correct statement, there is no instruction to stop all loans to the dairy industry. I have the letters here in front of me. The hon. members have the letters.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, this is why I was dealing with that sentence in the letter when Your Honour interrupted. I know it seems that the argument is going back and forth but the key point is, when the Minister said I have given no such instructions to the Farm Loan Board not to process loans in the dairy industry he was in fact telling the truth, because the letters refer to specifically deferring some loans to the dairy industry. I am talking about the answer. The question is whether the answer is correct or not. Now, I am willing to admit that the Minister skirted around the answer, and in which parliament in the world would you find a Minister who skates around an answer to a question being charged with contempt of parliament? It happens every single day in every

Parliament in this country during Question Period, Ministers skate around answers sometimes. It happens every single day and if that is the crime, Mr. Speaker, there is obviously no point of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The Chair has heard enough but we are going to reserve a decision on it until a little later until I get a chance to look at all of the submissions by hon. members and we will do that as quickly as possible.

Mr. Simms: On a point of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege, as this is the only way to deal with it right now. During his presentation the Member for Humber Valley tabled the two letters that we are talking about here, and he was asked to do so by the Minister in Question Period, as a matter of fact. Because of the limbo we are in with respect to this ruling, the table, I understand, sent the letters back to the member and said they could not accept them. Just to clarify the matter, I was just going to say that the Minister himself referred to excerpts from the letter so he has to table them anyway, so Your Honour would need that evidence, I believe.

Mr. Speaker: We have not been able to find what proceeding we are in now, but we said we had to finish the matter of privilege, we have done so, and I ask hon. members to join me at seven o'clock.



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(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

Tuesday

27 November 1990

The House resumed at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the amendment that was proposed today by my colleague, the Member for Grand Falls, our Opposition House Leader, I would like to have the opportunity to rise in this debate again and speak on the amendment, or the motion as amended, and the negative effect this resolution will have on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I find it rather strange this evening, Mr. Speaker, a Mayor of one of the largest towns in this Province, Carbonear, and now the Member for Carbonear, could stand up in this House and try to take credit for being part of the Government that wants to remove public hearings from his constituents, and wants to remove the entire process that is now included in the municipal, what do you call -

An Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Mr. Tobin: Yes, I did. I did pay attention to what you said. I can honestly say, Mr. Speaker, that there is no reason why anybody should try to associate themselves with a Government that wants to muzzle public input from the people of this Province.

Every jurisdiction and everybody in this Province right now has the right under the Municipalities Act to do exactly what the regional services bill can do, except there will be public hearings and feasibility studies. The major change in this bill is the change of public hearings and feasibility studies. Mr. Speaker, we have

seen it now three times this session where the Government has decided to bring in the gag order, have decided to implement closure in this House, and now why are they changing this bill. I guess it is the same type of closure being implied and implored upon the people of this Province that is now put on the Members of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, let me say to the Member from St. John's South, who should know about this bill because he was part of it and he heard several times the Government should not remove public hearings from this Public Hearings and Feasibility Studies. The last time I spoke in this debate, Mr. Speaker, I highlighted some of the things that had already been said by people throughout the Province as it relates to it.

An Hon. Member: You are ignoring (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: I am ignoring you. Mr. Speaker, what has some of the Council said about this. They said this document is insulting to every elected councillor in this Province, as it implies incompetence and a lack of capability. It leads us to question whether the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs and the Government of which he is a Member, have lost all confidence in the leadership of the elected officials. This is what councils throughout the Province are saying. Mr. Speaker, do you want me to read some quotes from your District.

An Hon. Member: Table them.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, I will table them, Mr. Speaker, I have an abundance.

An Hon. Member: Wait, you are not allowed to table them.

Mr. Tobin: You are not allowed to table them. Mr. Speaker, for example, the Town of Peterview, whose district is the Town of Peterview in Exploits. It leaves the door open to allow the Minister to amalgamate towns without any input from residents or councils of the area, as is now the case with amalgamation process under the Municipalities Act. Even though that may not be the intent for this process, this proposed legislation, if passed in its present form could be taken out of context in the areas that we have outlined.

An Hon. Member: (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: What is that? Yes, I do have them for your district, Mr. Speaker. I got it from Rocky Harbour. What district is Rocky Harbour in, Mr. Speaker? What district is Rocky Harbour in and what did they say about it? We have already discussed the bill forwarded to council and remain convinced that this bill, similar to amalgamation, would not be an improvement to the system of Municipal Government now in place throughout this Province. This is what they said in Rocky Harbour, Mr. Speaker.

Whose district is the Town of Mount Moriah in? I wonder who represents Mount Moriah, Mr. Speaker, and would the Member like to know what they say? Do you know what the Town of Mount Moriah said about this bill? We opposed amalgamation. We oppose regional service boards. If this regional board is appointed we may as well do away with all municipal councils. That is what the Town of Mount Moriah had to say, Mr.

Speaker, and we will oppose regional service boards.

If this regional board is appointed they may as well do away with all municipal councils. That is what town of Mount Moriah had to say Mr. Speaker, as well as other places throughout the Province. - You do not know, may be the Premier will take you on a tour of his district. - Mr. Speaker, and the town of Badger's Quay, Valleyfield, Poole's Island, the town of Steady Brook on amalgamation. We can go through this, the town of Placentia, very detailed document as well as all of the other places. The town of Fortune, town of Small Point, Broad Cove, town of Old Perlican, the town of Logy Bay, Middle Cove, Outer Cove. We have a list of councils here who have made representations to us to try to fight - Rocky Harbour, yes Mr. Speaker - try to fight this Government from bringing in another form of amalgamation through the process. We have and the Chairman of the Government Service Committee who had the hearings on this, realizes and knows full well Mr. Speaker, that presentations were made to him, even though he refused to travel to the Burin Peninsula, refused to go down there when they wrote and asked him.

Mr. Speaker, what did some of the presentations made to council say? We object to any proposal being forced upon us. We believe in the principal of democracy and the consultant process, especially when such a proposal has the potential to impact so forcefully on the people of our town. These are some of the things that were said Mr. Speaker. The question must also be asked how regional service boards will affect

employees of the towns serviced by a regional board. The proposed bill states in Section 9 that the board may be responsible for such things as the construction and operation of water and sewer systems, waste disposal systems and any other service designated as regional in nature. It follows then that the board must have capable trained staff available to carry out that mandate. If this is the case, the present staff employed in towns for example, to maintain the water and sewer system becomes redundant and are no longer required by the towns thus with the implementation of the regional service boards, and layoff of employees becomes a real possibility. Mr. Speaker that is what some of the councils are saying in this Province about this bill.

What did the other councils say, Mr. Speaker? Let me state that our town is not happy with the proposed bill nor with the methods employed in formulating and drafting this document. Is the Government, Mr. Speaker, going to listen to these councils throughout the Province that have made these statements? Is the Government prepared, Mr. Speaker, to listen to these documents that have been so forcefully put to the committee? What about the recommendations of the committees they have met? Is Government going to enact them? Is Government going to enact them in the bill, Mr. Speaker? These are the questions that have to be answered. That is the type of contempt, this Government cannot afford to show to the Legislative Review Committee of this Assembly nor to the people who have spoken for basically every council in this Province. I mean how arrogant. How arrogant can this

Government really get? How arrogant, Mr. Speaker, is this Government as it relates to what is going on? Why is the Minister of Municipal Affairs trying to force this on the people? Is it not amalgamation through the back door? Why is he removing the public hearings? Why are they removing, Mr. Speaker, input from the public, throughout the Province? That is the only difference between the existing Municipalities Act and the one that they are now proposing under regional service. It is to deny the people of this Province the right to have public input into such a piece of legislation. That is what is going on in this Province today. It is like some sort of a systematic approach by this Government to gag the Legislature by imposing, for the third time in this session, never heard it before Mr. Speaker in the history of Newfoundland as a Province, or as a colony, three times in one month, the fourth time this session, and what are we debating tonight? What are we debating tonight? We are debating, Mr. Speaker, an amendment to a piece of legislation that is going to gag the people of this Province by the elimination, Mr. Speaker - and the Minister of Social Services should be more concerned about the fire trap he had set up the weekend, than he is about what is going on in this House today - the fire trap that he was responsible for the weekend. That is where the Minister of Social Services should be concerned. Children down there, Mr. Speaker, without fire protection - and he was so concerned. It did not take him long, Mr. Speaker, to change his colors of concern.

Let me get back to this Regional

Services Bill. The government has brought in closure four times this session. Four times this session, Mr. Speaker, and tonight they have brought it in again against the Bill that will force closure upon the people of this Province as it relates, Mr. Speaker, to the public hearings being eliminated, and the appropriate input from the public of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what is going on in this Province today, and it has to be said, Mr. Speaker, it has to be said. Let the members opposite go out to their constituents and explain how they can support a government that eliminates public hearings throughout this Province. Why do they want to deny the right of municipal councils duly elected Mr. Speaker, duly elected in this Province, to go and impose the type of closure and gag restrictions on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I can say something else. When the members opposite, particularly the back benchers who do not know it, become aware of the briefing that the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs gave to the Federation of Municipalities last week, as it relates to the structure of GMAG-

An Hon. Member: General Municipal Assistance Grants.

Mr. Tobin: Yes. That is right. I can tell members opposite that when you have to go back to your council and see taxes, in some instances, increasing by 200 to 300 per cent because of what is being forced by this Minister - you can shake your head - if they are going to avail of any government monies, they are going to have their tax up to a certain level, and it is going to be based

on the system of local taxation it is referred to.

An Hon. Member: Everybody has to pay their (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Yes, Mr. Speaker, everybody has to pay their fair share, but the revenue taxation, local revenue taxation as it is referred to, when they have to put that in place, and everybody's tax, per household - I wish the Minister of Municipal Affairs was here - but when everybody's tax per household has to reach a certain stage, under the new proposal - I know all about the briefing that was given last week; I know all about it - and when somebody sitting here in this Assembly, I can think, Mr. Speaker, of the Member from Carbonear, the Member from Placentia, and other people who know municipal governments, and know -

An Hon. Member: Eagle River too.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, Eagle River, that is another place.

An Hon. Member: And Stephenville.

Mr. Tobin: Well, Stephenville may gain from this new proposal. Stephenville may gain, Grand Falls, Gander, and some of these places may gain. But I can tell you that the Rushooms, and the Parkers Cove, and the Port au Bras, and the Fox Coves, and the Mortiers in my district, will not gain, no more than the Salmon Coves and other places, and the Jerseysides-

An Hon. Member: The Minister of Development (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and there is a lot the Minister will

not gain. When somebody has no service whatsoever, no water and sewer, nothing, Mr. Speaker, nothing. Then you are going to imply upon them a minimum of taxation of several hundreds of dollars in order to avail of any government money.

They are going to have to put up without having any government service, no water, no sewer, nothing and then the government of the day is going to tell them they have to put in a minimum of several hundred dollars taxation on the people. The Mayor of Eagle River is going to go back to his constituents -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) It is going to be okay.

Mr. Tobin: How? My colleague from Eagle River and others are saying they will vote against it. They will vote against it if it is brought in this Assembly. I hope he stands, Mr. Speaker, to his convictions because of what was told to the Federation last week, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: It is here.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, I know what was told to him. I have it in detail. I can tell you. I will be questioning the Minister too. It is time for the back benchers to ask it in caucus, ask the Minister what his preaching was to the Federation.

Ask, because I can tell this government that the briefing given - I can say to the Member for Eagle River and everyone else there and my colleague, the Member for Lewisporte, about several small communities and Bonavista South that if government puts in place the funding system that they

proposed to the Federation last week, the smaller communities in this Province will suffer. We will be finished. We will be wiped out in terms of government money.

Not only that, I tell you something else. In terms of some of the councils that may benefit from this new proposal if they are forced to amalgamate with some of the smaller councils beyond their boundaries, which is now proposed, where the tax base in these other communities is not as great. The average tax of several hundred dollars per household will decline and they will not kick in at zero out of several hundreds of dollars. I know what the figure is too, by the way. They will not kick in at zero after paying several hundred dollars and from that amount up to double that amount there will be a percentage increase. You will avail then of a certain percentage from government under their proposal.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. John's South says tell the people. I say to the Member for St. John's South that it is the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs who should tell the people. That is who should tell the people. He should tell his caucus because I know you will be upset with the proposal that has gone forth in this Province.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a lot more, that is only scratching the surface in this new municipal structure now under way. I can tell the members opposite that is only the beginning of - Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games, when I was Chairman. - I can tell the members opposite that is only the beginning of a new proposed

financial structure for municipalities throughout this Province. Is it fair? No, it is not fair. It is not fair, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Oh, listen now, are you going to tell me Isle aux Morts, are you going to go to the people of Isle aux Morts, Margaree, Rose Blanche and all of these places, and stand in front of them. Yes, you tell them they have to pay \$500 a household. If they have to pay \$500 a household that is fair, go down and tell them. Let the record show, and I hope Hansard picked it up that the Member from LaPoile is supporting that against his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I know exactly what I am talking about. I tell the Premier I am talking about the briefing your Minister and his officials gave the Federation last week, that is what I am talking about. Now you are going to wipeout the small councils in rural Newfoundland, that is what I am talking about.

It is a long way, Mr. Speaker, from the election platform of the Liberals, when they promised to bring in a water and sewer corporation throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was going to be and that was here some where, I have the election platform. I have it here somewhere, Mr. Speaker, when they were going to bring in an immediate study.

Mr. Speaker, I remember reading in the paper, along with my colleague for Grand Bank, when the Premier was up and introduced these two star candidates in the last election. I am sure my colleague

for Grand Bank remembers when the Premier stood on the stage and said at the time he wanted to introduce these two star candidates from the Burin Peninsula. Mr. Speaker, never before in the history of Newfoundland has the Liberals in Burin - Placentia West and Grand Bank lost a nomination fee until the last election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tobin: So much for his star candidates, but what the Premier did say - yes, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Member for Mount Scio-Bell Island about the bus ride he is going to get when the teachers get their hands on him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tobin: And I can also tell him the time is coming pretty quick when he is going to be called in front of the teachers of this Province, not his district, in the Province to explain his statement, Mr. Speaker. He will not be able to try to back out like he did a few nights ago and say that it was taken out of context and all of this. You will have to stand and account for your statements in this Assembly about the teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, before I got sidetracked by the Member for Mount Scio-Bell Island, I was talking about the statements. We kept, Mr. Speaker, we kept most of the newspaper clippings, my colleague for Grand Bank and I, in the last election campaign when the Premier said that every community would be involved in this would be able to avail of water and sewer, because of this new corporation he was setting

up. I am not sure but my colleague for Grand Bank probably knows some of the areas that he mentioned, when the Premier committed to set up this new corporation, water and sewer corporation, when he made the commitment up in Salt Pond.

Where is the study in 18 months? Where is the water and sewer corporation, Mr. Speaker? Where is it? It is where all the other election promises have gone. It is where all the hospital beds that were going to be opened have gone. It is where all the fish plants that were going to be successful have gone.

I can say that it is time, Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Members on the Government side, particularly the private Members of the Government side to stand up, and let their constituents know where they stand as it relates to this Government bringing in such harsh action, and never fulfilling any of the commitments they made as it relates to the last election campaign. I believe it is incumbent upon every Member of this Assembly to explain to their constituents where they stand.

It is not good enough for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to come in this House as he did when he introduced the Bill and make some statements that were not true, Mr. Speaker. The Minister said it is the intent to have the Regional Service Boards operate under the auspices of municipal councils. The intent is not to have it driven by the Province but under the auspices of the Province. Mr. Speaker, that is not the case.

The question has not been answered

by anybody as to why Government wants to remove public hearings. I hope when the Minister of Municipal Affairs gets up he will respond. Why does the Government want to abolish public hearings and feasibility studies? I think the House is owed an explanation. There have been a few speakers from the Government side and neither of them has addressed the reason why they want that removed.

Here comes the Minister who writes letters and forgets about them.

The Member for Carbonear stood today but he never explained why he supports or why Government is removing public hearings.

There are some letters that are now being researched as to when the Member for Carbonear wrote Mrs. Newhook when she was Minister, about some sort of shared jurisdiction. Do you know what he demanded - that the public have the right to have input in his letters. Now, what changes his mind today?

Yes, I can tell the Member for Carbonear quite clearly - but the Legislative Review Committee has made recommendations as a result of their hearings. I can tell you this Committee has tabled changes to this piece of legislation. Now is the Committee going to have to stand alone or is Government going to amend the legislation to show the changes that have been suggested. Is that public hearings? That is what is happening in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister, the man who set up the old fire trap, the old fire trap speaks again. Any minister, Mr. Speaker, worth his salt would not have a group of youngsters in a building that was

a fire trap over the weekend with no protection. That is where he is coming from. Talk to the officials in your Department, by the way, if you think what we are saying is wrong.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I know my time is just about expired on this piece of legislation but I can say that there will be several opportunities for me to speak again before this piece of legislation finally receives the consent. I can tell the Premier and his caucus that there will be several opportunities for me to speak again as this piece of legislation goes through the House because a lot of things, Mr. Speaker, can happen in committee stage and third reading and the whole case.

We are not going to stand by and see the people of this Province muzzled which this piece of legislation is proposing to do. This piece of legislation is removing public hearings and feasibility studies from councils and the letting the government slip it in through the back door but we will ensure that that does not happen.

Mr. Speaker, if I ever had to turn my back on my constituents and the teachers, like the Member for Carbonear did, the Member received neither letter, Mr. Speaker. The Member that almost put the Town of Carbonear on its knees in order to get elected to the Assembly. They are bailing it out ever since, Mr. Speaker. The government is after having to bail it out ever since.

He was not like the Minister of Finance. He was not like him but he got elected anyway. I suppose that is what is important to him and I am glad he is in the

Chamber, Mr. Speaker, but that is what is happening in this Province today. The Member for Carbonear did not put forward his statement. Mr. Speaker, I know that my time is up but I will have many opportunities again.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the next speaker, the Chair would like to rule on the point of privilege that was raised today rather than keeping that in the air. The Chair would like to rule on it now.

The essence of the charge against the Minister of Forestry was that he misled the House, submitted by the Member for Humber Valley and later on in the debate, it was said that the Minister deliberately misled the House. Now let me, first of all, refer to the hon. Member's reaction, the hon. Minister of Forestry, I should say.

In rising he said, first of all, for the benefit of hon. Members I just want to make two references from Beauchesne for future guidance by hon. Members and I refer to Beauchesne, 6th Edition, Paragraph 26 (3): "...When a question of privilege is raised the Speaker's function is limited to deciding whether the matter is of such a character as to entitle the motion, which the Member who has raised the question desires to move, to priority over the Orders of the Day." In other words whether there is a primitive facing case.

The second case I would want to make from Beauchesne is Paragraph 27: "A question of privilege ought rarely to come up in Parliament. It should be dealt with by a motion giving the House power to impose a reparation or

apply a remedy. A genuine question of privilege is a most serious matter and should be taken seriously by the House."

When the Member rose, the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture, he had indicated he had intended to rise at the earliest possible opportunity to serve notice to the House, that 'I may have inadvertently, it depends how you interpret the Members question.' In other words, he was talking about the perception. 'I may have inadvertently and certainly, unintentionally provided what one could argue was wrong information.' Then the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture goes on to explain the manner in which he interpreted the question and then finished by saying - 'I have never misled nor do I ever intend to mislead this house. I have no reason to mislead this house and to have a point of privilege on an answer for what it appears to be a tempest in a teapot. I would have stood, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members know, as soon as I was aware that I may have inadvertently, depending on how one interprets the question'. I take it that the Member in his own inimitable manner, apologized and certainly indicated that he did not mislead the house. I also read for hon. Members, for future reference again Mangot page 190 and beginning at the bottom - the paragraph on page 190 and going over to page 191: "A dispute between two members about questions of fact said in the debate does not constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate..." Similarly, I inform hon. Members again that when the Speaker is speaking there ought not to be any others speaking. Similarly, the alleged lack or unsatisfactory

nature of a reply to an oral or written question is not a question of privilege and carrying on an allegation of misleading the House is not out of order or unparliamentary nor does it amount to a question of privilege. However an admission by a member that he misled the House would constitute a matter of disorder. An admission of deliberately misleading the house would constitute a breach of privilege of course then the key is the admission.

As I have indicated, the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture certainly did not admit, it was quite to the contrary and again I quote for hon. Members Beauchesne, 6th Edition, Paragraph 494, page 151, acceptance of the word of the member: "It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident." On the basis of these quotations I rule that there is no prima facie case.

The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I am up again for the Member for St. John's South. I made a few points in this debate yesterday I believe it was, and since that time I have not heard from any of the members opposite refuting any of the points that I did make. Mostly my talk the other day was based on

what information we heard during the public hearing session. Mr. Speaker, if I was incorrect in giving that information I would imagine that some of the members of our committee would have gotten up and refuted some of the statements that I did make during that debate. So I can only assume, that what I did say in my speech yesterday, reflects fairly accurately what the committee heard throughout their hearings. The Member for Mount Scio - Bell Island shakes his head no, yet he did not attend any of the public hearings so he would have no way of knowing what we did hear at our public hearings. Now if the Member for Pleasantville would suggest that I made some misrepresentation, I certainly would be very much delighted to hear from him in this debate, Mr. Speaker because I do have confidence in the Member for Pleasantville. He served quite well on our committee and was very interested in what was going on.

Just to review some of the things we did hear, the Minister was here yesterday when I made the points and he did not indicate that he would listen or he would try to revise his bill to allow for some of these points of concern from the people, the municipalities throughout the Province who came to us, the points that they made when they made their presentations to our committee. Mr. Speaker, one of the most serious points that was made to our committee and it kept coming and coming every time somebody came before our committee, the most serious concern of all of the people who came before our committee was this legislation will give too much power to the Minister and to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council or the Cabinet. That I suppose would

be recognized by all members of our committee as probably the most frequent complaint or concern that we had during our committee hearings. I do not see any indication from the Minister or from the Government, certainly nobody has stood up in their place and suggested that this will be addressed when the legislation is in the committee stage, or that there would be an amendment to address this problem. I can only assume that they are not going to do that. I find that very unfortunate because it was the major concern of just about everyone who came before us. Although the report of the committee does not make any strong recommendations, the report which was signed by the chairman of our committee and agreed to by at least the Member from LaPoile and the Member from Pleasantville and agreed to by me - by the way on this point they did mention that the most important thing we heard or the most frequent thing we heard in (a) of their submission on page three was that the - no that is the wrong one so far - Mr. Speaker they mention that we heard that the bill gives too much power. That is what the committee said we heard. The committee did not make a recommendation on that and that is unfortunate because I think we should have, as a committee, made a recommendation on how this could be taken into consideration. We should have made a recommendation of how it could be achieved. Where the Minister could get mostly what he wanted to do. I still believe mostly what he wants to do is solve a problem in the North East Avalon. I believe that is what he wants to do, not burden the rest of the Province with a regional council system that is not workable for them.

If our committee had agreed at the time to make the recommendations to deal with the problem that I think the Minister needs to address, besides I know he wants to address it, I think we could have had some very good recommendations in this. One recommendation probably should have been that he should treat the North East Avalon different than he is going to treat the rest of the Province because the problems here are accentuated and they are bigger problems. An area like Central Newfoundland, Grand Falls, Windsor, Bishop Fall's and that area, will not need the same type of a regional council or a regional government or a metro board.

I do not care what the name is but they will not necessarily need the same type of a Regional Services Council as would the North East Avalon area. The reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is because a representative from the Exploits Regional Services Board came before our Committee and that is the Board in my estimation.

I have know of it since I had become a Cabinet Minister, Mr. Speaker, and I followed its operations somewhat. I did a small amount of research on it while I was Minister of Municipal Affairs for a short while to see how that Regional Services Board in the Exploits area works. It is a good workable Board for ninety-nine percent of the Province.

It was formed voluntarily by the councils which is a good idea, Mr. Speaker, and that should be in our legislation. It takes on the responsibilities, only the responsibilities that they think are necessary and most of it right

now is to supply the water services, I understand.

They might do some work on the regional waste disposal, Mr. Speaker, but they do not want - and one of their concerns with this legislation is that if the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs now figures they should take over the operations of a recreational facility in that area or some other facility, maybe a fire fighting facility, the Minister can direct them to do that. They say the only feasible way for these boards to operate is if these services are recognized by the councils, by the Board itself, then they will ask and take those powers on.

Mr. Speaker that would be one very good recommendation for the Minister to make in Committee hearing, to try to split this regional council idea that he has into something to work in the North East Avalon and something to work outside the North East Avalon in most of the areas of the Province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the major faults again of this Legislation, I think this is a very serious one just from a regular democratic society if the Minister has the power to force these Regional Services Councils on Boards the minimum he should do is allow for public input.

Public input should come through a guaranteed public hearing system if that is what you want to call it, feasibility studies are what is used right now. Feasibility studies should be the ideal.

They should be the ones who would consider both the economic side of

it and the social side of it. If a regional services board does not turn out to be feasible from an independent commissioner's view, it should not be formed. But, Mr. Speaker, right now, the way this legislation reads, we will not know. The minister may believe he knows it is feasible to set up a regional services council in the Dunville/Placentia/Freshwater area. The minister may want to do something like that. The public down there would have no input. When he makes a decision to do it, the public would have no input. It may not be a practical service for that area, and the public or the town councils will not have an opportunity to say well, yes, maybe this council would work for waste disposal, or maybe this council would work for water services, and they can make the decision.

So, Mr. Speaker, without the feasibility studies or the public hearing process, which should be in this legislation, the people of the area who are going to be directly affected by this legislation do not have a direct say in whether they believe this is necessary for their areas.

Most of them who came to us, most of the councils who did present briefs to us, did say that their area did not need regional services councils. I believe them to be correct. There are some areas of the province where regional services councils would probably be workable, but I do not think they are going to be workable if the minister forces them on an area; they are going to be workable only through the co-operation of the councils involved. Maybe the minister will never do that. I do not know if he will ever do it. Maybe he will

not, but he has the power to do it. That is the concern of the councils who made presentations to us.

One of the other points, Mr. Speaker, the councils wanted clarified - the minister and the department made the commitment to do this, and it is not too clear in the legislation. I hope we will see some kind of an amendment or clarification at least, when it comes to the committee stage - is that all the board members belonging to this regional council will come from the councils which are affected. That is not clear. It is committed by the minister, I agree. The minister and the department have committed it, but the wording in this legislation does not make it completely clear that that would be in there. Some of the councils gave us suggestions, and we have them in their briefs, to clarify it. I know that is the intention. I am not questioning that, and it probably will work for this minister, but the next minister, if it is not clarified, does not have to do that - he may do it. I know he wants to do it. That was a concern of many of the people who came before us, that if these regional councils are to be established in certain areas, once we have a feasibility study, they say, once they can decide if there is going to be a council in the area or not, the next step should be that it has to be guaranteed that all members of this committee will come from these councils. I know the staff person from the department, who was with us, told our committee at the time that he would make some slight amendments to this to clarify it. He told us that is the intention, and if it is not clear, or people think it is not clear, he would have some

type of an amendment to make it clear. That is what they were requesting on that issue.

The next phase, Mr. Speaker, and this is the one that really causes a problem for a lot of councils outside the Northeast Avalon again, on the Northeast Avalon it might be necessary to have a Chairperson who is not necessarily one of the councillors from the Northeast Avalon. That could be possible. I am not sure. But, Mr. Speaker, outside the Northeast Avalon the communities who made presentations to us wanted a guarantee that once the council is formed, and it is formed from council members, the members on that committee, the members of the Regional Services Council or Board will have the opportunity to elect one of themselves as chairperson. That is what they would suggest for most of the Province, and I would say that would be the practical thing for most of the Province. The Exploits Board, again, has that power now. That is the way they operated, and within their own -

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: The Member for St. John's South says this will only be ensuring that nothing will be resolved, so by that remark he is insulting the Exploits Regional Services Board. I am suggesting that for 90 percent of the Province that is the way it should work; for the Northeast Avalon it probably should be different. I agree with that, but again the conflict we are in now is bringing in a piece of legislation for the whole Province that is geared to try to solve the problems on the Northeast Avalon.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: No, not all the people who came before us. The first consideration has to be that these boards are voluntary. The three or four or six councils, even or odd numbers, want these things, so they want to make it work. So if you go from that premise, then it is going to work, because it is those councils that want it. Now I can see that happening if the Department of Municipal Affairs went to an area, and I will not use the words forced it on them, but convinced them or tried to do it over and above their objections and established this council. You could then have problems like that.

One of the premises of mostly all the people who came before us is that these Regional Services Boards should be voluntary, they should come at the request of the councils. And I even agree that if there is an area of seven councils, seven different towns, and five of them want a board, let the five of them form the board and show the advantage to the other two councils, then the other two will join eventually. You do not need to force them into it.

I think the benefits of the boards, if there are going to be any - the council and the Department can do a selling job on the other two councils and have them involved, rather than force them. When you force one council into it, then you have the potential of obstructing the whole purpose of co-operation that is supposed to come from these regional councils. If they are done on a voluntary basis, then the Chairman of the Committee could be selected from within their ranks.

Another good thing about the

Exploits Councils is, that where possible, and it is very possible with those three councils, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are the two representatives on the Council which, in effect, gives it a prestige among the councils or among the towns. It is not necessary in fact, but it does give a certain prestige if the mayors of the towns are members of that. The way they do it in the Exploits Area is that each year one of the Mayors will be Chairperson, so you can get away from the conflict if there is going to be one. If you know that there are four councils and that every fourth year your mayor or your representative will be chairperson of that board, that will relieve any conflict.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest for all of the regional councils that an amendment should be brought in here to have the chairperson of the Regional Services Council elected from the councillors who would be guaranteed to make up the board. The Chairman of our Committee, the Member for St. John's South, again shakes his head, but he is aware that most of the people, except those from the Northeast Avalon, wish that. That is the type of formation of a council they want.

I am sure it could work in any area. It is working. I do not even have to guess at it. It is working in the Exploits area today. That is the prime example in this Province; that is the working Regional Services Council we should all be using as an example of what we are trying to do with this legislation, if we use it as an example for everywhere but the Northeast Avalon. Again, I always exempt the Northeast Avalon. I think we

could have very good Regional Services Councils based on the towns in the area co-operating on services.

Mr. Speaker, another concern some of them had was that if the Minister does form a Regional Services Council, whether it be forced on them or agreed to in an area, if there is a Regional Council formed and the Minister decides, as he can, that they should look after a recreation facility that is in one of the towns, that is supposed to be a regional service or it acts as a regional service, and most major facilities do, so if the Minister decides that the Grand Falls Stadium should be a responsibility of this Board, the Grand Falls taxpayers, who probably paid for all the operating of this facility over the years and maybe for some or most of the capital, should be compensated for any assets they lose, Mr. Speaker.

If it is decided that a water supply in a certain area, which was financed through taxpayers of one community or another, is brought into a regional service, and I could use St. John's as an example, maybe the Winsor Lake water supply could be brought into a regional services area, or Petty Harbour Long Pond, if that is done, the taxpayers of the City should be compensated for losing that asset they had up until the Minister put it in with the Regional Services Board.

Mr. Speaker, one other thing that at least one of the groups that came before us mentioned, and probably is fairly practical, is that this legislation does not provide for any conflict of interest rule. So probably the Minister could consider either

adopting the - I am not even sure what the conflict of interest rules are in the Municipalities Act. I imagine there are some, but I don't think they are very strong or very definite. So the Minister should have a look at the conflict of interest legislation that is involved now in the Municipalities Act and in this new legislation, and he should toughen it up a bit.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the formation of these boards should be only at the request of the councils involved. That is a very important point to my mind. Because it will probably mean the success or failure of these boards, if the Minister inflicts them on an area or if he has them formed involuntarily.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get on to a comment made during the debate, and I think I heard it a couple of times from the Member for LaPoile. The Member for LaPoile has shot across this House every now and then that yes, we did have twenty-some-odd presentations before us, but there are another four hundred towns out there which

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: No, maybe not. I do not know. But somebody said it a couple of times anyway, that we only heard from twenty or so out of the four hundred towns are around.

Now, Mr. Speaker, technically that is correct, because we had twenty-some-odd presentations - I cannot remember exactly. But, Mr. Speaker, we had a presentation from the Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Municipalities and they said, 'on behalf of the

Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Municipalities and its member councils throughout the Province...' That is how they started off their brief, so, Mr. Speaker, I would expect that they would be representing the rest of the town councils. They thanked the Committee for coming around to see them and allowing them to make these presentations.

They have a paragraph in their brief here of understandings they have from the Minister, the Hon. Eric Gullage, of the purpose of this Legislation, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things the Minister gave them was to provide a formalized vehicle through which the municipalities may co-operate on the delivery of any or all municipal services. We understand from the Minister that it is his intent that the Regional Services Boards would service the municipalities. That is what they understand from the Minister, and that they would utilize this vehicle for an efficient, timely and efficient delivery of services in areas from time to time.

They also say that they have been advised by the Minister 'and we now state publicly before the Committee that we concur with the above objectives.' I do not think anyone wouldn't concur with those objectives, because they are pretty good objectives, the method of doing it. The federation said they concur with these objectives, and they said there are many examples of active co-operation among the municipalities now and any legislation that would promote and facilitate this voluntary activity would be welcome. That is what they told our Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the next paragraph

underlined in their brief is very important, as they are representing all these councils, even the ones which did come before it. They say, however, 'we do not believe that the proposed legislation now before us will accomplish these objectives.' A very important statement from the experts in the field. I would imagine, next to the Department of Municipal Affairs they would have the most experience in municipal government throughout the Province and they, themselves, do not believe that the proposed legislation can accomplish the goals being set by the Minister.

They refer specifically to Sections 3, 5, 9 and 13. If you would refer to the Minority Report presented by myself and the Member for Harbour Main on this Legislation, Mr. Speaker, you will note that we have tried, and even those amendments might not be what the Federation wanted, but what I have tried to do without - I heard this presentation, but I was not reading this when I made the Minority Report.

Mr. Speaker, I am referring to an amendment to Section 3, an amendment to Section 5, second amendment to 5, an amendment to 9, an amendment to 13 and a couple of other things. I compared what they said, actually after I wrote it, and they are not exactly what they wanted. But they are close to what the Federation was looking for when they made their presentation to us. If you get a presentation from a group of people who agree with your objectives, obviously they are trying to be constructive when they give you suggestions. I have always accepted that premise, no matter what I do.

These people are not just doing this. You could say certainly, and probably lots of times it is true, that the Opposition, the way we have our political system set up, is just doing this to create a bit of publicity for themselves. A lot of times yes, sure you can say that, but, Mr. Speaker, when you have a group of independent people come to you and raise these concerns on behalf of many of the taxpayers of the Province, in all our districts, and they raise concerns concerning specific parts of this legislation, you have to listen to them, you have to try to accommodate them somehow. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister would like to accommodate, I imagine he would, and I think he could accommodate all of it if he would try to treat the Northeast Avalon Regional Services Council differently than he is going to treat the rest of the Province. And maybe there are other areas that would have to be treated differently.

I do not think the blanket legislation we are trying to do is going to be feasible. Maybe it will. This kind of stuff we have in the legislation, I do not even think it will in itself work for the Northeast Avalon. But maybe it will. Certainly the Chairman would not be coming from a council. I can see an appointed Chairman probably for the Northeast Avalon, but I cannot see an appointed chairman for the Exploits Board or a board in the Placentia area or a board down the Burin Peninsula, if they are going to be set up. I do not know that there is a great need for it, because most of those areas will have a specific service they want to look after. Not as many as an area in the Northeast Avalon, where we do have major problems:

we have a major problem in solid waste disposal, we have a major problem in fire fighting services, we have a major problem in the delivery of regional trunk sewers for sanitary and storm, we have a major problem in supplying water to areas, or had at least, most of that is taken care of now, but for the next twenty years you are going to have to have a regional board to deal with even the water supplies of this area.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make, and I have a couple of minutes left, is that if the Government would consider treating the Northeast Avalon differently than they treat the rest of the areas, I think legislation similar to this, if not exactly like this, could work in this Province. I am not against Regional Services Boards. I never said once in our meetings that I was against Regional Services Boards. There are services that can be better handled by regions. Now most of the people who came before us fear an extra level of bureaucracy and an extra level of taxation. I do not believe that is what the Department is trying to do. Because if I still happened to be Minister of that Department at the time, I would be trying something similar to this. Certainly not exactly like this, because I believe, once again, that we are taking the power away from the experts, away from the field people, and those are the councillors who are front line Government operators, or service deliverers, from a political sense, in our Province.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Aylward: Pardon?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Yes, they will be the Members of the Board, if the Minister wants. I know this Minister does want it. This is not my concern. I am not saying this from a personal point of view. The councils are the ones who have this concern, the ones who came before us, and they want it guaranteed or clarified. It says in the legislation that they may be formed from the councils, and they would be appointed by the Minister, which was another problem. It is not necessarily a serious one, but they would like to, the councils themselves, have the power in this Act to nominate people. They do not have the power to appoint them - not appoint them even, they have to nominate to the Minister a name or ten names and the Minister will pick that name and put it on the board.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Yes, but the council does not have that control. The councils themselves have a seven person council, and they will present seven names and the Minister picks one. They might present one name and the Minister does not want it. This Minister and your Government probably would not do that. I do not know, maybe you would. But there are people who have espoused (inaudible) political office who would do that. I mean, they might be small enough to do it. But, you know, they can only be from councils but the councils cannot appoint them, they can only nominate them. The Minister has the -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Oh no. Well, the formality is an important

formality for the councils. Now the Chairperson -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Not necessarily. What about if the Minister does not like the name?

Premier Wells: But the Minister can only appoint those nominated by the council.

Mr. R. Aylward: What about if the Minister does not happen to like the name that was brought to him? I mean, that could happen; the Minister might have had problems with a certain person. So, Mr. Speaker, if the Government would consider that and try to separate the Northeast Avalon from the rest of the Province and have the Regional Services Boards operate the same as the Exploits Regional Services Council works now, I think you could do a good job of this - I think you could do a good job of it. That is the example in this Province of a good working Regional Services Council. It is the example I would use if I were still Minister. I would try to mold the rest of the services councils around their example. I do not know that their particular example would work in the Northeast Avalon, but it certainly would work in most all of the other areas of the Province.

I just want to suggest that most of the recommendations made in the minority report, Mr. Speaker, are similar concerns expressed by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities. Mr. Speaker, I suggest they represent all the municipalities. They do not have to suggest that, it is a fact of their constitution. We have heard from all the council's in this Province. They have given

us these specific concerns and I think it would be sensible, if nothing else, for the Government to listen to these concerns and hopefully put forth amendments which would satisfy these concerns. We would then have a piece of legislation in this Province that could work.

This is what we are all trying to do, I hope. That is the intention of everyone in this House of Assembly, to pass a piece of legislation that will work and provide better services to the constituents. Mr. Speaker, I think if the Government would listen to some of these concerns - and they do not have to take the minority report, Mr. Speaker, they can take the brief presented by the Federation of Municipalities. Each of these items I mention, including the chairperson, including the fact that councils are formed from councillors, are all highlighted in their presentation. Certainly if I thought it would do any good, Mr. Speaker, this is a public document and if I were allowed I would table it so that all members could see a copy of what the Federation of Municipalities would like to see in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I am not doing this to be an obstructionist, I am not doing it to make political points, because nobody in the media will even hear what I have said tonight. Nobody is going to report what I said tonight, not a soul. 'Aylward may have spoken today' - I may get that line in the debate. So that is not why I am making this speech tonight. I think these are legitimate concerns. We have an opportunity here to get a piece of legislation that went through the process, we went through committee hearings

and members on both sides agreed mostly with what I have said today, members of our committee. I think we have an opportunity to make a piece of legislation that would improve the municipal services of this Province, if we listen to some of the concerns either in the minority report, the main report, or the brief presented to us by the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This proposed regional services board legislation, as well as the present provincial administration's approach generally to municipal government in Newfoundland and Labrador, is indicative of an authoritarian style of governing the Province. It is also typical of the administration's lack of understanding of the majority of people in the Province, and particularly their lack of appreciation of the positive attributes of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, two months after taking office the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs announced that he was going to amalgamate municipalities wholesale. Furthermore, he was going to have the whole process done and over with by November of last year, in record time, come what may, regardless of what objections were raised; he was going to use force if necessary. Now the Minister's wings were clipped by the Premier, but what has ensued has been quite a debacle. The Minister violated the spirit of the existing Municipalities Act, which requires

feasibility studies, by appointing his senior officials to carry out the studies; he had his Deputy Minister and two of his ADMs appointed as commissioners to conduct public hearings. After objections were raised, he then agreed to have two-person boards, and invited nominees from the municipalities targeted to fit alongside the department officials presiding over the public hearings.

The Minister still talked about having the whole process completed in time for the elections in November of 1989. Of course, that was totally unrealistic and he had to change his deadline time and time again. Many municipalities, at the Ministers request delayed their elections for a year, with the assurance that their future would be certain within the year, in time for November 1990. The commissioners went around the province in the areas targeted, held their hearings and got good responses from residents and existing municipalities. Some of the commissioners reported and their reports have been publicized. But, Mr. Speaker, other commissioners still have not even reported; the commissioners who held hearings last February still have not reported. Municipalities are in limbo.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there has been perhaps an unprecedented degree of objection to this provincial administration's municipal amalgamation plan. I have been a Member of this House of Assembly for eleven-and-a-half years now, and I have never received more feedback from constituents to any issue than I got through the proposal of this administration to amalgamate Corner Brook and Massey Drive, two municipalities in the district I represent. Mr.

Speaker, that kind of outrage, the kind of outrage that was voiced in Corner Brook and Massey Drive, was similarly expressed in other areas of the Province. I suppose it was because of all the flack that the Minister and the Government have retreated time and time and time again.

Now the Government is trying a circuitous route, presumably to achieve the same end, and that is this regional services boards legislation. Mr. Speaker, as I have pointed out and other speakers have said, there is not much difference between this Bill and Part 3 of the present Municipalities Act, so the differences are critical in this debate. The most obvious difference is that while the current Municipalities Act requires a feasibility study preceding the establishment of a regional council, this Bill imposes no such requirement; this Bill authorizes the Cabinet and the Minister, meeting in secret, to, through edicts, establish regional service districts, regional service boards, and assign powers to the boards. There is no requirement for the Cabinet to consult anybody, therefore, the Bill gives much too great powers to the Cabinet and the Minister, at the expense of municipalities and individual citizens.

The irony of the situation is quite striking. Here is the administration, led by a Premier who travelled from Atlantic to Pacific in Canada making speeches about the Meech Lake Accord, holding himself out as the ultimate democrat - the Premier is leaving. Perhaps the truth hurts too much - talking about the need to involve citizens in making

government decisions and setting policy, especially decisions affecting the way they are governed and condemning the process by which the Meech Lake Accord was determined, because he said it involved eleven men meeting in secret in a back room, and now, here, the same Premier is sponsoring legislation that is going to shut the public out of the process of making decisions to establish regional service districts, to establish a new layer of government with important powers affecting their daily lives, and empowering not eleven men meeting in secret in a back room, but thirteen men and one woman meeting in secret - where do they meet now? Wherever they meet now - somewhere in Confederation Building, usually on Thursday morning. How can the Premier reconcile the two?

An Hon. Member: Very easily.

Ms. Verge: Very easily, he says. Well, he is a master of fine, technical, legal, semantic distinctions and I suppose what suits his purpose of the moment he can rationalize very glibly and slickly. But I would suggest that there are discrepancies that cannot be explained.

Why would the Government want to have new legislation providing for the setting up of regional government in this Province without a requirement that feasibility studies be conducted or public hearings be conducted before final decisions are made? Why would a provincial government want to shut the people and municipal governments already in existence out of the process of decision making about the creation of regional government? Why? We have never been given an

explanation.

At the end of September, I attended a meeting of the great Humber Joint Council, made up of about twenty five municipalities in the Bay of Islands, Humber Valley, and White Bay area. The guest speaker was the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs and the main topic was this legislation. I listened intently while the Minister gave an explanation of the legislation and I could not object to anything he said. Nobody in that room could take exception with his remarks. The problem is that he was describing what was in part 3 of the present Municipalities Act. He failed to point out the differences between the present legislation and this Bill. He failed to make the point that this legislation does away with the need to have feasibility studies. In the discussion period that ensued I made that point and he said it was a good point and that he would be addressing it. Now why have we not seen changes to the Bill?

Apart from that and much more important than that, as my colleague, the member for Kilbride has said, when the Legislation Review Committee dealing with the Bill held hearings around the Province, they received presentations from several groups and individuals, perhaps the most important of which was the Provincial Federation of Municipalities, asking for changes to the Bill, including the addition of the requirement of feasibility studies conducted independently as a condition precedent of the setting up of a new regional service government.

Mr. Speaker, the government, early

in its term launched a campaign of wholesale amalgamation that was ill-conceived, poorly researched and back-fired on the government. There was tremendous flack and criticism. And while it has not been resolved, the Minister and the government apparently have lost their resolve to force it through. They now realize that there would be too much political damage if they forced through amalgamation.

So evidently they have retreated and they have decided to adopt another approach to reach the same goal. Mr. Speaker, I am not against municipal amalgamation per se, I am not against the establishment of regional government, I am not against that concept. In the district I represent the Towns of Pasadena and South Brook were amalgamated to form the united town of Pasadena in 1985. That amalgamation was a good decision, and the results have been positive for the residents of the enlarged municipality. That amalgamation took place under the provisions of part 3 of the present Municipalities Act. The required feasibility study was carried out by an independent lawyer appointed by the provincial administration of the day. That lawyer held public meetings in Pasadena and South Brook, got a good response, heard positive and negative comments, heard questions, made a report to the Government, which was made public, recommending certain steps preceding amalgamation, one of which was extra Provincial Government capital works funding to bring up to standard the services in South Brook, the smaller of the two municipalities and the one with the lower level of services.

Another recommendation was that provision be made for adequate provincial funding so that the residents of Pasadena would not have to bear a disproportionate municipal tax burden to pay for improvements in South Brook, and also so that Pasadena would not have to be put on hold while needed improvements were carried out in South Brook.

Most of the skepticism about amalgamation was expressed by people in South Brook, the smaller of the two municipalities, as I mentioned, perhaps because they were concerned about losing their identity. So that was acknowledged in the report.

After the report was publicized the South Brook council conducted a plebiscite. With the benefit of the reaction to the report of the Provincial Government, which was positive, a majority of the people in South Brook voting in the plebiscite chose amalgamation - they voted yes for amalgamation. After that, the residents who opposed amalgamation, the ones who had voted no, basically felt that while they did not get their way, at least the democratic process was followed and a majority had chosen amalgamation and they were willing to respect the will of the majority. So amalgamation proceeded quite smoothly and amicably, and the result has been happy for residents of the enlarged municipality of Pasadena.

Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that this administration does not have enough respect for the democratic process and enough appreciation of rural communities to allow that same process to work now. Instead of embarking on a wholesale campaign of municipal amalgamations, the Government

should have done some research and selected a reasonably small number of combinations or mergers where there was and is evidence of a desire for coming together, and then had independent feasibility studies conducted and negotiated reasonable financing packages to smooth the way for amalgamation. If that had been the approach of the Government a year ago or a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, instead of chaos in municipal government in the Province we would now see, perhaps, a half dozen instances of positive amalgamations.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of regional government, again I do not oppose that concept. Regional councils may be desirable in some areas of the Province. People suggest that would be sensible for the Northeast Avalon. I do not claim any expertise about the Northeast Avalon area, but I defer to the knowledge and wisdom of my colleague from Kilbride. Why, instead, as the Member for Kilbride suggested, could not the Government sponsor legislation specifically to address the needs of the Northeast Avalon? Newfoundland and Labrador is not a big Province by population, Mr. Speaker. After all, we only have - what is it? - 570,000 people, and surely in whatever few cases regional Government is desirable, there could be tailor-made legislation.

Instead what we have is overkill, instead what we have is a crude provision and power in the provincial Cabinet which meets secretly, whose deliberations are private and confidential, to decree Regional Government. The current requirement for feasibility studies is deleted, and that is the key difference

between the current legislation and this proposed new Act. We still have not been given an explanation for that difference.

Mr. Speaker, while I have made the point that I am not against amalgamation per se, and I do not oppose Regional Government per se, I do object to amalgamation or Regional Government in some instances. One of those instances is the Corner Brook-Massey Drive combination that the Government proposed in its package in the summer of 1989. Mr. Speaker, in that case there was a feasibility study conducted by one of the Minister's ADMs and Hubert Harnett, nominated jointly by the municipalities of Corner Brook and Massey Drive. The commissioners held hearings in Corner Brook last February. Their report, to my knowledge, has not yet been completed. Certainly it has not been made public. During the hearings, several people made presentations. The hearings were well attended as well, I might add. There was not one single presentation that favored amalgamation of Corner Brook and Massey Drive. Many were well-researched, thoughtful submissions and they gave all kinds of reasons why the status quo is preferable to merger in that case.

A usual rationale for merger is that economies of scale results and that the unit cost of administration is reduced. Now it was demonstrated by both the City of Corner Brook and the Town of Massey Drive that if Corner Brook and Massey Drive were to be brought together the unit cost, the per capita, the per citizen cost of delivering municipal services would go up.

The enlarged City of Corner Brook or whatever the new name might be would have to increase the mill rate for everyone, for the people now residing in Corner Brook as well as the residents of Massey Drive. Why? You may ask. The principle reason, when I see members opposite looking skeptical I go back to my point about members failing to appreciate the positive attributes of small communities.

The main reason is that in the Town of Massey Drive, which has a population of about five hundred, many essential services such as fire fighting are delivered on a purely volunteer basis whereas in the City of Corner Brook fire fighting is delivered by a fully paid professional fire department staffed by over 50 members. It is an unionized fire department as well.

So, obviously, if the merger is forced, either through amalgamation or through the imposition of a regional service board then the Massey Drive Volunteer Fire Department will no longer be able to operate because the fully paid unionized City of Corner Brook Fire Department will demand expansion with the addition of more staff and equipment to cover the enlarged territory. That is the main reason why the unit cost or the per capita cost of delivering municipal government would increase.

Now in that particular case as well there already is an admirable degree of sharing. Corner Brook is obviously a much larger municipality, with its water and sewer systems, its land fill site, which I call the dump are all used by the Town of Massey Drive under the provisions of legal agreements

of which are in writing at a cost to Massey Drive.

The arrangements are satisfactory to both municipalities and the sharing has been going on for several years. There is one type of service that is not now shared which the Massey Drive Council would like to be able to share on a regional basis and that is dog control or animal control. But the municipalities in that area are now talking about a shared arrangement for animal control.

During the hearings in Corner Brook about this regional service board legislation an individual who lives in Massey Drive, who heads the Concerned Citizens Committee there an ad hoc committee that is opposing amalgamation either by the front door or the back door, or both. From a common sense point of view he talked about the danger of regional government, a regional service board, adding to bureaucracy and costs.

Arguably, we are already over governed. Why in an area such as Corner Brook and Massey Drive where people are satisfied with their status quo do we need another layer of Government? Now granted the service board members would probably serve without remuneration. The Massey Drive councillors all serve now without remuneration. The Corner Brook councillors on the other hand get paid. So, we are not sure if the regional service board members would serve without remuneration but we can assume that the service board would require staff if they are going to exercise very many functions.

A serious concern I have with Regional Government as I said

before, I do not oppose it per se, but I would urge caution in considering Regional Government. The concern I have is that Regional Government is not elected directly by the people. Most of the members are elected to municipalities, but they are then nominated by the Municipal Government to the provincial cabinet and appointed by the cabinet. So members of regional service boards are not elected by the people to the regional service board. They are not directly accountable for their decisions on a regional service board to the citizens any more than members of school tax authorities are responsible to the citizens. These types of authorities whose members are not directly elected tend to be invisible.

I asked the Member for St. John's South can he name any of the members of the St. John's School Tax Authority. He may or may not realize that they comprise representatives of municipalities of the area as well as school trustees. I wonder if the Member for St. John's South or the Member for Mount Scio-Bell Island can name any of the members of the St. John's School Tax Authority. Well they are (inaudible) essentially in the same way that a regional service board would be (inaudible). The members are not directly accountable to the taxpayers or the citizens. They can get away with a lot, so a regional service board can lead to needless bureaucracy, needless duplication, extra and unnecessary expense. A regional service board can compromise accountability to the public, so these are all dangers inherent in Regional Government as proposed in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, again my main criticism about the bill and the main reason that I am opposing it is that the bill is antidemocratic in empowering the cabinet, meeting secretly to decree Regional Government affecting citizens in a very basic way, affecting the organization of Government, affecting taxes without any requirement for public consultation, public notice or consultation with or agreement of existing municipalities.

Under this legislation, the Government will be able to run circles around existing municipalities. The municipal council members may object, they may not even know though, because just think for a minute about this administrations record of conduct. This is the administration that on 1st October changed social assistance policy, did not amend the law, but nevertheless changed the policy - and by surprise, took up to one-quarter of the income of 850 or 1,000 single parent families in the Province.

This is the Administration, looking at you and the Members opposite, that on 1st October changed Social Assistance policy illegally, failed to amend the regulations, and made a surprise deduction of up to 25 per cent of the family income of about 1,000 single parent families in the Province.

I heard on the radio this morning that single mothers groups working with the Legal Education and Action Fund, which sponsors and pays for Charter Challenges of Laws that hurt women, are now looking at taking legal action against this Administration. I certainly wish them well and I

give thanks for the existence of advocates for single mothers and for the existence of the National Legal Education and Action Fund.

This is also the Administration that in September told school boards that the funding for substitute teachers had been reduced and that the cut took effect 1st April. The Government not only did not consult the school boards, but did not even tell school boards about the change until six months after it took effect. So why should we think that the Government would not do as much in the case of forcing regional governments. The bill gives the Government the technical legal power to decree municipal government against the wishes of municipalities without even asking municipalities or consulting with citizens about the idea of regional government. What is to stop the Government, the Cabinet, once this bill becomes law, from meeting on a Thursday morning in secret and deciding that there will be a big regional government around Gander and then six months later, mention it to the Mayor and citizens of Gander?

Mr. Speaker, it is because of all these inherent dangers in this bill that the danger of major change in local government being decided in secret and forced on people against their wishes in ways that will be counter productive; that will detract from accountability; that will blur lines of authority; that will proliferate bureaucracy; that will drive up costs; that will compromise accountability. It is because of all the dangers inherent in this legislation, and because of the propensity of this Government to act in an authoritarian style, impose

change, take people by surprise, for all these reasons I believe that it would be a good idea to delay further debate of this legislation for a six month period.

I commend my colleague from Grand Falls, a master of parliamentary procedure, for his six month hoist motion. It is an eminently good idea. It will allow the Government a bit more experience in office, perhaps time for them to be humbled by public pressure. Perhaps as they continue to go down in the public opinion polls, they will realize that their approach was wrong and that they should not continue to act in such an authoritarian and dictatorial style; that they should back off; and that they should show more respect for the people they are supposed to be serving. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker in starting this debate on this bill or this motion, the resolution by my colleague for Grand Falls, I have a very difficult act to follow the speakers that have spoken on this side this evening. The Member for Burin, Placentia West, lead off the debate right after we came back from supper and the member, oh yes the Member for Kilbride, but I am a little disappointed, it is very unusual that I stand in my place, as a matter of fact I am a little bit nervous that my sidekick is not around to back me up because I can usually count on him to take part in the debate and give me some very penetrating questions for the ministers and so on.

Mr. Speaker, when my colleague

from Grand Falls started talking today and he started going on about this hoist, I thought that maybe there was some unexpected high landings of fish somewhere and we are going to need it hoisted from the boats to the wharf. Having said that Mr. Speaker this is a - there has been considerable debate in the Province over the last I guess month or the last year - I am being distracted here Mr. Speaker by some members opposite. It is very unusual for there to be distractions and I find it difficult to be able to speak and listen to those comments from the other side - but for about the last twelve months there has been considerable debate in the Province, very strong emotional debate about the concept of amalgamation and regional services and so on. For the most part there has been a considerable body of opinion throughout the Province that has been opposed to amalgamation and has opposed the formation of regional services boards and I guess what has kind of disturbed alot of people and alot of the councils and so on around the Province has been the way that the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs has gone about the process. Some of the things that he said, for one thing, I was looking at Hansard of 1st November, when he was speaking about amalgamation, regional services boards, and so on, and he talked a lot about larger communities. I think it is something that is not only coming from the Minister, but I think from this Government. They somehow think that larger is better. And he said, the larger the community, in fact, the better these boards, in my view, would work. So the need for amalgamation in the first place is

to make a community large enough so that it would have good representation.

For the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs to say that, means really a slight, I would say, upon the representatives in smaller communities around this Province. In most of the communities around the Province we have seen exceptional representation on councils, and local service districts, and so on. I think it is rather unfair for the Minister to insinuate that these smaller communities indeed have not had good representation because they are not larger.

An Hon. Member: How could he insinuate that? Can you give us the councillors (inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: He says because, obviously, the larger the population you are drawing from - I do not think anyone will argue - to elect a person, the better the chance of getting the better person. He said, I think that is pretty good logic.

An Hon. Member: Take the St. John's Council for example.

Mr. Matthews: Yes, take the St. John's Council for example. There are things that I could say about the St. John's Councils, former and present.

An Hon. Member: They elected Mr. Gullage. Can you imagine.

Mr. Matthews: But I have to be careful, because sometimes when you get on your feet here and get engaging in debate back and forth and battering it, sometimes you can get yourself in a real snarl.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: No, I have never done that yet, I say to the Minister of Employment and Labour relations, no. In all of my time here, I must say that I have not done that yet.

An Hon. Member: Never, and you never will.

Mr. Matthews: I would not say that, because sometimes there are things that you would really like to say but your better judgement tells you not to say them.

So that is the kind of thinking that is coming from the Minister and from the Government, that larger and bigger is better and more beautiful. I think that is a flaw, because if you look at the very nature of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the hundreds of communities that are scattered all around the Province, along our coastline, in most cases you cannot make anything larger out of them. In most cases, you cannot make anything larger out of it, they are so far removed from any other community and so on.

An Hon. Member: So your regional services board can only have the same members that are elected to council.

Mr. Matthews: Well, exactly. In most cases that is the case, that those that are already on existing councils would only - well I do not even know if they would consider regional services boards in areas like that.

So those are the concerns that I see, and the opinions. I understand the Member for Fogo, who is here giving me some advice and so on, is going to speak next in a debate. I am sure that he is really going to zero in on this

smaller community aspect, the smaller community aspect, and -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) his skates on.

Mr. Matthews: He does not need to put the skates on.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) last night, the first time in years.

Mr. Matthews: Yes, he played last night, but I can tell the Member for Bonavista South that he will not be putting his skates on in the Fogo Arena. I know that was what he was referring to. I know that was the reference he was making, to try to get under the skin of my colleague from Fogo, about the cancelling of the cheques, and the regional recreation facilities that -

An Hon. Member: And a regional board set up.

Mr. Matthews: A board already set up and thousands of dollars in the bank and about the cancelling of the cheques and the regional recreation facilities that -

An Hon. Member: And a Regional Board set up.

Mr. Matthews: A Board already set up and thousands of dollars in the bank. Speaking of regional concepts and regional thinking and a promotion of the regional concept by this Government, when here we had cases where that setup was already in place, where municipalities had already agreed, they had to agree by the way, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that Mr. Speaker himself knows.

An Hon. Member: Go to bed, boy, go to bed. Go home and go to bed.

Mr. Matthews: Yes, the Premier is tired. He has had a hard day. We understand that. He has had to lace another one of his ministers today.

Talking about the regional concept that this government tries to promote, here there was a case of the regional recreational facilities, organizations around the Province where there was criteria laid down that they had to meet in order to qualify.

Mr. Tobin: C.B. (inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: There had to be agreements from amongst those communities that they would cost share, they would fund raise and so on in order to be considered for a facility such as was being considered at the time.

The regional concept which was a good one I thought, mainly because I had something to do with bringing it about. I do not know but I thought it was a good time today. But what happened once this government came to power? Scrap the works of it. Threw it out the door.

So we see them coming out talking about amalgamation. The reasons for amalgamation are for sharing of services, of reducing costs. Talking about the regional services boards, talking about sharing and getting together, making it bigger but it is contradictory when you see what this Government has done.

They are talking in great terms about what they want to do but here they had an opportunity to do something of a regional nature. Maybe it would have been the first test and they threw it out the door, kicked it out the door, Mr.

Speaker. People already had agreements signed, money in the bank and this government scrapped the idea. So it is hard for communities out and about in the Province to trust the real motives of this Government.

I do not know how many more times the Minister of Social Services is going to go in and out of the House, stand in front of me and in essence, tell me to sit down. It is hard to contend with here, Mr. Speaker.

If I did not consider him to be a friend of mine I would take exception to it and say all kinds of derogatory things about him. I can not do that.

Mr. Tobin: We can.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Speaker, there is a number of things that I just want to comment on but this is more difficult than I thought. What is the Minister of Employment & Labour Relations over there now quoting? Shakespeare, is it? The lean and hungry look or something. Young Cassius has a lean and hungry look.

An Hon. Member: I do not think she is looking at you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Matthews: No. No. She is not looking at me.

An Hon. Member: Tobin, I could understand.

Mr. Tobin: Leave me out of this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Matthews: No. I am neither young, hungry nor lean. I had a very good supper. I had a very good supper. Maybe it is with my

great hearing that I picked up something amongst the Government benches over there, something we were not aware of, maybe there is a Cassius over there, maybe there is a Cassius. I see the Member from LaPoile bringing up his arm. I would not refer to the Member from LaPoile as a Cassius. I certainly would not call him a Cassius Clay. There are times that I would say that he was brutal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Matthews: He was brutal, not a Brutus. But I must say to the Member for LaPoile it is good to see you coming back around again and you are getting a bit of life into you again. It is nice to see you. I am really glad because he went through a number of days of great depression.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Matthews: There were times, Mr. Speaker, I thought about sending his name down to the Lonely Hearts Club.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Matthews: There are a few people in the Chamber I think there are probably two people in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, that can identify with the Lonely Hearts Club and that is all I am going to say about that. I am not going to name who they are.

An Hon. Member: The other one is a St. John's area member.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Speaker, the ministers in debate about this bill, both inside and outside the Legislature, said that the intent is to have the regional services boards operate on the ostosis of

the municipal council, not to have it driven by the Province, under the ostosis of the Province. Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the House Leader has left here, because he is really distracting me and I have the Member for St. John's South over there now who is doing all kinds of imitations. He has imitated the Member for Placentia, number one, he has imitated him tonight. But, Mr. Speaker, I have concerns about this bill. A number of municipalities from around the Province went in front of the Committee, the Legislative Review Committee, I am not sure if the Member for St. John's South was on that or not.

An Hon. Member: He was the Chairman.

Mr. Matthews: Oh, he was the Chairman. I know there were two or three councils in my region of the Province that appeared before the committee. I believe two of them went to Clarenville.

An Hon. Member: One in Clarenville, and one here.

Mr. Matthews: I thought there was two. I thought Grand Bank and Fortune went to Clarenville, and Burin came here. Burin came in here yes, so there were three that came and expressed their views on this particular piece of legislation. I think it is fair to say that all three of those councils were -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: Well, they always do, they always did. I guess, someone else said it today really about Harbour Grace and Carbonear. I guess the Member for Carbonear spoke about Carbonear and Harbour Grace and about how

the relationship has been between them over the years. I assume there are a lot of communities throughout the Province that have experienced a similar sort of relationship.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: Oh, of course, I had it all in place. The only thing I regret about the games was that I was not Minister at the hosting of the games in Mount Pearl, where the announcement was made on the future of Newfoundland Summer and Winter Games, the allocation of four or five sets of games, because in essence the decision to award those games was made while I was Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth at the time. So, yes I did have something to do with it, and if that brings the two towns together then I say that is certainly another positive aspect to this kind of a sporting event.

I guess that somewhat ties into what I said earlier about the regional recreation facilities setup we hoped we would see in the Province with both communities combining their efforts, finances, fund-raising and so on, and sign agreements for the first time that they would cost share in the operation of those facilities, because what we had seen before was towns had taken it upon themselves to construct major recreation facilities and it really financially strangled them because they could not afford the operating cost. They were not getting enough revenue saved from arenas to pay for the operational costs. They were running deficits every year. There were communities who used the facility only to rent ice time and that seemed to be somewhat unfair. We

were trying to put in place a mechanism whereby all communities would cooperate and hopefully take the burden off the one municipality. That is what we are trying to do and ties into what the Member for Carbonear said.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a wide divergence of opinion expressed about this particular piece of legislation, amalgamation. Of course in my own District there are two towns that have been slated for amalgamation, the two of them are Grand Bank and Fortune. The commissioners came down and had hearings and so on. There was a strong, very strong opposition to the suggestion that Grand Bank and Fortune be amalgamated. I must say, the strongest opinion or the strongest voice against the amalgamation issue was from the Town of Fortune because Fortune is the smaller community. I guess, like most cases, the smaller communities sort of have a fear of being taken over and swallowed up by larger communities. So I think that - what is that, I do not know what you said.

An Hon. Member: They do not want to call it Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Oh, that is part of it too but there are other concerns. There are concerns with what is going to happen to the fire fighting services. At the time this started we had a full fledged hospital operating in Grand Bank, now that is not the case. The usage of town halls and the paying of taxes, senior citizens particularly expressed concern about what kind of mechanism there would be for the paying of taxes, whether they would have to drive extra distances to pay their tax? There

is a very strong movement down there against it. I do not know where that has gone during the whole process but the commissioners came down, held hearings and got a very strong message from the people.

My colleague here shows me - what is this one, the Shoreline is it - about municipalities ordered to put budgets on hold. I guess this must be the minister again, it says the Province is preparing to introduce a new system of municipal grants. Water and sewer projects take effect on January 1, 1991.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: Sorry? Severance pay about what? Severance pay what does that mean? Well I say to the hon. Member that if he gets re-elected to the Legislature, which I doubt very much, but if he does who -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: That is not too bad. I do not know who does the arranging of seats on the other side but I would suggest whoever does put the Member for Bonavista South down closer to me, right across from me, I must say that is very good.

An Hon. Member: We did not know he was alive.

Mr. Matthews: Yes, he would give me something when I am standing, at times struggling to have a few words to say to -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: - yes he got her sewed up. What was that?

Mr. Tobin: Would you put in (inaudible)?

Mr. Matthews: Well that is two now, that is not too bad. It is going to be a very good night, I can tell, before it is over.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) raise taxes, the underlined section there.

Mr. Matthews: Specifically designed to distribute Government funds on a more equitable basis and provide them incentives to encourage fiscal independence, or in other words encourage them to raise their tax rates.

These are the kind of things that are sort of inflaming opinion in debate on this particular issue around the Province. People think what the Minister in essence is trying to do with this bill is what he really could not do with the amalgamation issue.

An Hon. Member: That is an unbiased argument.

Mr. Matthews: That is an unbiased argument. Now, I am glad the member reminded me, because what I was about to say to him, was that if he gets re-elected -

An Hon. Member: Which he will.

Mr. Matthews: Okay, which he will. Whenever the time comes, I am sure he will be too feeble to walk out of the legislature, he will have to be carried out, he will be here that long as a member -

An Hon. Member: Who?

Mr. Matthews: - the Member for Mount Scio-Bell Island and then he will be entitled to severance

pay. These flippant remarks, insinuations about severance things, and other things that - he will not like it when someone makes some flippant remark about his severance pay will be. Because by the time he leaves here, I suppose severance pay will be about \$250,000, because wages would have gone up that much, he would be here so long, that severance pay is going to be very heavy then. I would say all members then would be up around the \$500,000 category, so you will get half for that. What is it now, six month's salary? So, I would say the member would have a big severance package coming and he will not appreciate it when some other member then comes in makes some little flip comments about that kind of thing about him. You always have to keep these things in your mind when you say things. You have to think about it before you say it because, in fact, might come back to haunt you some day.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: I cannot hear him. I wish I could hear, but I have difficulty hearing him.

An Hon. Member: You should not open the door to it by bringing in those kinds of articles.

Mr. Matthews: But it is press. It is opinions of the people. This is a statement made by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs. He said it here. He said it outside the Legislature. These are comments that your own Ministers made.

Now, I say to the Member for Mount Scio-Bell Island that I think he, like other members opposite, does not really know what is about to

come down the pipe on this stuff. There are more things connected with this bill and this legislation than the member knows about, I suggest. There is more coming down the pipe on this issue than the member knows about and once the picture becomes clear to members opposite, the private members, I think there is going to be some big concerns about it, because it is not all going to be rosy. Anytime there are tax increases around the Province, members opposite know how that is received by the general population.

Yes, we know what happened to poor old Margaret Thatcher. Yes, Margaret Thatcher was one. Poor old Margaret is gone mainly because of her poll tax, I would say. It is probably the biggest factor, sad thing to say, a person was Prime Minister of Great Britain for eleven years.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) G.S.T.

Mr. Matthews: It could have something to do with the G.S.T.

Regional services that will probably see with it a minimum mil rate that will see - the Minister of Finance is nodding his head over there. I do not know if he is agreeing with me or if he is nodding at someone else or if he is nodding because he is dozing off. I am not sure. - But if these kinds of things happen, I am sure members opposite will then have more concerns about this piece of legislation than they are showing tonight. If you see a minimum mil rate imposed upon municipalities across this Province and you see a significant increase in taxes, that is going to cause a lot of problems.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) a

letter. Be careful.

Mr. Matthews: In a lot of communities around this Province people cannot afford to pay any more tax than they are paying because their income is so low. In most of the communities in this Province the income is dependent totally on the fishery. We know what is happening and they cannot afford to be taxed any more.

If, for instance, their property tax is re-evaluated or re-assessed - there is a line up now of communities in the Province that are behind on re-assessment - those property values will go up by probably 30 per cent to 40 per cent automatically. If you compound or couple that with an increase in the mil rate, a minimum mil rate that may be imposed by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs then the tax burden on top to those people will be unbearable.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: The Member for St. John's South says everybody should pay their fair share. That is hard to argue against but a fair share for you is not necessarily a fair share for someone in Point May or Lamaline because your fair share in St. John's with your income would be a heavy tax burden to someone in Point May or Lamaline. I do not know what you pay by way of tax but I do know what these people pay.

An Hon. Member: Do you agree there are some municipalities (inaudible)?

Mr. Matthews: I suppose that is like people, municipalities and people. Wherever you look there are those that, well you know.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) present their budget like they are supposed to do.

Mr. Matthews: I mean they have to present a budget every year to the Minister. It is supposed to be a balanced budget. I do not think the Minister will accept it if they submit a budget that is not balanced. The Minister would reject it, send it back, and not accept it.

So they have to present a balanced budget to the Minister each year. Then they have their five-year plan and so on in addition to that. A fair share sounds good but in some cases it can be very damaging to those who can least afford to pay it.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: What is that? I mean you have to look at the community, the municipality, you have to look at the services available or lack there of. You have to look at the employment, what people are employed doing.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: Sorry, that is what I am talking about. Right now it is the fishery. Because every community in my district is dependent upon the fishery and for the last number of years the fishery has been a total failure. A total failure from Little St. Lawrence to Garnish, it has been a failure. So when you are going to impose a tax upon these people you have to take into account their earnings.

An Hon. Member: Do you support the downgrading of the inshore allocation?

Mr. Matthews: Do not ask me if I support the downgrading of the inshore allocation. You should ask your own Minister of Fisheries a few questions about that, after watching him on the news tonight, if you watched him.

Mr. Tobin: I watched Dr. Kitchen.

Mr. Matthews: You should ask him a few questions if you are all so concerned about the fishery and the inshore.

Going back to the Member for St. John's South, you have to take all of that into account. Some of these people, for the last number of years, have only made a very few thousand dollars, and I mean a few thousand dollars. If some of them have made \$6,000 the last two years, they have done well. So if you are going to impose a minimum mil rate on those municipalities that is going to see a significant increase - the thing is, if they are paying \$200 in taxes this year, if they are, and if someone imposes taxes on them now, to bring them up to \$400 a year - then they will not be able to afford it. Now we could laugh at that, and say \$400 what is that, but to these people it means bread and butter.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: There is not much middle ground when you have no work, and you have no services, and no chance of getting any services. That ties into a comment that my colleague for Burin-Placentia West said in his speech when he talked about the Water and Sewer Corporation.

There were municipalities in my District, during the last provincial election, that the

Water and Sewer Corporation concept as promised by the Premier, to get water and sewer out to those communities that could not afford it - that was the theme - you cannot now afford to have water and sewer services. I am going to put in place this corporation which will see that you, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who so rightfully deserve water and sewer services, will get them. That is what he said. And to some of the communities in my District that sounded very good. Now it did not reflect in the ballot box -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: - Oh yes, it is correct. I can read it out of your manual. It is correct. I have it right here in the Liberal manual. It is right here. I did not have to read it because I had enough time in the campaign, by the way Mr. Speaker, that I could watch the Premier at 6:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. on the news.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: Never mind about the next time. I have heard that before. I have heard about that. But they saw that as a hope they would get water and sewer services. Like I said, it did not reflect in the vote for the Premier. He could hardly get any less than he got down my way. But if he had delivered on the water and sewer corporations to the communities who needed it, then it might have reflected the next time. It might have, but they saw that as their only hope. They are certainly not going to get it now, with the budget cuts, the reduction in capital works programs from Municipal and Provincial Affairs. There is

going to be no water and sewer corporation, so how are they going to get water and sewer services in those communities that do not have them, even though they want them?

An Hon. Member: You cannot predict (inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: Cannot predict what?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: No, you cannot predict the recession. Everyone else has been predicting it for the last two years. Everyone else in North America has talked about a recession for the last two years, except the Minister of Finance - our Minister of Finance.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: Never mind squeezing Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson did not bring in a document that said this Government was going to have a \$10 million surplus, and six months later say we have a \$120 million deficit. That was not Mr. Wilson, that was Dr. Kitchen.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, those are the concerns I have about this particular piece of legislation. My main concern is that we are going to see people out and about in the Province further taxed, and larger is not necessarily better. Having said that I am very, very pleased that my colleague from Grand Falls has moved this amendment calling for the six month hoist. I would say yes it will pass, and that -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Matthews: - means more time, Mr. Chairman, to flesh out the Regional Services Bill content.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Once again we hesitated after listening to such an illustrious speech. I certainly thought there would be a response from the opposite side. However, there is not and we will have to continue where we left off this evening in talking about the bill. Once again I agree with the Opposition House Leader in moving this motion, because what it does is give the Minister, not the people who are going to be affected, but it gives the Minister a chance to assess the document which he has presented to the house. Hopefully, when the Government members agree to support our motion and they shelve the bill for at least six months, the Minister will get a chance to do some work on it.

You know it is rather disheartening to get up in the house, Mr. Speaker, and just as you start bringing out some points about a bill, you find out that closure is invoked. It has happened every time we get into any kind of contentious issue. Shut her down, that is the mentality of the Government. You know, close debate, close the house, get them out of here so they will not be bringing out the truth of what is going on. Everything is being closed down: close down the hospitals, close down schools. Now they are trying to close down communities and amalgamate them - get them out of the little places. They are now trying to close down Change Islands by interfering with their ferry; trying to close down Ramea, and on and on it goes. Which

reminds me, a few nights ago I was attending a function and one of the entertainers said, did you hear the story about the Premier? He said, I had a dream a few nights ago. I dreamt the Premier died and he went up to heaven, but of course he was stopped at the gate and he was told he was in the wrong place and he was sent somewhere else. A few days later, three days later in fact, St. Peter looked down the road and he saw the devil coming up with the Premier by the hand and after figuring out maybe which was which, he asked, What is going on? I will take that back, Mr. Speaker. After looking he realized that the devil was coming back up to heaven with the Premier and he said, Where do you think you are going? The devil said, I am bringing him up here.. St. Peter said, Oh no you are not. He does not belong here. Bring him back to where he belongs. And the devil said, No way! He has been down there three days and he has two furnaces shut down already.

Basically, that is what has been happening, Mr. Speaker. The unfortunate thing about what is happening, and this bill is a typical example, and I go back to what I said this evening, when I spoke after the Member for Carbonear, when he talked about consulting with the people after the bill goes through, nobody believes anything this Government is saying, because what they tell and what they do are always two different things. What they are doing is a tremendously bad name for politicians. It is getting to the point out around where nobody believes the politician anymore.

Talking about resettlement, there is a story, before the Premier leaves, about two gentlemen who

were going through a cemetery in a small resettled community. They saw this headstone and it had been erected by a family of a man who was a politician. During his life he was a very honest politician. He wanted it known to the world that he was an honest politician so he said to his family, When I die, I want it engraved on my tombstone that I was an honest politician. So when he died they buried him in the local cemetery and erected a big headstone which said, 'Here lies a politician and an honest man.' Some years later, when two tourists came back to the little island and they went to the graveyard, they saw this beautiful big headstone and on it was inscribed, 'Here lies a politician and an honest man.' One fellow called to the other, come over here and look at this. He said, Here lies a politician and an honest man. They have two of them in the one grave.

Unfortunately, that is where we are getting now, Mr. Speaker, where people no longer have any trust. They no longer have any trust in politicians. One of the members saw the light and he came over across the floor. I think we are going to be like the fellow in the first joke, we are going to bring him back because he is not in the good books of many teachers out there right now.

An Hon. Member: We got them now, boy.

Mr. Hearn: In fact, he told me something tonight which I will shelve for a later time. I will not put it on record, but teachers all around the Island, a number of teachers, have threatened to hang the Minister in effigy, or the member, I should say, in effigy. The member really wanted to go to

watch the hanging, but he could not find out where effigy was. So we suggested that he -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flight: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: I hope the Minister of Agriculture is not suggesting that I sit down. That is the same Minister who wanted to introduce a nobel prize for farmers because he heard they were out standing in their field.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) relevant.

Mr. Hearn: I think it is very relevant, Mr. Speaker, because it shows the contempt that Government really has for the people in the Province, when they perpetrate such legislation upon them without any planning, any consultation and any chance to look ahead to see the effects that such legislation will have down the road.

That is why I support the amendment from my colleague, the Member for Grand Falls, because it gives the Premier and his Cabinet, and in particular the Minister of Provincial and Municipal Affairs, a chance to slow down and smell the roses, to see that everything out there is not that bad, that small is not necessarily wrong, big is not necessarily the best. We have many small communities, as I said earlier, very, very prosperous, who handle their own affairs, manage their own affairs exceptionally well. If we try to amalgamate them, and in some cases amalgamate them with others who are perhaps not ready for amalgamation, then you have a tremendous amount of discontent at

the local level.

Mr. Speaker, we are not against the concept of amalgamation, amalgamation meaning bringing together. There are many things in this Province that can be brought together for the benefit of the people. There is absolutely no doubt about the fact that the amalgamation that has happened in education has been positive, amalgamation within denominational ranks, amalgamation between denominational ranks, but it has happened gradually, it has happened because of the communication systems that have improved, the transportation systems that have improved, so that people can come together without any great inconvenience; they were not forced to come together.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible):

Mr. Hearn: The Member for St. John's South says tell another joke. The Member for St. John's South who has such a problem with employment in his District, who apparently last week told a number of his constituents that they should go to jeopardy because he heard there were a lot of jobs in jeopardy, if I were that hon. member, I would not say anything in the House.

Mr. Speaker, amalgamation, as I said, is not necessarily bad. There are areas in this Province where towns are willing to come together. There are areas in this Province where, if the Minister had not interfered with the threat of legislation and the threat of withdrawing many of the benefits, towns would have already been petitioning to be amalgamated.

I would suggest to the Minister

that instead of trying to force amalgamation down their throats, he go out and consult, not after the legislation as suggested by the Member for Carbonear, but before. Now I know they say we went out and we consulted, the same way as the Minister of Education went out and consulted, the same way as the Minister of Health went out and consulted, but consulting and listening and taking into concern what is being said are entirely different things. I can say I am going to consult with the Government about what I say, but whether I will say what I say I am going to say is a different matter, and this is what is happening. People are going out leaving school boards, hospital boards and municipalities thinking they are going to have some part to play in the overall process and it is not happening. The ministers are coming back and carrying out the lines that were set in stone even before they went out, because the Premier has sent them out around after developing his master plan to centralize, following in the footsteps of the Government he was part of years ago. After setting in stone his plan, he sends out his Ministers: go out now and appease the people by pretending they are going to have some input into it.

We saw what input they had in the White Paper on education. Absolutely nothing! The only thing which saved a lot of them was that Government did not have the money to carry out some of the commitments they wanted to, because we would have seen a centralizing process in education which would have had a disastrous effect in the field.

We have seen it, and we have seen what has happened to hospital

boards. They have been given one message and they are completely confused as to what they should do. School boards, a typical example, last night there was a big meeting here in St. John's of one of the major school boards in the Province. Nobody from Government attended to listen to the parents or to listen to the teachers express their concerns.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: No, but we had somebody there to listen and to bring back the concerns, and they did express concerns. They did not come down and blame government for what they were doing, necessarily. Nobody likes freezes. Nobody likes cutbacks. Everyone admits there are times when we must make the best use of what we have. Nobody disagrees with that. That was always done. When we were in government, when budget time came you had to look at your budget and try to get the best mileage out of the dollars you had. But you did not go out and confuse people.

The feeling expressed at the meeting last night was one of total and utter confusion. People are confused out there. They are the school board people, teachers in particular. On the weekend I had the opportunity to talk with hundreds of teachers actually, at a function celebrating their 100th Anniversary. I do not know how many members opposite were invited to those gatherings. I presume some were. I presume some went. But teachers are extremely concerned - not mad, just confused. They do not know what is coming down the line. They cannot believe what they are being told, because the story changes day in and day out. That is wrong.

If there is going to be a complete cutback, if there is going to be a freeze, then let it be so and tell the people up front. Do not tell them something one day, or have the ministers go out and tell them something, and then have the Premier say something different in the House. Tell them the facts. Tell them straight. They would be better off, and they can get on with the job. They can either come in and stand on the steps and protest, or they can go about their work in the schools or in the hospitals. But it is complete and utter confusion.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: There goes my friend from St. John's South again, the Member for St. John's South.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: I will let that one slip.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major concerns we have about the amalgamation bill is that it puts too much power into the hands of government. It puts the minister, it puts the Premier in a position where they can manipulate what is going on at the local level. People like having authority. Decentralization is extremely important, especially where people show they can manage their own affairs, because then they feel independent. They put more into what they are doing, they contribute more.

One of the biggest pluses in education these days is School Tax Authorities. That is something else the government wanted to wipe out, to abolish, and now they are going around on their hands and knees - the Minister of Education

has the knees out of his pants from going around to school tax authorities, begging them to raise more money. The Minister of Transportation, sitting in front of him, was going around promising to get rid of them. How the world turns. Without School Tax Authorities right now school boards would be in desperate shape, as the minister well knows, and as many of his colleagues are starting to find out. Why? Because these people have absolute control over the funding they raise; they have control over the money that is taken in locally; they do not have to depend on government.

I remember making a statement once saying, well, it would be nice to get rid of School Tax Authorities, but tell me where you are going to get the \$40 million? And if we ran into tough times and governments had to tighten their belts, then would the same amount of money flow to school boards? The answer is no, and there is a typical example of it happening right now.

That is why it is important to have a certain amount of control locally. If we take away control from the municipalities by placing it in the hands of regional boards, members of which are picked by the minister, the Chairperson selected by the minister, where does the control lie, with the municipalities? No, no, Mr. Speaker. The control lies within the hands of government, and Governments are only as good as the people who make them up. Sometimes that can be positive and sometimes that can be very negative.

Mr. Speaker, hopefully, as I said, the amendment as presented by my

colleague from Grand Falls will be approved, will be supported by the House, and we will see a six month hoist, during which time the Minister should do what he should have done originally, find out how the municipalities feel through public hearings, through consultations, and then bring in a bill which we will support. Because the principle of bringing together, sharing facilities is an important one. But it has to be well-planned, well-structured and the communities themselves have to play a part so that they will do it willingly. Let them suggest how they can make best use of what is out there, not tell them. You know what happens when you tell a Newfoundlander anything. We stick in our heels and we will go against it. That is our nature.

So maybe the Minister will learn. I think during the six months he will have a chance to sit back and assess the situation and then, hopefully, when the Bill comes back to the House, we will not only do what we were going to do with the amendments we supported, but we will be able to do it with the Bill generally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to have a few words on this Bill, and also express my support for the amendment brought into the House by the hon. the Member for Grand Falls.

When this legislation first came forward I took the liberty of sending copies to some councils in my district. I remember distinctly that one of the councils had a delegation in my

office, probably a month or so after I mailed the thing out to them. They held up the proposed legislation and the first reaction was, what is this, amalgamation through another means? That council delegation, Mr. Speaker, was one of those councils in Green Bay which had been slated for amalgamation when the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs brought down his massive amalgamation scheme some time ago.

I think when this government was first elected, Mr. Speaker, it really did not expect to be elected and as a result they were somewhat confused as to what to do to start off a program, an agenda, for the people of the province. So the Hon. Minister responsible for Municipal Affairs, mainly I think due to his own municipal background and the expansionist tendencies of the St. John's Council of which he was a part, came up with this very bright idea that we should embark on a massive amalgamation scheme throughout the Province; it would lend itself to certain efficiencies, and presumably save the provincial government some money. At the same time, it would cause enough commotion, kick up enough dust, cause enough confusion, create a sufficiently large smoke screen so that people would not notice really that this government needed some time to get itself organized, being very surprised at being elected.

I do not think they realized at the time, Mr. Speaker, the degree of the smoke screen and the confusion and the dust that would be kicked up. Very quickly, in very short order, a great number of councils who had themselves slated for amalgamation, started calling their local radio

stations, the open line shows, doing interviews with the local newspapers, and generally demanding to see the Minister to have some reasonable explanation made as to why this brand-new proposal, right out of the blue, not mentioned in the election campaign, was being foisted on them.

As I indicated in my earlier remarks on this matter, first when I got elected this Government got elected with a mandate to do certain things. But they had no mandate to amalgamate, Mr. Speaker. That was nowhere prominent in their platform, as was not, as well, as I have indicated on a number of occasions, their strong stand on Meech Lake. These two items, which were major public policy items, were not items on which the Government placed any great emphasis during their election campaign, therefore, I do not think they are items on which this particular provincial Government has a strong mandate from the people.

But, Mr. Speaker, people reacted very negatively and very swiftly to the amalgamation scheme. In my own district the Government proposed the amalgamation of Brighton, Triton, and Pilley's Island - Brighton, Triton, and Pilley's Island. Now, Mr. Speaker, that sort of struck me as rather odd. As a native of Green Bay, and in talking to other natives of Green Bay, they were utterly surprised, to be quite frank with you, that if there was to be an amalgamation of certain communities in Green Bay, then I guess amalgamating these particular three communities made no sense to people who are aware of the physical geography of the

communities involved, or who are aware of the communities of interest within the District of Green Bay, in particular, the Southern Shore of Green Bay.

Mr. Speaker, I immediately, of course, as a member of the House, contacted the mayors of the communities involved, and the immediate reaction from the mayors was all negative. The people I spoke with on the telephone and in weekend visits to the constituency were all totally against, and again totally surprised, amazed, that these particular communities had been chosen for amalgamation.

I took the liberty, at the first opportunity, Mr. Speaker, of going out to the district after this matter broke and driving, physically, through the three communities. Brighton is at the far end of the road on the south shore of Green Bay District, so I drove to Brighton and then I drove back through Brighton, through Triton and onto Pilley's Island. I took particular notice of the mileage meter on my car, and between Brighton and Triton I passed through six kilometers of wooded coastal Newfoundland scenery. They call it scenic Green Bay with good reason, Mr. Speaker. But I had six kilometers of wooded coastal scenery between the community of Brighton and Triton. I also had to cross a causeway between the community of Brighton and Triton, so I had a little chunk of the Atlantic Ocean separating these communities as well.

If the Government did not admit or know there was a causeway present they certainly did this summer, because they actually replaced the bridge on the causeway this summer in Brighton, which was a much

appreciated local project, some work for local workers. But it certainly emphasized the fact that at least in one department of this Provincial Government, Mr. Speaker, people were aware that not only six kilometers of woods but a part of the Atlantic Ocean separated Brighton and Triton. Of course, unfortunately, that knowledge seemed to exist only in the Department of Works, Services and Transportation, not in the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I got into Triton and I drove to Pilley's Island, again another six or seven kilometers of beautiful wooded coastal scenery. A large causeway this time, Mr. Speaker, crossing Flatrock Tickle, complete with a bridge, separates the two Islands as well. So, again, a number of kilometers of woods, plus a causeway, plus a causeway bridge and a considerably larger chunk of the Atlantic Ocean separating those particular islands. So we had three communities, very distinct separate islands. Under the former Liberal Government they were extremely distinct separate Islands because, of course, there was no road connecting them at all. It was only after Brian Peckford became the Member for Green Bay that some progress was made in that particular area and that the road was completed all the way from South Brook down the south shore of Green Bay, all the way to Brighton. So we do have three communities which are still islands, but at least they are connected by road and causeway network.

I am sure the hon. the Member for Harbour Main, when he was a Minister, was heavily involved in the planning and construction of those roads and bridges, Mr.

Speaker. I am sure the people of Brighton have his name on the tip of their tongue just about every time they sit down and say grace at supper.

So, Mr. Speaker, we had a three Island network very physically separated. Prior to the roads coming into existence, they were very distinct communities of interest. One could almost say that these various communities had no real togetherness, each of them were very distinct. Brighton is a smaller community but very proud of its heritage of course, having been named for the seaside resort town in England. Triton is an extremely proud industrious town, a town that turned PC during the IWA strike, when the former Premier Smallwood was in power. Most of the people in that area were loggers and they have been voting PC ever since the IWA strike. So much so that the former member for Green Bay, prior to Brian Peckford, the son of the Premier of the day, found it very difficult even to enter Triton without threats of being tossed over the local wharf, because in those days the local wharf was the only way to approach the island, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these three communities have a paved road network, with two causeways and two bridges connecting them. Very distinct communities of interest, they are very different.

Pilley's Island, of course, is a very historic community in Green Bay, having been the ancestral home of the Government House Leader and the home of a very large copper mine, having a population I think in the thousands, back in the 1890's, operating that copper mine. So

very, very distinct individual communities. The only thing connecting them, Mr. Speaker, is the physical road network. And, if anything, the road network, given the length involved, the forest in the area, given the amount of forested land involved, helps to physically separate them and the road itself is about the only connection between the three communities. Who built the road? A member named Brian Peckford built the road.

The remaining roads seem to be unpaved in Green Bay: there is a road system leading to the ferry system to and from Long Island, the ferry system to and from Little Bay Islands, and the road down to the Harry's Harbour - Jackson's Cove area are all yet unpaved in Green Bay, Mr. Speaker, something that I have repeatedly indicated to the hon. the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation when he is courteous enough to send me a letter every year asking my priorities, as Member for the District, about the road. One particular road, the hon. Member will realize, had a petition done on it and the President of the Green Bay Liberal Association brought the petition in and delivered it personally and quietly to the Minister of Works, Services, and Transportation earlier this year. But, of course, it had no effect on getting the road paved. We hope and pray, Mr. Speaker, that we will see some pavement in the next budget year, but that remains to be seen.

So, Mr. Speaker, we had three communities, very distinct, no community of interest, physically very separated, up for amalgamation and everybody was

against it.

Then I turned on the TV news one night and I saw the hon. the Premier come on and come to the defence of, I believe, a little community called Steady Brook, on the West Coast. It had been slated by the Minister's Department for amalgamation with the City of Corner Brook, as I remember, but the hon. the Premier indicated that Steady Brook was separated from Corner Brook by the physical realities of the magnificent Humber River gorge.

Well, not quite as scenic, I might add, as the coastal scenery in Green Bay. Nonetheless, one is impressed with the degree of physical separation between Steady Brook and the City of Corner Brook, which comes about because of the Humber River gorge, and the hon. the Premier, and quite rightly so, I thought, said that this was a good reason not to amalgamate these two communities, that there is no way physically they can ever grow together unless you are going to build houses and shops and whatnot on the side of a mountain.

So, after seeing that particular show on television that night, Mr. Speaker, I knew I had it made now. So I immediately, I do believe, dashed off a letter to the Minister, or I might have raised it in Question Period, I cannot remember exactly what, but seeing that we had a physical separation with fresh water, the Humber River gorge, I thought that maybe the presence of the Atlantic Ocean and several kilometers of wooded coastal scenery would be a sufficient physical separation for the three islands in Green Bay District to have them eliminated from the amalgamation process as

well. In fairness and balance I figured what is fair for the Humber River gorge is fair for the Atlantic Ocean, what is fair for Steady Brook is fair for Brighton, Triton, and Pilley's Island. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, even though I made this logical approach to the Government to have these three communities exempted, I got absolutely nowhere with it and in due course the Minister's Department organized a public hearing session, as required under current law, so that the communities affected could actually have their say and give their thoughts about the amalgamation. Weather prevented me from attending, but I did fax out to the local council my objections and I believe they were presented to the Commissioners. The councils had their say and other interested citizens as well, as I understand it.

It was well over a year ago, I think, Mr. Speaker, that that process took place and to date there has been no final delineation if these three island communities are going to be forced to amalgamate or allowed to stay the way they are.

But one of the other aspects that was taken up by the Community of Brighton, which is probably the smallest of the three communities, Mr. Speaker, is if they were amalgamated into a much larger community, I suppose I would have to use Joe Clark's words 'A community of communities', that is the only logical way to describe the amalgamation of three very separate and distinct island communities, but if they were amalgamated at best in a council situation, maybe if you had seven councillors, three at large and four with wards, they might get

one ward - the larger town of Triton might get two wards, Pilley's Island might get one ward. So Brighton, with a Council of seven people, could only really count on the vote of one individual ward councillor for Brighton and the logic of the people of Brighton quite quickly turned to the fact that we are the only community among these three that really does not have a good water and sewer system installed - we have a start but only a small start.

Their logical way of thinking was what chance do we have in the municipal priorities of the larger amalgamated, multi-island community? What chance do we have of getting our priorities put forward in terms of completing our water and sewer system if we have one councillor out of seven on a joint sort of regional amalgamated council? Obviously, our concerns will be lost. We are better off with our own council of five or seven people fighting for the water and sewer system in our town. That was the logic of the people of Brighton, and I think eminently reasonable logic under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hewlett: Springdale, Mr. Speaker, was amalgamated once, I will have the hon. the Member for Bonavista South know. It was a part of a rural district council and it was joined with the Community of South Brook, some five miles away by water and, at the time, probably nearly twenty miles away by road. But that amalgamation de-amalgamated in due course and Springdale became a town council and South Brook became a separate town council. But there was a time in the

1950's, or maybe even in the early 1960's, when Springdale was amalgamated with the Town of South Brook. But I would say the sheer physical separation of the two communities, which was even more extensive than is the case with Brighton, Triton and Pilley's Island, eventually led to both of those towns becoming more mature in their municipal government and each of them deciding to go their own way.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have in the Bill that is currently before the House, changes in amalgamation. Basically you can call this Bill what you want. You can call it Regional Services Boards, but I think you are only into semantics, you are into a different type of phraseology.

What we have here is a mechanism whereby this Government can force amalgamation on communities without the embarrassment of public hearings. The public hearing process the Government went through on the hundred-odd communities they wanted to amalgamate a year or so ago caused considerable embarrassment to the Government.

Very few of the groupings that were proposed were acceptable to the local people, the local councils, and the public hearing process was one mechanism whereby locals with considerable concerns could voice those concerns, covered by local media. The entire amalgamation process, the massive amalgamation campaign embarked upon by the Government became an embarrassment in due course to the Government and out of it all, the one hundred-and-some-odd communities, we saw the amalgamation of Grand Falls/Windsor, there recently.

That is not a very good batting average when you set out to change the world, Mr. Speaker, and you end up merely affecting a couple of communities in Central Newfoundland, which at one time were physically separated by a railway track, and now that the train is gone, that is not even there anymore, Mr. Speaker.

Even in that particular case the amalgamating communities had to be enticed with certain commitments of capital projects and whatnot, and I gather there is some controversy now as to just what was and what was not committed. So even there, where the Government has had a degree of success in this amalgamation process, there is still a dark cloud hanging over the new reality of the Town of Grand Falls/Windsor, Central City Exploits, or whatever it may end up becoming called.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is not altogether a glowing record so far, the success of the massive amalgamation campaign embarked upon by this Government.

The particular bill we have on the floor of the House would allow the amalgamation process essentially to take place right now in the cabinet room in Confederation Building. Now I remember very well when we talked about an amalgamation of Provinces some months ago, called the Confederation of Canada, that the hon. the Premier had a very strong position, a very strong stand against the Meech Lake Constitutional Process. Especially he did not like some of the detailed aspects of it, but he liked even less the process, because it was all supposed to be cooked up behind closed doors in a

resort somewhere in Northern Quebec, we had a process that was done in secret. The body politic of Canada expressed considerable concerns that they were not allowed to be a part of the process, that it was left to 11 first ministers to decide the ultimate fate of the nation.

The hon. the Premier made quite a considerable reputation for himself across this nation in exposing the Meech Lake process with its flaws to the citizenry of Canada. It is rather strange, perhaps ironic, that the current bill that we have before the House will take an amalgamation of various communities in this particular Province and have that process completed in the secrecy of the cabinet room, Mr. Speaker, and the people will not even be consulted any more through feasibility studies or public hearings.

I think it is rather ironic, it is very much a double standard, Mr. Speaker, that a Government that would put such a stress on public consultation, that would invent a process of Legislation Committees travelling the Province to obtain public information and public views on various bills before this Legislature, would now, after having embarked on a massive amalgamation process, with a massive public education campaign, with a massive public hearings campaign, now finds itself having been so embarrassed by the process that it is now going to change the law of this Province and allow amalgamations to take place essentially in the secret of the cabinet room, without the input of the people of the Province through any kind of a public hearing process.

My hon. friend from St. Mary's - the Capes mentioned another form of amalgamation which is taking place in this Province, Mr. Speaker, and that has to do with school boards. We have had amalgamation in school boards for many years. When I first went to high school it was called an amalgamated high school, Mr. Speaker. The concept is not new to this Province at all. Eventually that amalgamated school system went on to become an even larger system of General Protestant schools, now known as the Integrated Education System. The Roman Catholics have their own school system, as do the Pentecostals, Mr. Speaker.

One hint even now in this assembly that through the tightening of the screws on the finances of various school boards and whatnot, that amalgamation here will not be voluntary as it was in the past, that amalgamation here may well become a requirement of school boards in order to survive financially. I certainly have certain constituents in my district, and I know many people involved in the Pentecostal Education System in my district are extremely concerned that financial pressures will lead to a forcing of amalgamation there that they think maybe against their constitutional rights. I want to go on record as saying that the Government does not have a mandate to perform that type of amalgamation either, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Who is the Mayor of Springdale?

Mr. Hewlett: The Mayor of Springdale. Why do you keep bringing him up? The Mayor of Springdale spoke rather politely to me the other day, at the

opening of a day care centre in Springdale. As a matter of fact, he raised the matter that he has raised before with the hon. the minister of Development, having to do with the survival of a wood products company in our Town, a matter on which both I and the Mayor have written the Minister requesting that that particular company be given help in the marketing end of its business.

Indeed, in my conversation with the Mayor of Springdale on Monday past, at the opening of a day care centre, that was the sum and substance of our conversation, apart from gentele pleasantries, etc. So I am glad that the hon. the Member for Bonavista South raised the matter, it gave me an opportunity to put a plug in for the company, to tell the hon. the Minister that both myself and the good Mayor of Springdale are looking forward to great things from his Government in this matter so that this company can expand and prosper, and employ 100 people rather than the 20 it now has, and not be faced with being in a production of probably only 20 percent of its capacity. Given the commitment of this Government to diversifying the economy, Mr. Speaker, I think it is time the Government, if they are looking for opportunities and avenues to create work in non-traditional areas, the hon. the Member for Bonavista South provided me with an excellent opportunity to remind the hon. Minister of his duty and his opportunity to create work in that particular area and that particular industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have amalgamation by another name in this new bill, we will have amalgamation without the public hearing process, we will have

amalgamation without even
feasibility studies. This
Government is afraid of the public
hearing process. I think it
created a monster. It decided to
amalgamate one
hundred-and-some-odd communities.
The Province went absolutely wild
and unholy fire was kicked up.
Now, in order to prevent that sort
of thing, they are bringing in a
bill which will allow amalgamation
to take place in secret, inside
the Cabinet room. Thank you, Mr.
Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member
for Fogo.

Mr. Winsor: Mr. Speaker, being
close to 10:00 p.m., there are a
couple of minutes to adjourn
debate.

An Hon. Member: Call the
question. Call the question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member
adjourns the debate. It being
10:00 p.m., the House stands
adjourned until tomorrow,
Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.