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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!

Statements by Ministers

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to address the issue of the late March adjustments to Federal transfer payments.

Contrary to the statements made by Members of Her Majesty's Opposition, it is not the usual practice of Governments to adjust Budget estimates immediately upon receipt of new information, such as the revised Federal transfer estimates provided by the Federal Government subsequent to the tabling of the 1990 Budget.

Budget estimates are a forecast of what Government believes will have happened at the end of the fiscal year twelve months away. They are based upon the best available information at the time of preparation. Invariably, during the course of a fiscal year, certain items in the estimates will change. All hon. Members know that. Indeed, revenues estimated and paid by the Government of Canada each fiscal year are subject to a series of not less than fifteen estimates and re-estimates, some of which affect entitlements for up to four fiscal years.

These Federal estimates total 64 per cent of budgeted current account revenue for 1991. It is ludicrous to suggest that Government officially revise its Budget each time there is a change in one of these individual

estimates, or, in estimates of own source revenues, or in estimated expenditures. In fact, re-estimates provided by Federal Finance within the last two weeks indicate an additional transfer of approximately \$20 million.

We have chosen not to include this amount in our forecast, however, because we believe it may very well be offset by negative adjustments later in the year.

Mr. Speaker, when Budgets are brought down, there is always a risk that a revision can occur such as the one experienced this fiscal year. Again, contrary to the continued assertions of the Opposition, there is nothing unique about such an occurrence.

In the 1988-1989 Budget, delivered by the previous Administration on March 29, 1988, and read by the then Finance Minister, the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl, Federal transfers to the Province with respect to equalization were forecast to be \$25 million higher than the entitlement for that year due to anticipated revenues from prior year adjustments. A letter from the Federal Department of Finance dated March 30, 1988, the very next day, however, indicated that the anticipated \$25 million adjustment would not be paid in the 1988 - 1989 fiscal year. It was instead paid on the last day of the 1987-1988 fiscal year. This had the effect of reducing equalization payments to an amount \$25 million less than the Budget estimate for 1988-1989. The previous Administration did not revise its Budget. In fact, no public revisions to the Budget estimates were made until a press release was delivered on September 30, 1988, six months later.

Another similar situation occurred

in 1982 - 1983. In that year a revenue slippage of some \$69 million from the May 27, Budget was apparent by August. Over \$20 million of that was known in June. However, the Budget projections were not officially updated until November 18, 1982, at which time the government of the day enacted expenditure restraints and major tax increases to address the issue.

Mr. Speaker, concerning the present situation, the Department of Finance was informed by telephone on March 30, 1990 of revised equalization entitlements concerning the four years from 1987 - 1988 to 1990 - 1991. This enabled us to calculate the \$63.7 million shortfall in the fiscal transfers. This was confirmed by a letter of Federal Finance dated March 30, and received on April 5.

I would like to point out that this Government has responded to the negative Federal adjustments to the transfer payments in a most fiscally responsible manner.

Of the total negative \$63.7 million revision the Province had the option of repaying \$34.2 million to Ottawa immediately or having this amount deducted in equal interest free installments from the twenty-four equalization payments to be made in 1990 - 1991. Had the repayment been made last March, it would have reduced the surplus last fiscal year and resulted in a lower deficit this year. However, Mr. Speaker, Government has chosen to practice good cash management by spreading this repayment over the 1990-91 fiscal year thereby saving approximately \$2 million in interest payments. The estimated fiscal position of Government is traditionally not revised until

after results for the first quarter or first half of the year has been analyzed and determined to show the situation that is expected to persist until the end of the fiscal year. That was the practice of the previous Government and that will be the practice of the current Government.

Mr. Speaker, I trust that these comments will provide an appreciation of the fiscally responsible manner in which this Government has conducted its financial affairs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what a pathetic effort of trying to cover up one's incompetence and one's deceitfulness. There is a big difference, Mr. Speaker, in the \$25 million difference by our having it moved ahead to accept the last day of the fiscal year because that was to the advantage of this Province. That is called good fiscal management, Mr. Speaker. That is called working together with the Government of Canada to receive the payment in the year in which it was most advantageous to us. It is a big difference in trying to hide a \$64 million deficit during two months of which we were involved in a Budget debate in this House of Assembly, when a Minister had opportunity, after opportunity, after opportunity to tell the truth and failed to do so. It is a big difference, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Further statements by Ministers.

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, it is not a formal statement by me but I would like, with the leave of the House, to advise Your Honour and the Members of the House of the sudden passing of the mother of the hon. the Member for Placentia. She died suddenly yesterday afternoon and he, of course, will not be here for the next two or three days. I understand she is being buried Wednesday morning from Mary Queen of Peace Church on Torbay Road. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that all hon. Members would join in expressing the sympathy of the House to the hon. Member for Placentia and the entire Hogan family. I would ask Your Honour if you would arrange for the usual expression of sympathy from the House.

Thank you, Your Honour.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House we certainly want to associate ourselves with the comments made by the hon. the Premier. We want the House to express its condolences to the hon. the Member for Placentia and to the Hogan family. We are sorry to hear of the sudden passing of Mrs. Hogan, and we certainly want all of the House to be associated with passing along our condolences.

Oral Questions

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr.

Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in a press scrum following Question Period, the Minister of Education indicated that the Government might proceed immediately to implement some of the measures it referred for study to the Royal Commission on Education before the Royal Commission reported. Now, I do not know if that means the Government does not need the Royal Commission or it is attempting to forecast what the Royal Commission might recommend, but I would like to ask the Premier, will the Premier inform the House what measures relating to efficiency and sharing in the education system his Government plans to take as part of its cost reduction measures for 1991/1992?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education would have considerably more detail at his fingertips than I do. But what the Minister had indicated, from my recollection, is that steps would be taken to ask those responsible for the delivery of education services in the Province to work more closely together to avoid duplication.

I believe, for example, there is an example of it in the district of the hon. the Leader of the Opposition. One of the denominational education committees, I believe, is in the process of planning the construction of a new school in Baie Verte. Now, Mr. Speaker, that will have the effect of taking children out of a school that is already there and functioning well, so far as I know, and building a new school and leaving some of the rooms and some of the facilities in the

other school vacant.

The net result will be a higher cost and a lowering of efficiency. I believe that is an example of what the hon. Minister had in mind, asking the Denominational Education Committees to take into account this situation. And not waiting for the Royal Commission to report, but asking them as a preliminary measure to try and save money wherever we could.

Now that is one example. I have no doubt there are others that would more readily come to the mind of the Minister than myself, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rideout: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am asking those questions to the Premier in his capacity as leader of the Government because I would assume that with health and education, where we are looking at tremendous reductions for next year, the Premier would be intimately aware of every detail the government is planning.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier was fairly vague in his answer. Let me ask the Premier some direct questions, short, to the point, direct questions. Does the Government intend to eliminate or reduce the number of assistant superintendents at the school board level?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what kind of an office the hon. member ran when he occupied it, but I am not aware intimately of every detail in

every department. As a matter of fact, I recall the usual criticism I get is that I am a dictator, dictating to everybody what they had to do, and now he expects me to be intimately aware. He, at the very least, should develop a consistency.

Mr. Speaker, I can take his question under advisement. If he does not want to ask it of the Minister of Education, who is far more aware of the detail than I could ever expect to be, because contrary to the suggestions I am not a dictator, I do not run the government, I can take it under advisement and I can repeat the answer after I have been informed by the Minister of Education or have been informed by the department. I gave an example of the Baie Verte thing because that is something we discussed and that I was familiar with, Mr. Speaker. There are probably other examples, and I can find out and advise the House in due course.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we spent more time in our offices, let me say to the Premier, than we spent on airplanes, whipping from one end of Canada to the other talking about constitutions.

Let me try the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker. Does the Minister of Education intend to impose as part of his cost-cutting measures, a very simple, straightforward questions, reducing the number of assistant superintendents at school boards?

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

Dr. Warren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to preface my answer with a short comment. One of the most exciting and positive things this government has done in education is to establish a Royal Commission on Education to look at the delivery of education in this Province. I am very pleased with that decision, and we are anxiously looking forward to a long-term solution to many of the problems that face us in the Province.

We are looking at a whole range of options, Mr. Speaker, but as I indicated last week, we have not even decided on a figure. We have not decided on where any downsizing will take place. We are in the process of consulting; serious consultations have been initiated. And, I might say, consultations are not just taking place with trustees and with the NTA and with other groups, the DEC's and parents, but over the next two or three weeks we are going to consult throughout the Province; we are going to ask the people throughout the Province what kinds of adjustments can be made in the next year so that we can meet the requirements of the Government, and I will be in a position to inform the House in due course of the results of these consultations.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a pretty long preamble to a third supplementary question. Let me ask the minister directly once again, Mr. Speaker, does the government intend to eliminate or reduce the number of program co-ordinators at the school board level? Yes or no?

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

Mr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, all of the options are being examined. Let me tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, and tell the hon. member, if we have to make cuts throughout the system, we are going to look at all levels, including management. We are not going to cut only those at the bottom. I can assure you that we will examine school board offices, and the presidents throughout the colleges, and the central office staff in the colleges. We will examine in our own department what downsizing will take place, not only with the teachers and with the people at the bottom, but at the top as well and in management. So, with that answer, Mr. Speaker, I think that gives you the yes or no.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for providing the answer. The answer is obviously yes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me ask the Minister this: Does the Minister intend to remove the teacher salary regulation which presently freezes at 2 per cent the number of teachers a board can lose in any given year? Does the Minister intend to remove that 2 per cent regulation?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I usually am a pretty good communicator, but apparently the Leader of the Opposition has not heard what I said. No decisions have been made but we are looking

at a whole variety of options and we are consulting. Before any decisions are made, we will consult. We have made no decisions about teachers, we have made no decisions about program co-ordinators, we have made no decisions about assistant superintendents. But we are looking at all the options, including program reductions, personnel reductions, efficiencies in the system, as the hon. the Premier has mentioned. I can give a whole list of possible efficiencies that have to be examined and, in fact, some revenue sources as well. All of the options will be examined in the next month and I will be pleased to announce what our decisions are in due course.

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

Mr. Tobin: You should start at the top (inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, that would be the best cost-cutting measure we could have. Mr. Speaker, let me ask the Minister of Education this: Does the Government intend to ask school boards to ask School Tax Authorities to raise an additional \$5 million next year through school taxation?

Mr. Simms: They are abolishing that. They are abolishing the school tax.

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, the Minister is not asking anybody to do anything at this point in time. We may have to ask them eventually to help share the cost. By the way, Mr. Speaker,

the reaction I have been getting throughout this Province is that people want to know the truth and they want to share in the solution, not just to criticize.

Now, more specifically in answer to the question let me make this quite clear, Mr. Speaker. This is what school boards are suggesting. School boards are suggesting in their public discussions as well as in their discussions with the department, and School Tax Authorities are suggesting, that there may be a way to raise additional monies as a result of a reformed school tax. The Government has not made any announcement on this. These are suggestions that are being put forth, constructive suggestions, for solving the problems that we now have. The boards are helping to solve the problem, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education and the Government are going to find out the level of public sympathy very, very quickly over the next few days.

Mr. Speaker, let me ask the Minister of Education this: Is the Government requiring or planning to require school boards for 1991-92, all school boards, to pay 10 per cent of bus transportation costs, which will be the equivalent of \$4 million? And is the Government contemplating asking the school boards to pass that cost along in user fees to parents in this Province?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, ditto is the answer to that, the same as before. We are considering all of the options, so I would say ditto. I would like to go through it again. I do not want to be arrogant in answering my questions. I want to give all the information, but I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that all of the options are being considered and we will consult before we make our final decisions on these issues.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I say to the Minister of Education he should not try too hard not to be arrogant, he should be himself, be arrogant.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my old friend the President of Treasury Board, whom I have not talked to for quite some time now. On August 30th the President of Treasury Board announced Government's decision to make some major changes in the contribution rates and the retirement benefits of the Public Service Pension Plan, the Uniformed Services Pension Plan, and the Teachers' Pension Plan. I also noticed in The Evening Telegram of October 15 the President of Treasury Board was quoted as saying, 'There have been a number of misleading and inaccurate statements on this issue, presumably, by Mr. Coombs, President of the NTA.' First of all I would like to ask the Minister, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister still intend to proceed with the changes as announced and articulated on August 30? And secondly, I wonder if he could elaborate and tell us what statements he is referring to when

he says the statements of Mr. Coombs have been misleading and inaccurate?

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are an awful lot of questions there and I wonder if you would bear with me for a few moments?

An Hon. Member: Two.

Mr. Baker: More than two.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Baker: I heard him. First of all, in terms of the changes to the pension plans, we announced changes to the Public Service Pension Plan and the Uniformed Service Pension Plan, but we did not announce any changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan, contrary to what the Opposition House Leader has said. The comment on the Teachers' Pension Plan was that it was in negotiation, that there were deficiencies that must be corrected. No changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan were announced, except to say that it was under negotiation.

The next question, I believe, had to do with some inaccuracies. He wanted to know what inaccuracies I was talking about. There were a number, but I could refer to one. There was a statement in a teachers' bulletin which said this Government had contributed nothing other than ordinary payments to the Teachers' Pension Plan, nothing outside regular payments, and that, of course, is an inaccuracy. This Government put \$20 million extra into the

Teachers' Pension fund in March of this year. There were some inaccuracies that I was concerned about. I communicated with the teachers concerning these inaccuracies, and will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Simms: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I asked two questions: Do you intend to carry on with the changes, and what statements were misleading?

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the Minister, and may I just remind him that in his statement on August 30 he makes it clear that significant revisions to the pension plan are essential. That is in the paragraph dealing with the Teachers' Pension Plan. So if he tries to suggest that he did not say there were going to be changes, that is not quite accurate.

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is this: He did say, as I just quoted, that significant revisions would be made to the Teachers' Pension Plan, and since this particularly is an arbitrary Government directive and Government decision, can he tell us, therefore, how much increase he proposes teachers will be paying in pension premiums - what percentage in other words, and can he tell us what benefits might be reduced for past and future service in the NTA pension program?

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was one thing I did not answer to the previous

question - does the Government intend to go ahead? The Government fully intends to go ahead. We have had discussions with various unions involved. There may be some provisions which may take a little longer than we expected, but these will be simply time delays and would have no effect on the basic plan. But we do intend to go ahead. That is all of them except the teachers.

With regard to the teachers' plan, Mr. Speaker, there was no arbitrary decision taken by Government. The NTA agrees that the plan is seriously underfunded and there have to be changes. The teachers in this Province agree that the plan must be properly funded. That is the one thing we all agree on. And I can say to the hon. member that that is what we are saying, the plan must be properly funded. Discussions are underway with regards to the details of this, but certainly there was no arbitrary decision taken, but simply a common-sense, logical, sensible decision taken to overcome the blunders of the past and properly fund the pension plan that teachers at one point in time were assuming was funded but in fact it was not.

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

Mr. Simms: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Just so we get this straight now, because that is certainly not the perception that is out there, from what I understand, I will ask the Minister a simple and direct question. Does the Minister intend to make major changes to the Newfoundland Teachers' Pension Plan?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the

President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: The answer, Mr. Speaker, is that the Teachers' Pension Plan will be properly funded so that teachers can be assured that they will receive the proper pension when the time comes to pay the pension.

The Teachers' Pension Plan will be properly funded, unlike what has happened in past years. So, yes, there will be these changes.

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

Mr. Simms: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister tell the House whether the Government intends to make major changes this year in the contribution rates and the retirement benefits of the Newfoundland Teachers' Pension Plan?

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

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, as the Opposition House Leader well knows, this is a topic of discussion with the teachers right now. They are working with us to guarantee that they have a proper, well-funded pension plan when this is over.

They are very encouraged and very happy that a Government in this Province finally had the guts to do something real for the teachers of this Province to guarantee their pension fund would be solid and their pensions would be paid fifteen years down the road.

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

Mr. Simms: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would be interested in

knowing all the teachers who are so excited about this proposed change, because it is certainly not the way we are hearing it. He is probably taking his advice from former NTA presidents.

Let me ask him this: He would confirm that the changes to the NTA pension plan requires the consent of the NTA.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) think.

Mr. Simms: According to the collective agreement, it requires consent of the NTA. Now under a collective agreement it is therefore protected by law. I am sure he can confirm that. Perhaps I will ask. Can he confirm that? If so, let me ask him this scenario. If there is not consent by the NTA to the changes that Government wants, how, then, would the Government proceed to implement the changes it desires, by breaking the law?

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not one to discuss or encourage breaking of the law, and I want to make it clear that I am not the one who is suggesting that here today. I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am confident that we can work out an arrangement with the NTA with regard to their pension plan.

I cannot say how much of an increase in contributions this would mean, both on behalf of the Government in behalf of the taxpayers of this Province, and on the teachers' part. I cannot say how much that will be, but I am confident that something will be worked out and, therefore, the rest of the member's question is

purely hypothetical.

Mr. Simms: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I refer to the President of Treasury Board and to Your Honour, of course, because you would want to have all the accuracies of the last bulletin from the Newfoundland Teachers' Association. The headline says: Teachers won't tolerate Government's approach. That is a little bit different from the Minister's response, and I know Your Honour would want to have all the information at his fingertips.

Mr. Speaker, let me ask the President of Treasury Board, this question. Perhaps I can get him to answer it this way. If there is not consent by the NTA to the changes that Government would like to see, has Government ever indicated to the NTA that they would be prepared to bring in legislation that would provide for the changes the Government wishes? Has the Government ever indicated that? Has the Government ever thought about it? Does the Government think about it? Does the Government intend to bring in any legislation to counter the provision in the collective agreement the NTA now has?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: I would like to say to the Member for Grand Falls that he

is doing a good job in trying to stir up trouble here today but he is not going to succeed.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) very complimentary?

Mr. Baker: We are currently discussing with the NTA bargaining group the Teachers' Pension Plan. I am confident that something can be worked out, and this is the reason now. It is not because of something that comes out in the NTA voice and part of the hype of collective bargaining, it is because there are people of goodwill on both sides who want to be guaranteed that, number one, the teachers will receive pensions when the time comes, and number two, as a consequence, that there is proper funding now put in place. And I would say to the hon. Member that this is a position, not only of Government, but of the NTA and, therefore, something will be worked out.

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

Mr. Simms: Let me ask one final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, just a final one. Since I can't get anywhere with the President of Treasury Board who, by the way, insulted me, as you are aware, Your Honour, by suggesting that I am trying to cause trouble, which is not true - I am one of the most fair-minded people in the Newfoundland Parliament, as everybody would know, let me ask the other fair-minded person, the Premier, the question. Has the Premier on behalf of the Government ever indicated to the NTA that if the Government does not get the consent of the NTA for the changes it would like to see to the pension plan that the Government would be prepared to

bring in legislation to invoke or impose such a change upon the pension plan, which is covered in the collective agreement?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I have never made that statement to anybody in the NTA, that we would bring in legislation. But, at the same time, let me not mislead anybody and have Members come back and say, you said you would not bring in legislation. I am not saying any such thing.

If legislation is at any time in the future, five, ten, twenty, thirty years from now, one year from now, or whenever, necessary to protect the interest of the public of this Province, including the teachers of this Province, including all employees of Government and everybody else, no Government would be so foolhardy as to say no, they would not bring in legislation.

Have I ever suggested it to the NTA? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Winsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question was intended for the Minister of Labour, but I will ask the Premier in her absence. Is the premier aware that the President of Treasury Board has intervened in the collective bargaining process between the NTA and the Government's negotiating team on two occasions this year, not once but twice, the latest being October 6, by writing directly to every teacher in this province.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: I am totally aware. And not only am I now aware. If I recall correctly, I was aware at the time the President of Treasury Board was going to write to the teachers to correct some misstatements that had been made so they would not be misinformed.

Now I have no quarrel with anybody in this Province making public information to insure that people are fully informed. If I recall correctly, I knew about it at the time. I was not just informed later on. I do not remember. But I have a recollection of that.

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

Mr. Winsor: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Doesn't the Premier regard this interference as a breach of good faith in the collective bargaining process, by having the President of Treasury Board intervene directly in the dispute between two negotiating teams?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: I do not regard it as interference in a dispute. The President of Treasury Board has the responsibility on behalf of the taxpayers of this Province, not the Government. We are just agents for the taxpayers. He is discharging a responsibility on behalf of the taxpayers of this Province to conduct those negotiations and to protect the interest of the taxpayers and, at the same time, to be fair to the teachers and insure that they are fairly treated and that they are fully informed.

In the process of carrying out those duties he, as the Minister

responsible, provided information. I do not regard that as an interference in the collective bargaining process. Now maybe the hon. Member, as the President of Treasury Board said just now to the Member for Grand Falls, wants to stir up trouble. But he is not going to succeed. And I am not being any more complimentary to the hon. Member than the President of Treasury Board was to the Member for Grand Falls.

He has a responsibility to do what he did and I have no quarrel whatsoever with the way in which he discharged that responsibility on behalf of the taxpayers.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) going behind (inaudible) here.

Premier Wells: He is not going behind any of the parties! He is one of the representatives. He is the official responsible. He is not going behind anybody.

An Hon. Member: He should do it (inaudible) not behind their backs.

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

Mr. Winsor: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Premier indicated that we might be trying to stir up trouble. I think the President of Treasury Board has stirred up trouble. Will the Premier not admit, then, that this type of bargaining is unprecedented in collective bargaining between the NTA and Government? It never happened in the last number of collective agreements. And was it not an attempt by the President of Treasury Board to undermine the credibility of the NTA's negotiating team with its members? That is what he tried to

do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Either my memory is playing tricks with me or there is substantial precedent for this happening. I recall the former Premier commanding time on public television to go directly to everybody and say, here is our position and this is what NAPE wants to do. We are not going to tolerate this in the collective bargaining process. Unless my memory -

Mr. Rideout: Your memory is not only playing tricks, it is gone.

Premier Wells: Well, maybe it is, but I seem to recall those things taking place, and I seem to recall letters and positions being taken and spread out everywhere. I do think this is unprecedented.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Education, the minister who said earlier he was doing what he was doing to meet the requirements of government. I thought the minister was supposed to look after the requirements of the students. But last week the minister told us that the Education Budget will be cut by \$30 million, and I quote 'depending on the settlement with teachers and other factors which I cannot identify at the present time'. I ask the Minister, does

he intend to offset the cost of salary increases negotiated by teachers during the current round of negotiations by laying off teachers?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not say last week that there would be a cut of \$30 million or \$40 millions, I said it could be more, it could be less. I think the hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes first raised the \$30 million figure.

Mr. Winsor: And you upped it to (inaudible).

Dr. Warren: I think it was the hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Warren: He is a good communicator, and he has been quite successful in getting others to believe that the Minister of Education said \$30 million. In fact, someone said \$40 million.

An Hon. Member: Thirty-two million dollars.

Dr. Warren: Thirty million dollars. Mr. Speaker, I want to correct that. The Minister of Education has not put any figure on what the effect of freezing the Budget might be next year. The Minister of Education has not put any figure on it and, therefore, no decisions have been made with respect to how these monies would be collected or saved.

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

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Speaker, last week

the minister put his foot in his mouth. He was not prepared for the statement, because he did not think we knew how much he had been told to cut. He was caught unaware, and he has now been told by the Premier to try to slough his way out of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hearn: Will the minister confirm that he is planning to lay off 200 to 250 teachers in any case? And if the teachers are successful in negotiating a raise that is comparable to other people in the public service, it will then mean a layoff of up to 500 teachers. Is that what the minister plans?

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

Dr. Warren: I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, there is a short answer to this and the answer is no.

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

Mr. Hearn: Well, then, will the minister tell the House if his statement last week was a deliberate effort on his part to interfere with the collective bargaining and to threaten teachers with layoffs if they go looking for a raise comparable to that other people in the public service have already gotten?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is no.

Mr. Speaker: Question Period has expired.

Petitions

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 888 people in the Trepassey area which I will read. The prayer of the petition: whereas we the undersigned residents of Trepassey area are keenly interested in our stadium and the recreational programs it provides, and whereas our community's main industry is about to be closed down, placing a great financial burden on the Trepassey Town Council, therefore we petition the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to compensate the Town of Trepassey for losses incurred at the F.J. Mallowney Stadium because of down time imposed by provincial officials from the period of February 26, 1990 to April 8, 1990. And I'll repeat, the petition is signed by 888 people.

Last winter in the midst of the hockey season, or the season during which the stadium was being used, well for hockey and skating and what have you, a number of people who frequented the facility, especially those who were involved in on-ice activities, the hockey players and others, complained about problems with their eyes, burning sensations in their eyes, and after it became a relatively common occurrence, the managers of the stadium contacted the Department of Labour, I presume, who would do such inspections. The government inspectors came in and stated that the problem was caused by emissions from the Zamboni machine used for cleaning the ice and they recommended that in order to clear up the situation

changes be made to the filtering system to reduce certain emissions and so on, even though the Zamboni used in the stadium in Trepassey is a very new model - it uses propane - unlike the old gas models that did cause some problems in other areas. Extensive repairs were made, or changes were made to the machine and after the stadium was re-opened, now we're talking about a loss of down time, not only the cost of the repairs to the machine and the changes that were made to the machine, but also the amount of revenue lost to the Town because the stadium was closed for a number of days. When changes were made and the stadium was re-opened it was found that the problem had not improved any, that people who had skated on the ice, who had played hockey, myself included, found that they were still having problems with their eyes later on in the evening. Consequently, the inspectors were called in again, so this time they said that it was probably due to poor ventilation in the stadium, despite the fact that at most times there are several doors open in the stadium with the wind blowing in and out through, certainly cleaning out the building. so once again on the advice of the inspectors, the Town Council went through a heavy expense in putting in a new ventilation system in the stadium. Lo and behold, after the stadium was re-opened, again after having been shut down for a number of days, and as I say during peak season, at the loss of several hours of rental time and several thousands of dollars to the coffers of the stadium committee and council, the stadium was re-opened only to find out that the same problem still existed.

A couple of days after the last visit by the inspectors and the last changes made to the stadium, one of the employees, the manager as it happened, noticed a cracked light bulb in the stadium, and in his attempt to repair it received a severe flash damage to his eyes and had to be brought to hospital. It was then discovered that the problem right from the start was caused by a crack in one of the light bulbs, which was a special kind of light bulb which was remitting some kind of radioactive rays or ultraviolet rays. The repair was done of course to the light bulb and there hasn't been a problem since. So because of the professional advice by people who were sent by government departments, the Town was put through an expense of thousands of dollars and lost several thousand more because the building was closed down on order of these same people for several days. So the petition here, Mr. Speaker, signed by the individuals of the area, is fair and just, if we are talking about fairness and balance, well then let's be fair here and try to balance the books of the Town of Trepassy, a small council going through hard times now, have had to put a lot of money into this building because of poor advice by Government officials. So if there's fairness and balance, the request is only fair that the Government compensate the stadium for the losses that occurred last year, and I presume, the Minister of Recreation will stand and say he will do that immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Winsor: Mr. Speaker, the

Minister is not interested in responding to that petition, presented on behalf of the 888 people. This kind of lack of concern is an indication of this Administration's response to recreation in this Province.

If we recall, last year in the Budget which was presented, there was not one dollar of new capital grants allocated, only money that was left over from the previous year that had not been used up and the Minister did not ever table the list in the House, despite being asked so on many occasions.

But it is very evident that this Administration has very little, if any, regards for recreation in the Province and the people of Trepassy area deserve much better.

If the stadium was shut down because of the advice of the officials in the Province, then the Province should be expected to compensate the stadium committee and the Town of Trepassy for the loss of revenue that occurred over that period of time.

So, it is now incumbent on this Administration, this regime which is in power, to support the Town, to make good for the losses that the stadium incurred over that period of time and it is also incumbent on this Administration to now refocus some direction in recreation.

We have had two years in which the Government has ignored the plight of recreation in this Province and it is high time the Minister go to the Premier and admit that the responsibilities of recreation are overwhelming and pass it on to someone else, so that recreation can get the justice that it deserves from this Administration.

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

Ms Verge: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition of residents of different parts of the Province, pleading with the Government to reverse the October 1st cut in social assistance that has hurt about 1,000 single parent families.

The petitioners live in different parts of the Province; in the St. John's area, the city of St. John's, Mount Pearl, Bell Island, Brigus, Carbonear, Gambo, Appleton and Corner Brook.

The prayer of the petition is: Therefore, your petitioners urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reverse its change of policy and continue to permit social assistance recipients to retain a substantial portion of maintenance and child support payments, as well as regular social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, in presenting similar petitions last week, I made the point that the October 1st change was made without any warning whatsoever to the people affected, I made the point that the cut has resulted in an instant drop in income for about 1,000 single parent families of about up to \$115 a month and third, the point that, that amounts to as much as a 20 per cent drop in income for most of those families.

When we left off last week, Mr. Speaker, if you recall, the Premier said that he would investigate this situation and if he concluded that the Government had made a mistake, he would admit it and correct it.

Unfortunately the Premier is not in his place now, but perhaps the

Minister of Social Services can tell the House whether the Premier has indeed investigated this situation, and has recognized that a terrible error has been made.

Mr. Speaker, in responding, the Premier quoted from a speech I made when the previous Government was setting up the support enforcement program. He correctly quoted me as saying one of the reasons for the enforcement agency was to prevent unnecessary dependence on social assistance, which is true, Mr. Speaker. The Premier went on to say that if a woman, if a single mother is getting \$2,000 a month from her ex-husband for child support, why should the Government provide any social assistance?

I cringed when I heard that, Mr. Speaker, for after all, anyone getting more than \$400 or \$500 a month does not qualify for social assistance. The Premier obviously is completely out of touch with the social assistance program. A single mother with three children gets only about \$550 a month total for food, clothing, utilities, transportation and all the costs of bringing up a family.

Mr. Speaker, I will sit down now and wait for the Minister of Social Services to tell us about the Premier's actions since the House last sat.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further petitions? The hon. Member has a further petition?

Mr. R. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the petition so ably presented by my colleague.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. Member to take his place please.

The Chair said that it was not going to look around and wait for people to stand, because this is going to cause problems. The Chair cannot recognize people if they are not standing. The hon. Member was not standing when I said Further Petitions, and the Chair is going to have to apply this rule, otherwise we are going to get into all kinds of problems.

I will allow the hon. Member today, but point out to hon. Members that the Chair is not going to do this in the future. There was plenty of time for the hon. Member to be up, and I think all hon. Members agree, for the efficient running of the House, that we cannot have that. The Chair's obligation is to recognize Members when they stand and that is what I will do. And if there is nobody standing, I am going to have to go to Further Petitions. For now I will allow the hon. Member to speak.

The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your indulgence. The reason that I did not stand is that I expected, as usually happens in this House, that when someone on this side presents a petition, usually the Minister or someone from the other side would answer to that petition.

But Mr. Speaker, it is evident here that the Minister of Social Services, in this case, has no interest whatsoever in the single parents of this Province. He has stolen \$100 a month from the single parents of this Province and he has no remorse or compassion. The most surprising thing to me about this, Mr. Speaker, is that when this issue

came up first I did believe that this was some type of a bureaucratic error.

I could not believe, knowing the Minister of Social Service when he was in Opposition, and knowing all the platitudes that the Premier of this Province has made over the past 18 months about fairness and balance, I could not believe that when this issue was brought to the attention of the Minister of Social Services, that he would allow this situation to continue in this Province.

I support the petition as presented by the Member for Humber East, and I support it because of the issue. But today, only less than one hour ago, I got a call from a constituent of mine, a single parent, mother of three children, who has to rent an apartment - and rent is extremely expensive in Kilbride and in the St. John's area generally - she has to lose a part of her maintenance payments because of a ruling made by this Minister. I thought it was a bureaucratic error, Mr. Speaker, but the Minister just said that he makes the decisions in his Department. I would have even thought that maybe the Premier told him to do it just to cut back on the \$120 million deficit they have. But that is not the case now.

It is the Minister of Social Services, the one who was going to reform the whole social service system in this Province. Well, if that is the case, and if this is one example of what he is doing, Mr. Speaker, I ask him to back off, because he is hurting people who cannot afford to be hurt.

Mr. Speaker, this woman, this single person who called me today,

receives maintenance payments, or did receive maintenance payments, occasionally. They are not regular. They do not come on time all the time as happens in these cases, she is owed in back-maintenance payments now some \$2,000. Mr. Speaker, if she went out to work at babysitting - if she could find a part-time job where she could make \$100, \$125, \$130 a month - she would be allowed to keep that \$125 without interfering with her social service assistance.

But because the court has ruled that her spouse had to give her \$100 or \$150 a month in maintenance payments, she will now lose that maintenance payment from her social assistance.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, I might not know what I am talking about but the woman who phoned me today, who is short \$300; she knows what she is talking about. You do not want to listen to them. You just want to make politics. Mr. Speaker, if the man had any compassion at all he would change his ruling and make these maintenance payments allowable earnings, the same as a babysitting wage - if she could get a couple of hundred or a hundred dollars a month - would be allowed, Mr. Speaker. He should change this. She is now losing her maintenance payments off her social services and her husband is not paying them, she is supposed to get it from her husband but she does not - Social Services or nobody in government will help her collect it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

I would ask the hon. Minister, who

appears to be interrupting the hon. gentleman, to stop. The Member just has five minutes and the Minister does have a chance to respond and he can keep all his statements for then. This is not helping to expedite matters.

The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I apologize for getting carried away, Mr. Speaker. But this is such an important issue to people who cannot afford to be hurt, Mr. Speaker. It is bad enough to have your family broken up, Mr. Speaker. That is stressful enough in a family, especially on a mother and three or four children. It is hard enough to survive. I would say if the Minister would turn around and look at his Minister of Labour she would give him some information, Mr. Speaker, on whether this is justified or not. Mr. Speaker, if he would speak to her privately, I know she is one of the people in that Cabinet who will stick up for the rights of the poor people in this Province. Mr. Speaker, this is mostly a women's issue, most of the people who are hurt by this, the thousand people around this Province are single mothers, not single parents. The hon. Member again is yawning in this House of Assembly. It shows, Mr. Speaker, that he has no interest whatsoever in the poor of this Province. Mr. Speaker, he has no compassion. And when he was on this side of the House, I thought when he became Minister that the world would be changed and the people on Social Services would be bowing down to him every day, Mr. Speaker, but I will tell him that the single mothers in this

Province -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I will apologize to the Speaker and to the House for making some remarks across the House, but it is not very easy not to make remarks when you have to listen to the Members opposite making statements, knowing full well that they were in power for seventeen years and knowing how little they understand about the Social Services Programs. Heaven forbid that you will ever get back in power in this Province again, because this country could never stand the like of your intelligence in government. It is absolutely unbelievable.

Now let me tell you about the single parents. We have 6,500, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Efford: If you want to hear my position on it, I will explain it, or you can keep interrupting and we will keep arguing back and forth. We have 6,500 single parents in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have less than 1,000 people receiving maintenance income. Now let us suppose they had continued receiving the maintenance income and social assistance, not once in the last two sittings of the House of Assembly or not once in this

sitting has any Member opposite rose to their feet and asked: what about the 5,700 who are not receiving the maintenance income? What are you going to do for them? Not one time did one Member opposite show any concern whatsoever for the 5,700 single parents not receiving it. That is a fact of life. You have 6,500 in the same position. Now what do you do? Do you want to leave people dependent on social assistance? Do you want to leave people home in a house with no way to get out of their rut at all? I can tell you one thing, if I had at my disposal the \$23 million that was wasted on this conglomeration of an industry, I would be able to let every single parent stay home and pay them the money that they deserve to buy the essential things in life. But unfortunately I do not, because the former Administration drove this Province in debt in excess of \$5.7 billion, and we do not have the money to give out to the people. So what do we have to do, Mr. Speaker? We have to provide a better alternative, and we have that better alternative. Tell your single parent who called you this morning, to call me tomorrow morning and I will offer her a job on a community development program the very least where she will earn

Mr. Tobin: What about day care?

Mr. Efford: We will pay her day care for her. We will pay her day care for her and she will get \$220 a week for fourteen weeks, then she will receive UI for the remainder of the year, and she can still draw her maintenance income, and it is better for a person to be out to work or in an education program than home on social assistance. You tell that to your

parents. All you are trying to do is get on the phone and try to stir up problems. The hon. Member for Humber East never once this year in the House of Assembly asked me a question about the parents who are not receiving this. You were not concerned? You were not concerned when you were in power? You did not offer them a better alternative, not once while you were in power did you offer them a better alternative. So do not go sitting on your ivory towers now when you are over there after driving the Province in debt and curcifying the single parents of this Province.

Mr. Simms: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

A point of order, the hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I just raise a point of order.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

I have great difficulty hearing the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do not wish to take away from the Minister's comments, but I must rise on a point of order about the rules governing speaking on petitions. You are supposed to confine yourself to the number of signatures and the prayer of the petition. The Minister I think is playing politics more than anything else.

Mr. Speaker: To the point of order. The point is well taken,

and as we have said so many times in the past, Members must keep their remarks to the material allegations of the petition.

The hon. Minister's time is up.

Mr. Simms: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A point of order, the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Just a further point of order, I did not want to raise it at the time it occurred. I trust Your Honour will understand why, because I did not want to interrupt the discussion, but I understand, and I was outside the House for a moment, and I raised the point of order more for clarification than anything else, because it is important for future deliberations and debate. I understand that there was an order from the Chair during the debate on the petition when a Member spoke, presented the petition and no other Member rose to speak immediately. I think Your Honour ruled that unless somebody rose immediately he was not going to recognize him in the future. Now I beg Your Honour to reconsider that dramatic kind of ruling, because it puts Your Honour in an awful bind. I would argue and submit that in general debate often, nobody stands at a particular point in time, and Your Honour would simply move on and call the next Order or see if there are any more petitions in this case or whatever. But never is there an immediate urgency for somebody to stand immediately and be recognized. Often when Your Honour will call the next Order, somebody may very well rise and say, no, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to this. Your Honour

obviously would allow that person to speak. So I want to make sure we are clear on what your ruling was and what it was you were saying, because all that is happening and we all know how the process works. There are two people can speak from the side of the petitioner and one from the other side. So the Opposition, when it presents petitions, quite frequently will present a petition and then give the Minister opposite the opportunity to respond to the presentation by the Member presenting the petition. And if nobody on that side stands we will wait a few seconds then we will have another member rise. So I just want to explain that to Your Honour.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair just wants to point out again that over the last few days there has been excessive waiting, and I think the hon. Government House Leader would realize that does not expedite matters of the House, and that it will cause confusion. Generally the procedure is when a person gives a petition and sits down another rises, if not, the Chair has no other choice but to call for further petitions or go on to the next Order. Then what generally happens is when somebody stands they will ask leave, they say they want to speak to the petition. The proper procedure then is to ask the House: does the hon. Member have - because we called another Order, we called another petition. But most generally people don't stand to present another petition. All the Chair was doing was pointing this out to hon. Members in order to try and prevent any problems from developing, and when an hon. Member wants to speak to a petition then he or she should rise immediately when the

opportunity is there, otherwise it presents difficulty. Quite obviously the Chair will try to be sensible in interpreting the matter.

Mr. Simms: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the same point basically. I mean I would not want anybody in this House, any Member of this House nor the people we represent ever to get the impression that a Member's right to speak in the House is somehow going to be restricted - for whatever the reason. I am sure Your Honour does not intend to do that. But I think I would be remiss as House Leader on this side, if I did not raise the point just to make sure that the Member has the right to speak under the rules and should not be deprived of that right.

Mr. Speaker: Your point is well taken.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: A very brief comment to that point, Your Honour. We understand that there has been quite a bit of - like people waiting and playing little games and so on with regards to petitions. And it has happened in some other instances where Members have not been very quick in getting to their feet and it has caused some confusion and this has happened over the last few days.

Mr. Simms: Back over the last few years.

Mr. Baker: Yes but it has been a little bit worse in the last few days. I think at first when His Honour brought it up it was quite obvious he was not trying to interfere with the Member's right

to speak to a petition. He was simply indicating that if he waits awhile and there is nobody else, then he goes on to the next order of business. Then it gets confusing and he has to revert and so on and I understand his concern, so this is something that has been dealt with over the last few days in a previous occasion.

I would simply like to point out that it would be nice to welcome the Opposition House Leader and indicate to him that we did not have a whole lot of interruptions in the last few days and we hope that we do not have a lot of interruptions in the few days ahead.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a brief point. The Government House Leader reminded me of this, when he mentioned the word, 'games'.

Yes, there are games being played. Normally what happens in this House, a Member presents a petition, somebody, if there is going to be somebody, responds for the Government and then there is a third person who will speak from this House.

The games which have been played over the last three or four days on this particular issue, is for the Minister to wait out the Opposition, and this is where Your Honour gets in difficulty.

The Minister waits and waits and waits and finally somebody has to stand for the second speaker from this side, and invariably and inevitably, Mr. Speaker, that gives the Minister the last word.

Now that is the game which has been played, if the Government House Leader and the Speaker want to know, and I hope the people of the Province will find out, the Government is playing games, to make sure that the Minister gets the last word, not the back and forth as it should be.

That is what happened here today on that petition and I suspect you will see it happen, Your Honour, on many, many more, but we will wait in the game. We will be players in the game and we will wait as long as we can to try to drag a Minister to his feet, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day

Mr. Baker: Motion 1, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burin Placentia West.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tobin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I believe I am now starting the debate. I moved, I think, on Thursday evening that you would report progress and I did not get into the debate whatsoever, but I want to speak on this Bill which is before the House today, particularly that old Bill as it relates to the

financial matters facing the House in this Province.

Mr. Chairman, it gives us an opportunity to deal with some issues, particularly with the Department of Social Services and the attack which has been placed on the single mothers or people who depend on the maintenance program - how the Minister has changed that.

We should not lose sight of what is taking place. The fact of the matter is, what is taking place is very simple. It has changed, we can talk about it, but I have been there before, I understand it. What has taken place, is changing it from allowable to non-allowable income.

Do not get fooled up in figures with \$115 or anything else, what has taken place here is that the Minister of Social Services has made maintenance payments non-allowable, that is the point.

I do not know why the Minister has done that Mr. Speaker. I do not know why he has done it. I do not know if he is losing any sleep over it or not but he certainly should be and I believe he is, because he is tired. In the last little while, he looks awfully tired. As a matter of fact he has been doing a lot of yawning here today while the Member for Humber East was presenting the petition.

But the fact of the matter is, Sir, that you have changed it from allowable to non-allowable income, and that is the problem, it is now being placed in with unemployment insurance, with Canada pension, with disability pensions; that is where he has placed maintenance payments and that is a regressive step.

That, combined with the cutbacks in that Department, I suspect, explains the poor morale in the Department of Social Services these days. Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to the Minister that there are more temporary employees, social workers, more temporary positions filled of the Department of Social Services, in the field, than there are permanent positions.

Mr. Efford: Don't make me yawn.

Mr. Tobin: I am not what makes you yawn. There are more temporary positions in the Department of Social Services today, in the field, than there are permanent positions and that is what has caused the low morale. I know the social workers, Mr. Chairman. There are social workers in this Province I keep fairly regular contact with, a number of social workers throughout the Province, from one end of it to the other.

Mr. Efford: I had better not find out.

Mr. Tobin: Why? Why?

Mr. R. Aylward: That's a threat.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Chairman, there he is, threatening the social workers again. That is what is taking place in this Government. Through innuendo, social workers are now being threatened by the Minister not to speak to members opposite. That is what is happening. But I can tell the Minister they will continue to speak to me, and they will continue to tell me of the games you are playing as it relates to the Department of Social Services. I have not heard you on radio today condemning your colleagues, the Minister of Education and the President of

Treasury Board, for having teacher assistants home, when mentally delayed children are not allowed in the classrooms because there are no teacher assistants there. As a matter of fact, I had a call from a constituent last night who was very upset because of a called he received saying his son, who is a mentally delayed child, could not be in school today because this Government refused to honour a collective agreement they had just signed with the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees. That is what is happening with this Government.

Where is the Minister of Social Services now? Is he not concerned about the responsibilities that have been entrusted to him concerning mentally delayed children? Three times we have seen the Minister of Education stand by and pound his desk when the Minister of Finance brought in a Budget which had less money for teacher assistants in this Province this year than we had last year. And then they went through the Collective Agreement.

Mr. Chairman, a parent who called me last night told me himself that he was in the Minister's office, they put pressure on the Minister, and he promised he would fulfill their commitment. But today there are mentally delayed children not allowed in their classrooms because of the action, the arrogance, and contempt of this Government. That is what is taking place in this Province.

I received a call at my office from someone in the Mental Health Association, a lady who both Ministers should be familiar with. What is happening here is shameless, and don't say anything different. When they balance the

books of this Province, Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance, the Premier and other members of the Cabinet, they balance the books on the backs of the people who can less afford it. And not only that, Mr. Chairman, the sad part of it is that members of the caucus are supporting it. The Member for South John's South is over there banging his desk every time something happens. How can a member in the backbenches of that Government, no matter what district he represents, support a decision of Government that denies mentally delayed children the right to teacher assistants? Where are they? If it is not a dictatorship, stand up and be counted. We know what is happening.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tobin: Well, take your place and condemn the Government for what they are doing. Do that. It is no good saying, I didn't bang, take your place. Do you support this Government's action against mentally delayed children?

I was asked today, Mr. Chairman, to come into this House today on behalf of parents of mentally delayed children and state their position and concern as it relates to their children not being in the classrooms today because of the contempt of this Government and the lack of concern of this Government towards mentally delayed children in this Province. That is why I am standing today.

I am concerned too, Mr. Chairman. I have given my life to social issues in this Province, since I started work as a social worker in this Province some 20 years ago. And I will tell you something

right now, that mentally delayed children is an issue far beyond any realm of politics. And nobody, Mr. Chairman, politicians, Ministers, nobody, should ever try to use that position for political purposes. And the Minister of Education and the President of Treasury Board should immediately honour the agreement that was reached. Until they do that, the mentally delayed children of this Province will not be in school; they will be home, and that is sad. That is a sad commentary, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible) word, boy. Developmentally delayed.

Mr. Tobin: Developmentally delayed. Okay. But what have you done about the developmentally delayed? To the Minister of Education, what have you done? Nothing, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Warren: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: What is that? I think the Minister of Education has something to say about the developmentally delayed?

Dr. Warren: Discussions are now ongoing across the Province.

Some Hon. Members: The Minister said that before. You said that a month ago. You told us that in September.

Mr. Tobin: They were ongoing before. I would suggest to the Minister of Education not to repeat what the Minister of Justice said, because we know how accurate the statements are he makes in this House. We know how much respect the Minister of Justice has for getting the truth in this House, Mr. Chairman, so I would suggest to the Minister of

Education that if the Minister of Justice tells him to say anything in this House, be extremely careful, even though he is Minister of Justice.

I hope the discussions will be satisfactorily concluded before the day is over. But I can tell the Minister of Education that this is not the first time this has happened this year. They were in your office, Sir, after there was pressure put on them, and they had to hit the streets and strike because of your budget cuts, they had to come in and march on your office, and they had to tie up the open line shows.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) Corner Brook.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, they did that too, and there is still nothing done. But I would plead with the Minister of Education to ensure, for God's sake, that these children have teacher assistants in their classrooms tomorrow morning, and honour the collective agreement.

Mr. Chairman, there are other areas as well. We have the health situation in this province. The Minister of Health. When they brought in the budget this year, what was there for the Burin Peninsula? It was not, and people should not lose sight of it, in the last few weeks that this Government decided to close down the health care system in this Province, it was announced in the budget. The closure of the hospitals in Grand Bank and St. Lawrence, Mr. Chairman, that was the first gutting of hospital beds by this Administration. That is where they came from and that is when they came, Mr. Chairman.

Now we are seeing additional beds close in this place. It is time for the Members opposite to honour their election commitments and their promises to the health care system, the social services system, and the educational system. It is time they honoured these commitments, Mr. Chairman, and get on with what needs to be done.

The Minister of Health knows full well that during the election campaign he did not say we will be cutting the health care budget by \$60 million. That is not what the Liberal candidate said throughout this Province; that is not what the Member for Harbour Grace said; that is not what the Member for St. John's South said. And they almost did not believe him, Mr. Chairman; they were only one vote away from not believing him - no landslide.

That is not what took place. That is not what he told the people when he ran in the last election, but he pounded his desk here today when they announced closures and cutbacks, supporting the Minister of Health.

It is about time the Member for St. George's to stand in this House and state his position on these cutbacks, a member who could tell the Premier he would not resign to let the Premier run in St. George's District after the last election. Well, now he should tell the Premier here that he does not support his policies and programs as clearly as he told him he was not going to resign and let the Premier run in the District of St. George's. Not once, not twice, but three times he told that to the Premier, from what I have been told, if my sources are correct, and I think

they are. That takes courage, and I hope he now has the courage to stand up and condemn these cuts, because that is the only way this Premier will listen. He will only listen if it comes from within. I honestly believe that if the Premier sees the private members in his caucus do not support his cutbacks he will take a second look at them. The Minister of Social Services made reference to Sprung which was not part of this year's Budget, Sir.

An Hon. Member: It had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, it has all to do with it. When you predicted a \$10 million surplus which is now a \$150 million deficit, it was not Sprung. But the Economic Recovery Commission was there; the millions of dollars for Doug House and his group was there, enough to keep maintenance payments to single mothers as allowable income. There is enough and much more besides that. But what happens? Doug House and his Committee are dealt with, they are saved. You will support a Commission that had done absolutely nothing but watch the unemployment rate rise. There were 11,000 jobs less in Newfoundland -

Mr. Efford: That is your (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Well, statistics will show you that from July of 1989 to July 1990 there were 11,000 less people working in Newfoundland.

Mr. Efford: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. Tobin: I do know what I am talking about? There were 11,000 less people working in Newfoundland. What has Doug House

and his Economic Recovery Commission done about that? In addition to that, in the last year and a half almost 10,000 Newfoundlanders have left Newfoundland and gone to the Mainland in search of work. Is that what the Economic Recovery Commission is all about? Is that what they are getting millions of dollars a year for, to watch Newfoundlanders go to the Mainland? These are not my statistics, they are the statistics we had from Statistics Canada. Do you want to laugh about that? Do you want to laugh at these 10,000 people who had to leave their wives and children and go to the mainland to seek work? You think that is funny, do you? Well, I don't.

Mr. Murphy: Newfoundlanders have been doing that for hundreds of years.

Mr. Tobin: It was this Premier who promised to bring every mother's son home. During the last election campaign, every mother's son was coming home. That is what he promised. That is what you promised, and now you laugh at 10,000 people leaving, and 11,000 less jobs in this Province. It is too bad your constituents can't watch you laughing.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) your mouth.

Mr. Tobin: Oh, am I? There are not 11,000 less jobs in Newfoundland from July of last year to this year, according to Statistics Canada? Are you saying, no?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Okay. Mr. Chairman,

you heard what he said, and you know what happens if someone intentionally misleads the House.

Mr. Murphy: You said 11,000 - two ones and three zeros (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: 11,000. Now, Mr. Chairman, that is what is happening in this Province since the Economic Recovery Commission took over.

I do not have much time left, but I would like to touch on the educational system in this Province. I would suspect the Member for Exploits conveniently left the room, the former, former President of the NTA. The former President is still here, the now Minister of Employment and Labour Relations. I ask them what they said about substitute teachers back when the Peckford Administration addressed the issue. I would like to ask the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations and the Member for Exploits what their position was on the student-teacher ratio in this. I wonder if they support what this Government is doing? We heard the Minister of Education say in Question Period that he didn't say it was \$30 million, someone else said it.

Well, then, Mr. Speaker, in Hansard of October 18, Dr. Warren, the Minister of Education: "Mr. Speaker, I repeat what I said earlier about the \$32 million. I said 'It may. It could likely be in excess of that amount.'" Now was that the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes, as he tried to insinuate today, who made that statement? No, indeed it was not. It was the Minister of Education who said that he was going to slash the education budget by \$32 million. Is that

what makes this Government work? Yet, the Economic Recovery team is still up there working away creating jobs for themselves.

And there is another question I would like to ask about the Economic Recovery Commission, a very interesting question. How much money has the Economic Recovery Commission put out in the last year? How many jobs has it created? I would suspect it has created very few jobs, and I would suspect, as well, that the millions of dollars they have put out is equivalent to what has been cut out of the budget for health. That is what is happening, right?

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible) that statistic from?

Mr. Tobin: You wait and see.

How much money has the Economic Recovery Commission loaned through the Newfoundland Development Corporation? That is the question. Why don't you ask him to find out? The Premier said he is going to get the answers for us. He did not have them the other day. But I can tell you the if the Minister of Health could have it there would be no hospital beds closing.

And see how many jobs it has created. We will get to the bottom of all this sooner or later. We will justify it. And then, when we talk about the educational system, now he wants to take the headquarters of the Eastern Community College from Burin and put it in Clarenville when there is no educational value to it, none whatsoever.

And the sad part about it, Mr. Chairman, is that there are two Members in this Assembly, namely,

the Member for Bonavista South, who worked on the Burin Peninsula and practiced law down there for a number of years, and the Member for Bellevue, who originally came from Placentia Bay, and they are the two people who are persuading or trying to convince the Government to take it from the Burin Peninsula. That is what they are doing.

The Member from Bellevue stood in this House last year - it is in Hansard - and he said, 'I support the decision of the Government.' And you still support them moving the headquarters to Clarenville. Yet, Mr. Chairman, they pretend they are friends of the Burin Peninsula.

An Hon. Member: Liberals are not very good friends (inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Yes, you are right. They are not very good friends. They are your colleagues, and they are doing the same thing to Carbonear, exactly the same thing.

What satisfaction will these two Members, together with the Minister of Education, get from moving that headquarters and throwing out people who are employed up there? Some who built new homes, Mr. Chairman, have come home. As a matter of fact, one man who was up there came back to Marystown to live after being gone for many, many years. When he got a job there he built a new home, his family had settled in. All of that has gone by the wayside for one reason, a political reason.

There is not one person in the educational system who will tell you that there is an educational value to moving the headquarters from Burin to Clarenville. If

there were, Mr. Chairman, I would not argue against it. If somebody's education is going to be improved by the move, that is fair ball. But officials told me, they told the former Minister, who was the Member for Grand Bank at the time - we asked them - there will be no educational value to putting the headquarters anywhere.

Mr. Murphy: How can it be political?

Mr. Tobin: Because they voted PC in Burin - Placentia West and Grand Bank, and the Premier is punishing them, that is how it is political!

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible.)

Mr. Tobin: What's the trade-off in Clarenville?

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: What's the trade-off in Clarenville?

An Hon. Member: Tell us.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, I will tell you. I know what is going on.. I can tell you there will be a trade-off between Clarenville and the headquarters. There will be trade-off, okay? And remember I told you. And it has to do with first-year university, if you want me to give you another little bit of information, okay? There is a deal being done between Clarenville and the Department of Career Development and there is nothing done for the Burin Peninsula except taking 50 or 60 jobs. That is what is being done. Driving families away, putting them on Unemployment Insurance.

And the Clarenville area - and I

have nothing but respect for the Clarenville area - nothing. It is a good area with a good group of people. Economically it is going to boom. And the Burin Peninsula? There is a man told me yesterday he is getting laid off in the Marystown shipyard, the first time in 14 years. My colleague from Grand Bank said the other day that Premier Wells was the biggest curse to the economic conditions of the Burin Peninsula we have ever known. And he is right. Fourteen years, the first time he is getting laid off.

She is dead down there. The shipyard, Mr. Chairman, is hardly operating.. But it was operating when we were in Government. The fish plant in Grand Bank is going to close; Marystown, it has now been announced, is going to go down for six months; Burin, going down for six months. And yet they will take those 30 or 40 jobs that are in the headquarters.

The Member from Mount Scio - Bell Island was down in Marystown. And you know what he told the workers in the Marystown shipyard? He said the Premier considers me the jewel of the back benches and I am soon going to be in Cabinet. That is what he said down there to the work force. Maybe it is true, I do not know. That is not for me to judge, whether you are the jewel of the back benches, you said you were, so that is good enough for me.

And I hope you get in Cabinet. And when you do get in Cabinet I ask you to treat all of the Province with equality. Not the way that it has been treated here, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of other issues.

An Hon. Member: For example?

Mr. Tobin: I spoke to the President of the CSU.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Well, sir, I can tell you something. There is money enough being wasted on the Economic Recovery Commission for you to get an arena. And I can tell you furthermore, the \$8,000 a year that the Premier voted for himself and the Ministers to drive to work, as a donation towards the cost of their cars, that could do a lot of good.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: I do not get any \$8,000.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: I paid \$18,000 out of my pocket. I got a loan of \$18,000 from the Bank of Nova Scotia in Marystown and bought my car. That is where I got it. But he never had to go, nor none of the Ministers had to go, because the taxpayers of this Province gave them it. But they are getting \$8,000 a year to drive to work. And not only that, look out through the window, and the Premier is picked up with a chauffeur. The Premier is picked up for every time he moves in this city in a chauffeur-driven Oldsmobile and I saw it happen not long ago.

An Hon. Member: Go on, boy.

Mr. Tobin: Deny that now!

An Hon. Member: He is getting a ride home from work, boy, don't be so foolish.

Mr. Chairman: Order please!

Mr. Tobin: And I can believe that. But he has \$8,000 to take you around the bay and he did not use it. That is what is happening. It is time for you to find out when the Premier is playing games with you.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: Now, it is time to find out when the Premier is using you. And he has just used you, because you, I would suspect, had to do the same as I had to do. Which was to go out and borrow the money, or probably you have the money to buy a car. But they get \$8,000 and there is no car payment any more than \$8,000 a year. That is what is happening.

Some Hon. Members: What about insurance?

Mr. Tobin: And do not the rest of us pay insurance? Do you not pay insurance on your car?

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, we would not give him leave. That is long enough listening to that.

Let me take a few minutes to give a few comments on what the position of Government is today, a few explanations on why we are in this financial position today and why we are taking some steps to

try to solve the problems that were caused by the former Administrations - I say, administrations. In 1971-1972 when the Tories first came in power, the debt of the Province was about \$800 million.

An Hon. Member: Eight hundred million?

Mr. Efford: After twenty-three years of Liberal policy, Liberal Administration, Liberal Government, they inherited a debt of \$800 million.

An Hon. Member: How much interest?

Mr. Efford: Now they were in power for approximately seventeen years, I do not know why the good people of this Province did not have the wisdom to put them out before, but nevertheless they were in power for seventeen years.

An Hon. Member: Seventeen years of (inaudible).

Mr. Efford: Take into consideration \$800 million. When they were voted out after seventeen years in power they left this Province in debt \$5.4 billion.

An Hon. Member: Billion!

Mr. Efford: \$5.4 billion. Think about it. Let us use the common mathematical sense that God gave our little brains to put around, \$5.4 billion.

An Hon. Member: That is \$5400 million.

Mr. Efford: With 50,000 people unemployed, 25,000 people between the ages of 18 and 25, with a social assistance clientele of 23,000 plus, dependent on social assistance, with 70 per cent of

the Province on seasonal work, most of the time scraping 10/42 weeks. Most of the time scraping 10/42, with the highest poverty rate in Canada. Think about it. The highest poverty rate in Canada. The highest number of children in all of Canada, bar none, in Newfoundland and Labrador, going to school hungry, with no food in their stomachs. With the lowest day care of every other area in Canada, the lowest day care spaces in all of Canada.

An Hon. Member: Shame! Shame!

Mr. Efford: Just think about it. This is what we have heard from for the last eighteen months, an Opposition Party which is suppose to do their job, I agree with that part. I had spent four years on the Opposition, I must say I enjoyed doing it, but I had a job to do, and I do not blame them, but at least when you get to your feet talk about what is happening in this Province. Talk about the things that are happening.

The fishery: never before in the history of this Province, in the 400 years since the Portuguese first came to the Virgin Rocks, never before was the fishery in such a crisis and a mess as it was when that Administration left power. After seventeen years there was total chaos.

The hon. the Member for Humber East has rose to her feet on a number of occasions, and so she should as an Opposition member, and criticized me for less than 1,000 single parents in this Province who lost their maintenance income. Never once in the two sittings prior did she rise to her feet and ask me, the Minister of Social Services, what are you going to do with the other

5,000 people? Why are these 5,000 people receiving the same amount as the single parents who are receiving maintenance income? Why are you not offering them jobs and education and training programs to get them away from dependence on governments and dependence on food banks and sending their children to school without money?

Only this morning I approved the School Lunch Program for the Holy Cross School here in St. John's, only this morning.

Why did we do it? because when I was appointed Minister of Social Services the people came to me as Minister and showed me that there are children going to school, falling asleep at their desks, without food, no nutrition, falling back in their grades, and nobody in the former Administration - the holy saints who stand up over there now, for seventeen years they never even gave it a second thought, to put some sort of a program in school which could fill the bellies of those little children.

After we put it in a school last year the evaluation proves that the children who were seen falling asleep with no attention span, and falling back in their grades, were completely reversed, completely reversed - \$75,000 labour and about \$4,000 for your equipment and start up program.

The parents of Gower Street United Church has \$10,000 in the kitty to expand to other programs. I have agreed to expand it to two other schools starting this week, three schools. That is the type of positive thing you want to do. Why is it that I cannot expand it to every school in the Province? - because of the \$5.4 billion debt

we inherited. We did not cause it, we have only been here eighteen months, where will we get \$5.4 billion to spend? We inherited a total mess in this Province. We inherited the worst labour relations of any Province in Canada, it is right here now, the worst labour relations. We inherited teachers in the education system, but not enough funding to build schools. The worst kind of a system.

On the \$5.4 billion: let the people in the gallery, let the people in the Province listen, \$458 million was paid out in interest charges on that debt, \$458 million. God, if I only had 10 per cent of that to give to the poor parents in this Province for their hungry children in school. A lousy 10 per cent, if I only had that to give to the single parents or to give to the hungry children going down to the Gower Street School or the Holy Cross school.

\$181 million paid out to retire debts. \$181 million on top of the \$458 million; that is the mess that this Government took over, and the Opposition Party keep saying to this Government: why haven't you done something about it?

Income from tax revenues in this Province, income is less than a billion dollars. We depend on Ottawa for in excess of \$2 billion dollars in Government loans and Ottawa's equalization transfer of payments.

This year, after the Minister of Finance brought down his Budget, afterwards, not before, not during but afterwards, Ottawa dropped a \$65 million, not \$6.5 million, but \$65 million bomb. How does a Province like Newfoundland and

Labrador bring in \$65 million to take care of the loss from Ottawa, do we turn it out on a duplicating machine, do we turn on the xerox machine, or probably the Minister of Finance has a money tree out in his back yard.

We have \$458 million to pay this year in interest loans, now we have to come up with another \$65 million. What do you do, do you keep borrowing, is that how businesses and Governments can keep going, you keep borrowing and put yourself further in debt and further in debt and growing interest and growing interest 'til finally you reach a stage of bankruptcy, 'til finally there is absolutely nothing left.

No. The Premier of this Province, the President of Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance is absolutely right, there comes a time when you have to draw and tighten in the reins.

There comes a time where you have to look at what is going to happen to our children and our grandchildren. Are we going to have them spend the rest of their lives paying off a debt that was so stupidly incurred by Governments of the day and Governments of the past? No, no, we are not going to get a bouquet of roses thrown at us.

We are not going to get a thank you note delivered to our table because we are asking people to pull in and tighten up, but that is the price we must pay for the inherited stupidity of the former Administration - the debt incurred - that is what we must pay, and we are willing to do it. We have to make some tough decisions. I do not enjoy tightening up on the single parents but I want to do it

and at the same time give them something better.

I do not mind looking at single parents and saying no. I do not want to give you social assistance; no, I do not want you to be begging for handouts; no, I do not want you to go to food banks, I want to give them an opportunity at a better education and a job so that they can become independent.

Too many of our people have been allowed to get into that situation and it is time to change it. You may be condemned for doing it, and maybe some people will suffer in the meantime, but it is better to have a few suffering now than the 6,500 single parents. Just imagine! Think about the numbers in a Province the size of Newfoundland and Labrador - 6,500 single parents with nowhere to go, nowhere to turn, no help to get out of the system they are in. They received no support from the former government whatsoever, but we give them support and you are going to condemn us, the great advocate for single parents. Smarten up! Look at what is best for them. Look at the best things, and don't try to play politics with it.

Ms Verge: Less income is better for them?

Mr. Efford: More income is better for them, not less. They have been on less income long enough. Smarten up! Open your eyes and look.

The hon. the Member for Kilbride, I agree with him. It is not nice to have a single parent come to your door or come on the phone and tell you about their children going to school hungry. I witness

it every day of the week, every hour of the day, but what I do when that single parent comes to me, or that person, I do not tell them to go out and get social assistance, I give them better direction. And you tell your single parent to come to see me tomorrow morning. I will see her in my office, and if she wishes to bring her friends and their children, I will see them. My door is never closed and my phone is never off the hook.

When I was appointed Minister of Social Services, I took on the responsibility to care for the people under my department, and to try to break the cycle.

Mr. Hewlett: Yet you are still not paying them a living wage.

Mr. Efford: Listen to Old Twinkle Toes. Take seriously what you are doing up there. Think seriously about the people in the Province, for goodness sake. If we had the severance pay you got when your employment in a former Premier's Office was terminated, we would be able to help a lot of single parents in this Province. Talk about hypocrisy!

If you had one decent bone in your body you would not be condemning, you would be trying to help out, you would be trying to encourage people to become better educated. People dropping out of school with Grade 1V, Grade V education and going to the Department of Social Services, for seventeen years that has been happening and has been encouraged - go ahead, take the \$300 a month. That is good for you. Now when they come to the Department of Social Services we say, yes we have Social Assistance, but we also have jobs and we also have training

programs. What would you like?

An Hon. Member: They can't get (inaudible).

Mr. Efford: Nonsense! Absolute nonsense! You bring your single parents and I will give them work, yes. We will give them opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, it is quite clear the message needs to get out to the people of this Province. It is time that I and all other ministers and all other MHAs, on both sides of the House, told the truth about what is happening in this Province. I told this a number of times in the House of Assembly, sometimes in jest, but let us look at the seriousness of it. Let us look at what this cost the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. How many people would \$23 million employ in this Province? Take the interest alone on it, \$2.3 million a year at 10 per cent. You give me \$2.3 million a year and how many hungry children could I put in school with fully bellies? On the interest alone! So don't talk your nonsense about what this Government should do. This Government is doing something. This Government is looking in a positive direction to help the people of this Province. We have to deal with it your mess and we will deal with it.

Yes, the Premier appointed the Economy Recovery Commission. But he also stood in his place the day he announced it in the House and he said very clearly, I cannot guarantee you it is going to work, I cannot guarantee you it is going to turn the state of this Province around, but at least we are facing up to the fact that there is a problem here. We are going to put

a solution in place to solve the problem not further incur it, and go further into the rut we are into. We are facing up to reality. And he said along with his ministers in Cabinet and along with himself, he needs other help. And that is the reality. What you have to do is face up, first of all, to the fact that there is a problem. And when you are faced with a problem, you have to be man enough to admit there is a problem and you do something about the problem to start curing it. But if you bury your heads in the sand, as the former Administration did for seventeen years, and play politics and live the good life, live the perks, then the problem will never be solved.

Now is the time for this Government to get on with solving the problems, and that is what we are doing. It is also time for those people on the opposite side to recognize the problem we have to deal with. And if someone would write us a cheque tomorrow to pay the interest on the loan, in the area of \$458 million, then the Minister of Finance would have \$458 million to give the Minister of Education, to give to the Minister of Development, to give to the Minister of Environment and Lands, to give to the Minister of Social Services, and whoever else, monies to put in their budget. But he doesn't have that kind of money, so now we have to tighten up the belt.

Mr. Chairman, I am not going to take up as much time as the former member did, but I want to state very clearly that we are going to do the job. We are going to make attempts and we are going to recognize the desperate situation this Province is in. We already

have. And make no mistake about it, we may not bring in the heavenly answers and cure everything 100 per cent, but let me tell you one thing, we are going to be honest with the people of this Province, we are going to face up to the reality that we are in debt and that I and everybody else in this Province is going to have to suffer. But we are going to do something about it. When we leave in 2010, 2020, 2030, or whenever it will be, this Province will not be in the financial mess it was in when we took over from the former Administration. All I will say in closing, Mr. Chairman, is that this Government accepts its responsibility and will continue to do the job that needs to be done in this Province. Thank you.

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

Mr. Woodford: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was going to have a few words on the Loan Bill itself, but after listening to the previous speaker and some of the comments which have been made by him and other speakers here this evening, I think I should change it somewhat. To have a Minister of the Crown stand up after eighteen months in office and pass the blame to the previous administration, not mentioning the administrations before that, or the administration before that, that is an ongoing thing. We can mention figures and toss them around forever and a day.

When the previous Tory administration took over in 1971 or 1972, \$800 million was the figure quoted. We can compound the interest on that regardless of who was in for the last seventeen years, whether they be Liberal,

NDP, or PC, and we can come up with a fairly staggering amount of dollars. I would love to have had that \$800 million in the bank in 1971 and put 10 per cent on it over the last seventeen years. I will tell you I would not be far off coming up with the \$4.5 billion, I guarantee you.

Mr. Chairman, with the so-called minding of the House and looking after the fiscal responsibilities of this Province for the past eighteen months, I will not even talk about the first twelve I will just talk about the previous six. When you look at the fact that there was anywhere from a \$120 million to a \$200 million deficit in just six short months, I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that if this Administration is in power for seventeen years, the \$4.5 million will be a mere pittance.

In any case, I want to talk about the real concern out there today, which is unemployment. It is first and foremost in the minds and hearts of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, and I am sure the same applies to every politician sitting in this House, regardless of what stripe. On the one hand, you have Ministers get up day after day in Question Period and otherwise, especially the Minister of Labour, and say we are not going to relegate the people of this Province to short-term jobs. They are sick and tired of that after seventeen years, so we want to give them something more meaningful. That was said here in the House just last Spring, when she was questioned on the Employment Generation Program that was put in place a couple of years previous, on which \$7.8 million was spent. When I, at that time, mentioned some of the figures, the people in the district who had

gotten jobs, some part-time, but who, through the training aspect of the Employment Generation Program we had, stayed on - 70 to 75 per cent of them stayed on and worked with their employer at that time - I was more or less laughed out of my seat. It was a joke. Now here we had, today, another Minister of the Crown saying if anybody on social services comes to your door or phones you, you send them to me and I will give them a job. The Minister did not say for how long, but I will tell you and the people of this Province for how long: however long it takes to draw U.I., again shifting the burden of responsibility from the Provincial to the Federal Government, from social services to U.I., the very argument that was used for years.

We did it as an administration, I will admit. We had to do it as an administration, because of some of the same concerns that are here today. You cannot argue that it is not needed, that short-term jobs are not needed.

I took the Minister's word at face value at that time and I said, well, that is great. We can probably see some light at the end of the tunnel. Maybe so. And I believe I even said that here in a speech in the House. Maybe we are going to get some long-term jobs and I, for one, would commend the Minister and the administration if that could be done. I have not seen that, Mr. Chairman. I have not seen any more long-term jobs in this Province than were created previously. I have seen just as many short-term, or a lot less. Just a few weeks ago the same Minister come out with a program - well, three different Ministers but under the auspices of the Department of Labour, I guess,

Forestry, Social Services, and \$1 million through the Minister's Department of Employment - to enhance the Employment Generation Program which, like the other program, was a twenty/twenty/twenty deal. It was not bad at all. In fact, it could have been so called long-term, because it would have given people sixty weeks work. It was not bad at all. I don't think it was as good as the one previous to that, but that is beside the point.

An Hon. Member: We have added a lot (inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Oh, there is no doubt about that. That happened, but anybody who did get on, and it was a reputable company or half decent, or even a small company starting up, it was a good help, it was better than nothing.

So what I am saying is that in comparison to last spring, with no programs and 600 applications sitting on the desk, and some of the results given previous to that by different districts in the Province who benefitted from it, there is no doubt in my mind benefitted from it, it was proven, and to come back just a few short weeks ago and say we are going to come out with \$6 million now, \$1 million in the Employment Generation Program, \$3.5 million in the Social Services Program, which doesn't say much for the Department of Social Services and the administration as a whole, because it says that the economy of the Province is in the worst shape it has been in years - the first place you see that is in the Department of Social Services. So, Mr. Chairman, it was not only in the different programs that came out did we see some rather about-faces, I suppose, or people

being hypocritical.

Getting back to what the Minister of Social Services just finished saying, he said, and put it quite clearly, that we cannot afford it because of our deficit. We want to try to pull in our horns now to try to rectify the thing so that we will be a lot better off in the future. But the Minister and other Ministers of the Crown cannot say that and then go out this evening and comment, for instance, just to make a comparison, on what the Federal Government is doing now. How many people agree with the increase in taxes the Federal Government is proposing, namely, the GST, the dirtiest three letters in the country today? The Premier agrees with it, and it is obvious some of the members opposite must agree with it, the Cabinet especially, when you are going to slap the RST on top of the GST, and in this case tax a tax.

But the bottom line of what I am trying to say is that on the one hand the Minister says we here have a deficit, and we want to make some cuts and raise some taxes in order to look after the deficit. So how, on the other hand, can he say what the Federal Government is doing is wrong? They are trying to do one and the same thing. They inherited a deficit from the previous Liberal Administration. I just forget the bucks now. They are so big it is just unreal. So that is Government. That is the way it goes. If you fellows - that is just the thing. I suppose we won't be able to make comparisons, because after another couple of years, if you keep on the track you are on now, you will not be able to say that you have seventeen years with a deficit of

\$800 million, you would only have had four. That is why we will not be able to make any comparisons. But in any case, try to be straightforward about it and do not be hypocritical, and if you are going to say it, say it like it is and let the people make their decisions. But I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, if we keep on the road we are on now with regards to unemployment in this Province, it is the worst that I have seen in fifteen years in politics, including ten years in municipal life and my five short years as an MHA. It is the worst I have ever seen. Granted, I would be the first to admit, it is not all the cause of the Provincial Government, but I can assure you, based on some of the programs and the so-called policies, policies that were put out in the 1988 campaign, I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that a goodly part of them is because of the Provincial Government and its attitude.

For instance, the one that comes to mind the most: I have to talk about the Economic Recovery Commission. It has always been talked about in reference to Sprung, and the hon. Member is the one who always brings up about the pickle factory. This Administration is in a pickle. I will guarantee you Sprung will not hold splits to what it is going to be if the Economic Recovery Commission and its Chairman keeps on having its way with regards to the amount of dollars being expended, and no return. I would not mind if you could see some return for it. But when you look after eighteen months and see an Economic Recovery Commission put in place to solve the unemployment problems in this Province and you have Ministers of the Crown and

the Premier himself stand in this House and look awfully proud and say that we have created 1,400 jobs, now to me, Mr. Chairman, that is shameful. 1,400 jobs, and I would say not 10 per cent to 15 per cent of those jobs are long term. Not 10 per cent to 15 per cent. I would love to think the whole 1,400 are long term. Four hundred I can identify right away because they were in a fish plant in Twillingate, but that was part-time, one of the only fish plants in the Province that was rejuvenated, and I commend the Minister for it, we have 400 extra people working for however long, as long as they are working it is a good sign. But to look at the monies that were put into the Economic Recovery Commission and look at the results thus far, as far as I am concerned, Mr. Chairman, it does not say much.

I will just quote one of the paragraphs: We have had enough royal commissions, studies and task forces, the state of the economy has been studied to death, what we need now is action. A Liberal Government will move within thirty days to establish an Economic Recovery Team to start implementing our policies and solutions. It does not say start looking at, it says, start implementing our policies and solutions. Now that to me, Mr. Chairman, says that we have something in mind and now we are going to do it. But that is not what happened.

The Economic Recovery Commission has been studying commissions and has been studying more commissions and has been studying studies, everything is studied to death, rightly so. But for an Administration who just eighteen short months ago went around this

Province pontificating the fact that they wanted to implement, they wanted a chance to implement their policies and objectives and solutions, and to come into this House eighteen months after taking power and see the unemployment rate the way it is today there is no doubt about it, Mr. Chairman, it is shameful. As sure as I am standing at this desk today, we will look eighteen months from today and maybe someone on this side will be able to get up and talk about the ERC the same as they are talking about Sprung today. But I can assure you I would say there are a good many days now and a good many hours when Ministers on the other side, and backbenchers as well, are saying to themselves: if only we had to give it a chance. That sixty jobs, even on the last of it, would look awful good today.

Then we have a Minister of Development who got on television the other day, and he has had advertisements, talking about science and technology. How can you on the one hand get on talking about science and technology and on the other hand condemn a project that never had a chance? It never had a chance. Granted, I will say it again and I have said it before, probably we made a mistake in the way it was implemented, the way it was looked after, the Departments it went through, the way it was handled. I would be the first to admit it. The first day I got in as Minister I admitted it, and I will do it today. The sad thing about that complex, Mr. Chairman, was where it was put, right under the microscope of the media. The other sad thing, after all the hullabaloo, the abuse, the remarks, and the sarcasm that was cast on the project over the last

number of years: in a meeting the day before the Premier took office I said to him, Sir, the election is over, you won it fair and square, give it a chance, the money is spent, the people are working, the technology is here, give it a chance; but no, in his usual manner - when I say no, I mean no.

The same thing applies today when he is talking to his Ministers, or any other backbencher as far as I am concerned, who has an idea. When they bring it to him, if they cannot tell him and guarantee the Premier that it is going to work then, I am sorry, boy, I need proof. Those are the words he said to me, I need proof, I need absolute proof that this project is going to work. How can anybody, except for probably Newfoundland Light and Power or Newfoundland Hydro and a few other people with monopolies in the Province, say, yes Sir, I can guarantee you a return on every dollar you put in. There is no other businessman in this country, no small businessman in this Province, no corporation in this Province, or anybody else, can walk in and slip an application to any Department and say, Sir, I guarantee you that. If you could tell a banker today when you go in to get money to start up your business that I can guarantee it, he would not be asking you to put up your car, or a mortgage on your house, or your piece of land, would he? No. he wants collateral. He wants to be covered no matter how good your project looks. Now, Mr. Chairman, this Administration gave permission for Cabot Produce to sell off two or three of the zones of the Sprung Complex. Why? Mr. Chairman, Cabot Produce made a decision to go to Deer Lake. I am

not talking about this because it was in Deer Lake. The first day they said they were going to move, I said it publicly both on CBC television and radio, when this company makes its decision, wherever it goes, I will be the first one to wish it well. I said I do not want the decision made because of politics, or socially, I want it made primarily on economics. I did not say it after they made the decision to go to Deer Lake, I said it the very day they announced it, and that is why I can stand here today and unequivocally state those facts. But the sad thing about it all, and the last few comments I will say on it, is that after all this has been done, money spent, and the Administration giving the company permission to sell off two or three of the zones so that they could possibly move, when they asked permission to move the facility from Mount Pearl to Deer Lake they were refused. Why? Simply because, I cannot guarantee you, Sir, it is going to work, although no other monies would be put into the project. I said it then when the decision was made and I say it now, Mr. Chairman, the only reason for that not being given permission to move to Deer Lake was because they were afraid it was going to work.

Now, Mr. Chairman, let's look around and talk about the cuts and the savings that this Administration was trying to make. The Minister of Municipal Affairs just left the room now. A few short months ago the Minister made an announcement on television, I believe, it was not in the House, I believe it was on television one summer day, saying they were going to amalgamate all those communities in the Province.

Now that was a great idea, I guess, at that time, but I guess the Minister and the Administration soon found out that the people and the municipal leaders in this Province had a little bit more backbone than what they thought they had. So they in turn, after all the racket about forced amalgamation and so on, hauled their horns in and then asked for feasibility studies and so on which was all accommodated in the Municipalities Act. Everything was in there to look after this, but they were going to come in and say, you amalgamate, period. So that was taken back.

When they saw that there was still a considerable amount of opposition, then they brought in the Regional Services Board Act. Now anybody who has been on council for years - and I know a Member on the other side has been associated with council and the Federation of Municipalities - is quite familiar with what is in the Municipalities Act. They took out the very first paragraph in the regional services board, took out the possibility and the rule I guess, and whatever was necessary to have feasibility studies done for each municipality that wanted to have anything to do in the region. That was taken out and the power given to the Minister. And another part of it gave the Minister the power to appoint the Chairman.

But, Mr. Speaker, the analogy I am trying to draw right now is that when they started off and said, you are going to amalgamate, then had to haul their horns in and say, no, not so, we will do the feasibility studies, and then we will see. When that was done, then we will say, well, it is done now, but if you do not want

amalgamation you will not have it. And then came in with the regional services board. The fact is, Mr. Chairman, that the regional services board Act if passed will give this Administration amalgamation by another name.

So, I mean, when you say you are not forced - and when the way that this Act goes - unless some of the amendments, there are amendments made to some of the conditions of the Act, other than that it will be forced amalgamation by another name.

And I can see the same thing today happening in the school system. We all know that in this Province over the years it has been very costly to afford anybody the proper education. We have seen funds put into education topped up over the years, never seem to make the commitments because of our requirements, and the vast area we have in this Province. But Mr. Chairman, what we have seen in just the last couple of weeks is, any Minister that was interviewed concerning the denominational system said, no. The Premier said no, well we will probably look at it down the road. The Minister said no, they should have shared services. Yes, and I agree. But denomination, no, it was in the Constitution and we cannot touch it unless there is something done with the Constitution. Rightly so.

But then it gets to the point where you start cutting. I will talk about the education part in this instance, but health the same thing, but more specifically the education part of it. When you start cutting funding to the school boards in this Province, what are you doing? When you start touching - and God forbid,

the 2 per cent ratio in the school boards - or fooling with the substitute teachers' monies, and youngsters today have to be sent home because their teacher is sick and there is no one to take her place, and the school board has not got the funds, and when you start looking at cutting the ratio, for instance 2 per cent, what do you do? When I have a school board in my district today, fifteen out of the twenty-five schools in that district have got double classes. Fifteen.

If they move the ratio even from 2 to 2.5 it could mean anywhere from six to nineteen teachers gone. Now people might say so what, we have too many teachers. We cannot remove teachers out of a system that is already overloaded with double grades and so on, we just cannot do it. So it is obvious Mr. Chairman, that once we dicker with that ratio we are going to have triple, and in six cases in my district, six schools in my district, we will have four classes in the one room; four grades in the one classroom.

Now, Mr. Chairman, if that is not setting the education requirements in this Province back not twenty, not thirty, but forty or fifty years, Mr. Speaker, I do not know; I would just like someone to explain it to me. Now you do not have to be here, you do not have to be political about that, these are facts. They will look at him and say well he is a politician, he is going to say that anyway. He is in opposition, he is going to say that anyway.

I am not saying this, I am only relaying a message. These are facts. There is not one person, and especially the Member for Exploits, he used to be in the

NTA, he used to be a teacher, he can sit down in private, I am sure, and say yes boy, it is true but we still have to face the cuts.

But I mean it is true. When you start hitting the hearts, when you start touching the children with regards to education in this Province, you hit the heart of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. It is bad enough today, and in cases we just cannot help, we have double grades.

To see that happening, to me is unconscionable. And Mr. Chairman, what I am trying to say and get right down to the bottom line, is that by doing this, by cutting programs, by cutting funding, it is just automatic - again I am talking about the amalgamation system coming into regional service boards, we will have the same thing coming into the denominational boards, because the schools cannot afford it, so they will force the schools in the particular areas of the Province to get together and say boy, we have no choice but get together, so they in turn will have to come to the Government and say boys, we have to change, and that is the way it will be done:

To me that is what is happening, and if someone can tell me differently so be it, but Mr. Chairman, those two analogies, the amalgamation one and the denominational system in this Province with regard to education, is one and the same, one and the same, because it will be forced, whether directly or indirectly. And maybe somewhere down the road, I do not know, but looking at it today, in regard to the grades in the classroom it looks to me as unconscionable. Somewhere down the road someone might be able to

say it was the best thing that ever happened.

I had a mother the other day who called me from Pollards Point, her child is in grade three, there are two grades to a class in three and four. Now it is an honest mistake, I know, but the parent did not take it that way, the child came home with grade four homework. That was an honest mistake on behalf of the teacher. But he took the brunt for it. He took it.

He made a mistake, and I suppose this was the type of parent who was a bit touchy, a bit edgy, right away jumped on it. Some more would not, but she happened to jump on it and he took the brunt - through no fault of his own, as far as I am concerned. I talked to him afterwards, it was just an honest mistake, he just happened to give the wrong paper. But what I am saying, what happens when you get three in the one classroom. And none of us, Members on that side know as well as I do, that that is happening today. It happened when we were there two double classes, but when you get three or four as far as I am concerned it is time, Mr. Chairman, that we try to show this Administration that they have a social conscience and try to do everything possible to eliminate that type of thing happening in the Province.

And, Mr. Chairman, I know my time is just about up, but another area I would like to touch on is the fishery. I have a plant in Jackson's Arm today that has ninety-five plant workers with absolutely no work whatsoever, and some with just seven weeks in the Jackson's Arm area. I have them in Sop's Arm, they will probably

end up with seven weeks for the year, it doesn't matter whether it goes from fourteen down to five.

An Hon. Member: That's the E. Janes plant?

Mr. Woodford: Yes, the E. Janes and Son crab plant in Jackson's Arm, they will not get their unemployment regardless.

They are going to have to depend on the fisheries response program and that, this time of the year, as far as I am concerned, is wrong as well. Because you have to have something that can be worked on if you are going to put something in a community or a worker, whether they be a plant worker or a fisherman on a project, he should be put on it while he can do something with it; not in the wintertime when he is up to his backside in snow and cannot cut a tree or cannot do anything.

It should be done in the right time of the year and that I blame on the Federal Fisheries Response Program. It should have been out early enough. To add to that I would also say that the provincial Minister in his wisdom, should, especially now, he has time now to analyze what happened this summer, look and consult and communicate with the Federal Minister of Fisheries, come up with something jointly, put some monies into it to try to accommodate and help those people get something meaningful to put them over, at least the short-term, which would be this winter.

Mr. Chairman, I know I have gone over my time, I do not know why you did not bring me to task. There are a nice few comments I would like to make on the unemployment situation in the

Province, so I would like to -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: -have a couple of minutes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make a comment on the Minister of Social Service's statement with regards to the school lunch -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Is my time up?

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

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

Mr. Simms: There seems to be a misconception here, Mr. Chairman. The hon. Member does not necessarily require leave to speak again, because we are in Committee on a loan and Members can get up five, ten, fifteen, twenty times, as often as they want in this debate. They do not have to speak for thirty minutes. They can speak for five minutes, ten minutes, sit down.

So I say to my friend, and I want my friend to be aware of this because obviously he was not quite aware of this and others are not, that as soon as the Member for LaPoile sits down whenever he is finished, the hon. Member should stand up again and make sure he understands his comments just so everybody understands that there is lots of debating time available to us. The Loan Bill debate can go on for days, weeks, months on end, all night unless the Government decides to use closure. So we will just wait and see. I thought that was a valid

point of order though, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The Opposition House Leader is correct. The debating time is thirty minutes the Members can speak, but he has to take his place and stand again. I will recognize the hon. Member for LaPoile.

Mr. Woodford: Is my time up?

Mr. Chairman: Your time is up, yes.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman it gives me pleasure to rise in support of the resolution relating to the raising of loans by the Province. There are quite a number of things that have happened lately in my own district as well as in general, I suppose, in the public as far as the information that is being bandied about as to responsibility and taking responsibility for the situation that the Province now finds itself in. In doing a bit of research a little earlier and the figures that have already been mentioned by the Minister of Social Services, I think we have reached a point where the Province has to look at it and figure out what do we do. Do we continue to borrow excessive amounts of money and increase the debt from \$ 5.2 billion, \$ 5.4 billion.? The next thing you know in ten years time we are up to around \$8 billion, \$10 billion in debt. Do we continue to do that? I do not think that the money would be lent by the financial institutions, and I do not think the various agencies that would give advice in this matter would allow the

Province to go much further in the borrowing of money. \$458 million interest this year that we are paying towards the debt. \$458 million, just think of that. In essence pretty well covering 500,000 people that is \$100 a head a year on that debt alone not even considering the provision of services to the people of the Province.

Now, prior to speaking I was looking through some of the various business magazines and that, just trying to get a feel for some of the ways we could take a look at this, some of the different analogies to it. If you analogize it to a business you end up with a situation where a business can only take so much before your banker calls you in and says, look, there is no more money you are able to borrow, or we are going to jack up your rate, which is a possibility. That is the kind of thing that would happen if we had to borrow more to try to meet this crisis situation. In essence, as was mentioned, it would cost us more to borrow to a point where there would be no gain in exercising our extra borrowing. We have had our head in the sand too long. I am a new Member of this House of Assembly and in looking at what has been happening, and doing some history on what has happened in the past, I feel that as tough as it is, and as much as I would love not to have to go back to my district, to stay away from it, and say everything is great, we are going to be able to put in new programs, we will do this, but there comes a point when you finally have to stop and say, we are no longer going to only look at the short-term, we have to look at the long-term effect of the kind of tactics that have been

used, and the kind of procedures used by governments in the past of sticking their heads in the sand and doing everything from a political, and not a good business management, or good public financial management perspective. Robert Louis Stevenson said one time, you cannot run away from a weakness. You must sometimes fight it out or perish. He continued, and if that be so, why? Not now, and where you stand. We have to fight it now and as hard as it is, any Members on the Opposition now who would think that a Government Member in this House of Assembly would enjoy, as the hon. Minister of Social Services said, we are not going to get any bouquets thrown at us for taking this position. It is tough, it is difficult, and it may have severe consequences if you guys do your job well enough. If you do not do your job well enough as an Opposition then maybe the consequences will not be so bad. Maybe people will really see that this has to be done, that \$458 million a year in interest is too high a consequence for the future.

The hon. Member for Humber Valley spoke of children who were hungry, saying what we are doing is going to make these children hungry. Well, God knows, in twenty years time if we continue the way we are that hunger will be even worse. There will not be any children around because nobody will be able to afford to have children. No one will be able to live up to the kind of expectations placed on Government. The economy can only handle so much and there is a certain element of sacrifice that we, the Members of the House of Assembly, collectively have to take. Now, I speak as a member of the Government side, but I would

say any suggestion of us as Members of the House of Assembly in taking the initiative and taking the lead in possibly some form of financial restraint ourselves, may not go over very well on either side, but that is the kind of leadership initiative that is being looked at by the people in the districts. I have met with the NTA groups. I have met with various groups throughout my district recently, and asked them what they thought we should do, getting input from people as to how they feel we can make some changes ourselves, how we can take the initiative to show the leadership and make people realize just how serious this problem really is. I know I would personally be willing to give up some of the benefits that have been afforded me as a Member of the House of Assembly in order to show these people that we are serious about this and we do not enjoy doing it. It is a very serious thing and it is the kind of initiative that we have to take leadership in. Now, I would ask other Members on the other side to consider taking the initiative that I took in finding out from people how they feel we can better things. It is always said that there is a certain percentage of the Budget that is salary only and the only way to make cost cutting measures work is by cutting jobs. Now, that is part of it, and it is going to be a big part, but there is a certain percentage there that can work in how we run Government, how things are worked, and maybe that can be a big element of assistance. If we look at the health care sector: on my way home on Friday I sat with a doctor who sits on the Newfoundland Medical Association, and he expressed to me his fears of how the medical community is actually helping to

cause the problem, because of the procedures that are in place with doctors and how they are paid and the procedural elements within the health care system and how that is really contributing to the problem. Excessive visits by some patients who go because the system will allow and some genuinely who do need to see their physicians regularly, weekly, bi-weekly, or whatever but there are cases that can be addressed through either some form of deterrent to abusing the system, and also some form of enforcement on the part of the physicians and surgeons and dentists, that will assist the Government in making sure that the money is wisely spent. Because if we do not take those initiatives in making sure that every public dollar is put to the best possible use and that abuse is brought to the minimum, and I do not mean to employ that there is abuse on the part of physicians or what have you, but what a system will allow any businessperson would be foolish not to use to its maximum extent. But to look at it from a Government perspective and from the perspective of protecting the rights of the public of the Province, we have to look at, I suppose on a larger part, that we have to see to it that every possible step is taken. And I urge other Members, and see if it will cross the mouths of the Opposition as to any inkling of taking any kind of benefits away from us, which may require a complete agreement by all people here in this House of Assembly. But if that is what we have to do, we should do it. Because I know I would not be able to sleep at night if I had to tell my next door neighbour, or if I had to tell some of the teachers or some of the health care workers in my district that they are going to

lose their jobs, if I was not doing something about it as an individual.

And the fish plant workers in my area: you speak of the fishery. We have 400 people who are currently out of work and maybe we can put something together and manage to get that plant up and running this year. But do not let it be sacrificed in two or three years time if it was the same kind of a problem because we had chosen to borrow more this year, if we had chosen to take the easy way out, and stick our head in the sand, as it was done in the place, by governments of both political stripes, Federal and Provincial. There comes a time when you reach the breaking point and you have to start cutting back.

It has been said about business that it is somewhat like a man rowing upstream, and to draw the analogy in government we are rowing, but the water is getting a lot faster against us. And if we borrow or put a little bit more weight in that boat in the form of interest, there is probably not enough power to keep that boat rowing up stream and it is going to go falling back and the next thing you know we are over the falls, and that would be bankruptcy, and we just cannot do it. We just have to do something as hard as it is, and I guarantee you I would not support something that would give an element of drawing us into a cesspool, draw us into the abyss again, and the next thing you know in twenty years time the debt is up around \$15 billion. As hard as it is to live in your own community and support that kind of an initiative because people in general do not understand, they think that you can continue to borrow and add it

on and all of your efforts to try to improve the situation are for naught. Well that is difficult.

Another element that we could look at is to encourage people to conserve energy. If you look at what the system that we have in place now is costing the government and is costing the Newfoundland Hydro that we support in as far as putting money into the energy system where you buy power for a dollar at the consumer level, and it is costing probably, I do not know the exact percentage, but say one dollar and twenty-five to produce in selling it for a dollar, it does not make a lot of sense economically. Maybe something in the order of having the Newfoundland Hydro run in a manner the way that Newfoundland Light and Power is run, as a private company, albeit still tied into Government, but I mean raising money through a share issue that way and then they would be answering to that company. Maybe that is a way we can look at it. There are many other things. We look at the pressure on the Government now and the pressure on basically the whole economy as far as peoples' wants and needs for the future. People in turn who want to retire early, in a survey done recently the number of Canadians employed in 1988 who wanted to take early retirement, 5.3 million Canadians want to retire earlier.

Now these 5.3 million Canadians, which is a good percentage of the work force, are going to put further pressures on the economy and on the tax raising ability of Governments to supply the social services for them. Because of course, earning on the order of 60 to 70 per cent of what they earned when they were earning a living

from employment income, on retirement income it is a much lower amount and then the amounts the Government can collect in tax revenue will also be under a lot more pressure.

We look at the expectations, because of the violent growth of the economy in Central Canada versus how the economy has grown here. That in turn has put upward pressure on our wages here. And has put upward pressure on the Newfoundland economy to match that of Central Canada, and yet we do not have the ability to pay. So again we are sacrificed as a result of what Central Canada is doing to the Canadian economy.

In conclusion, as far as my comments here, Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say that I would ask all hon. Members to consider some kind of leadership role in assuming some of the burden ourselves, as individual Members of the House of Assembly, and set the initiative so that the people of the the Province will realize just how serious this situation is, and that we as the leaders, elected to our respective constituencies throughout the Province, are going to take the initiative in dealing with this and set a good example for the public of the province.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Woodford: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few short comments and I will clue up. If I had a couple of minutes earlier I could have done it but I could not get leave.

Getting back to what I said

earlier about the Minister of Social Services introducing a school lunch program. I was going to at that time commend him for taking the initiative to do such a thing. That was instituted last year I believe, and was a good and successful program, and now the same school made a request this year for that program to be instituted again and it was granted.

But that same program, Mr. Chairman, should have been tied in with a program that was about to go in the Spring of 1989, and that was a school milk program. If anybody in this House can tell me a better product to get into the classrooms than milk, well then I am open for suggestions.

And every Member in the House, whether they are a parent or not, certainly is cognizant of the fact of what the children go for today in the schools. They go for the Pepsi and the soft drinks, whatever it is, and when they get out they go for something a little harder sometimes. But in any case in schools that is what they get.

So we were going to at that time institute - with very little money, by the way - I know the Minister of education should probably take note that at that time it would have cost Government, I believe it was \$250,000 - I stand to be corrected on that - to institute a school milk program in the whole Province, in conjunction with the processors and the producers.

Now that to me would have been far better than a school lunch program in one or two schools in the whole Province, in the St. John's area. And the people in the rural areas of this Province and in Labrador

certainly can benefit from a school milk program. We all know what is being used in schools, and we all know about milk. We do not have to tell anybody in the House the nutritional value of milk. I am sure that if everybody drank it and started at an early age, the Minister of Health today would not have some of the problems he has with regard to the health care system.

Now there were two things at that time. Granted the producers also had an interest, because by getting a school milk program in place the kids would start drinking milk at an earlier age and, therefore, when they came out of school, they would as parents keep on drinking milk and would buy it for their children. So there would be an ongoing effect.

I just forget, but I believe there was a figure put on it at one time, what it would save the health care system and the dental care system if a school milk program was instituted. There are figures on it from other provinces and it has been proven, so I don't have to stress it. But I would just like to leave that especially with the Minister of Education, who is here now. But it was the Minister of Education at that time, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Agriculture was involved - the three departments were involved.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: They were about to bring it in. I believe it was 250,000. You can check it out. The figures are still there.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Woodford: No, no, it was not

just through government, it was the processors, producers, and government. There were three involved, but government's part at that time to help institute it was that -

Mr. Tobin: There was a crowd up there on Shea Heights and that is why I was getting (inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Yes. Well, that was to institute the program and there were some monies there for prizes and so on for different schools, whoever consumed the most milk.

Dr. Warren: (Inaudible) and how much it cost for that program?

Mr. Woodford: Yes, I have them somewhere. I will try to get them.

But I am just saying what importance such a program would have.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the other thing I would like to mention is small business in the Province. Now, for years, from 1985 to 1989, Mr. Chairman, I was approached on at least fifteen or sixteen occasions by small businesspeople in the district, and three from outside the district. Out of twenty-three cases there were eighteen cases of people who owed RST, Retail Sales Tax. They were threatened by the Department of Finance that they were going to be closed: they were going to take their vendor numbers and come in and close them down because they did not pay their taxes. I, in turn, went to the minister at that time and said look, give those businesses a chance. They are not closing down because they do not have sales, they are not closing down because the individual is not interested in his business, he just struck on

hard times, used the money rather than remitting it to the Provincial Government, and now the Government is moving in and wants their money right away. Give them a chance to pay over X number of months. That was done and everyone of those businesses are still going today except for one - one folded afterwards.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: No, that is wrong.

Mr. Chairman, going back to last fall, I guess pretty well eight or ten months now, I have seen at least three cases in our area, one in particular, where the finance people just walked in and said, I am sorry. I want the RST now or I want your vendor number. He had no choice, Mr. Chairman, but to give them his number. He had absolutely no choice. One in particular had \$87,000 in accounts receivable, \$62,000 of which were what we call good receivables. The Department of Finance not only took his vendor number and put him out of business, he finished that day, they also took \$21,000 in third party demands on that business. He owed \$31,000 in taxes. They took \$21,000 in third party demands. He had no choice but to collect, because they were after him every day of the week. He went to the Small Claims Court, where the maximum was then only \$1,000 that you could get, and recuperated over \$22,000 from small claims himself. He got that back in five months. They still would not give him back his \$21,000 in third party demands, good, because the Department of Finance only takes the best receivables. We all know that. They will leave the rest for the ordinary individual and the ordinary businessman to collect.

But they will take the top of the lot, so they took the \$21,000.

I don't know now, but two months ago he didn't have those back, and he is still out of business, as is his wife and two other people, which means four people were out. And I can go on with two or three others. Having said that, I had other cases where there were taxes involved and the Department of Finance charged interest on some monies the people owed. But I have to give credit where credit is due. I called the Minister and the two or three cases I called him on were straightened up. They were hounded for the last couple of years, but he did straighten it up and they did not have to pay the interest, so that says something. But the bottom line is, in talking to one inspector he did not come right out and say it, but I got the impression they were told to collect X number of dollars, bring them in, or else their jobs were on the line. I know on the Public Utilities Board the inspectors -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: I don't know. I would say that figure is fairly high. In any case, I know with the Department of Labour the people doing electrical inspections, or something like that, were told last year to make sure they brought in \$200,000 or \$250,000 or there are X number of jobs on the line. Now, there is only so far you can go with that. People can only afford so much, especially with the way the economy is today.

I would like to have a few words regarding the fisheries and again, Mr. Chairman, the one that comes to mind is this Baader machine,

this Baader 32 that Nord had come in a couple of years ago and leased to a company on Bell Island, which, I am sure, the Member for Mount Scio knows all about. P. Janes and Sons, out of Jackson's Arm, made a request to the Department of Fisheries, along with, I think, five or six other proposals, to try and get that Baader machine this year to use for the filleting of mackerel and herring. The quota in the White Bay area, down in the Jackson's Arm area, is 5,500 tons, so that would have been a blessing for the people there; it would have given work and probably a lot of them would have gotten their stamps if they had to get the Baader machine there. Instead of that, the Baader machine, I think, went to the Minister of Social Service's District, Port de Grave, if I am not mistaken.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) more fish.

Mr. Woodford: More fish in Port de Grave? That was okay, but when you look at a 5,500 ton quota in White Bay and a 600 ton quota in the Port de Grave area, and look at what it could have done for an area that was depressed economically, no jobs this year, absolutely nothing, Mr. Chairman, I do not know. I would like someone to explain that to me. And when I checked into it further, I was told the Baader people, in conjunction with Nord, put the machine out there to try to perfect the filleting of small cod.

Maybe the Minister of Fisheries can respond to that some other time, but, I mean, if there is any truth to that, could someone tell me how come they could leave ninety-five people in Jackson's

Arm - maybe there are other areas around the Province who probably have 150 out of work, I don't know. But in this case a specific proposal was made and instead of it being given to an area where there was a quota of 5,500 tons of herring to be caught, 4,800 tons of which was left in the waters last year, it was given to an area where there was a half decent fishery this year. As I understand it, there was a half decent fishery down in that area this year. But it where there was a quota of 600 tons, to me that does not say much for the Minister of Fisheries and his Administration.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have taken up enough time. I just wanted to make those few short comments with regard to the small business part of it. As to the fishery, with regard to this Baader machine, I want to be on record as mentioning that particular part of it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a few brief remarks at this time on The Loan Bill that is presently before the Legislature. I only have a few minutes, obviously. Because the House adjourns in a short period of time, it is hard to focus on any one point at this stage. I just want to make a general comment at the outset.

Mr. Chairman, I was fortunate enough to be able to get a couple of weeks off, the first time in a long time.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) couple of years.

Mr. Simms: No, that is not quite accurate, either. Nevertheless, when I left a few weeks ago, I left with a bit of a positive feeling in the air. It was on the heels of the Hibernia agreement being signed and the Hibernia announcement. People out my way, in Central Newfoundland, were very positive about that accomplishment, that great Tory accomplishment finally being finalized, and they were looking forward with a bit of optimism to the future for a change, because things had not been really good.

People out my way were eagerly anticipating the announcement of the site for the new central Newfoundland university campus, which was touted, one of the major planks in the Liberal parties campaign in 1989. The Minister of Education promised a new central Newfoundland university on behalf of the Government. In fact, I think he announced it several times. I cannot remember how many times now, but on several occasions, early on in the year, he expected an announcement almost any day, then it was within a few weeks, then it became a few months, and finally he would not say anymore, he was not going to give any date as a speculated date.

So, there was some positive feeling in the air out in Lewisporte, Gander, and places like that, which had been seeking this particular campus. But, Mr. Chairman, low and behold, having left on this air of optimism, this feeling of positiveness just about three weeks ago, I came back Friday night, I read about twenty or so newspapers and I could not believe my eyes. I was returning to a complete disaster. It was like a disaster area that I was coming home to. I could not

believe it. I mean, there was so much happening.

An Hon. Member: Where were you?

Mr. Simms: I was in Florida.

An Hon. Member: Were you?

Mr. Simms: Yes. I saw a lot of friends of some of your colleagues who were down there at Easter. I did not go down Easter time. Unfortunately, I could not get away. Anyway, Mr. Chairman, I came back and read the newspapers and I said to myself, first of all, as an opposition member, good heavens! We have so much ammunition here it is unbelievable. How are we ever going to be able to tackle and focus on this? Because it was all over the place: Hospital cutbacks, education cutbacks, Marine Institute strikes, student assistants strikes. I could not believe my eyes!

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible) the feeling Leo had when he came back from Boston.

Mr. Simms: My colleague says, 'Do you think it might have been comparable to the feeling the former leader of the Liberal party, Mr. Barry, had when he came back from Boston one time?' I say, I am not quite sure now what that feeling might have been.

And, Mr. Chairman, I heard about an exposé done by NTV about an alleged patronage charge against the Minister of Tourism with a contract in tourism.

An Hon. Member: It was good dancing though, him and Rod Stewart.

An Hon. Member: He did well

dancing.

Mr. Simms: I heard about my colleague, the Member for Humber East, valiantly putting forth the case for single mothers, because of the cutbacks to single mothers, their maintenance payments being taken away from their social assistance payments, and, Mr. Chairman, I saw where Fraser March, the head of the largest union in the Province, said words to the effect that they thought they had it bad with the Peckford Administration in terms of labour relations, but they have never seen anything like they are seeing now, contrary to what the Minister of Social Services said when he spoke a few moments ago.

Then, of course, I left thinking that the Minister of Finance was going to be dead on in his prediction of last March when he presented his Budget and bragged about a \$10 million surplus, but, lo and behold, six months later I find out there is a \$120 million deficit. I could not believe my eyes.

Mr. L. Snow: He has changed it again now, Len. He just said he might have (inaudible).

Mr. Simms: Well, whatever. But it is a rather unusual twist, because only four or five months ago they were all pounding on their desks over there when the Minister of Finance - it is all on tape - announced, 'We again, Mr. Speaker, second year in a row I believe, will have a \$10 million surplus.' But it has quickly turned into \$120 million, or more, maybe, now.

And, of course, I saw the usual criticism of the Federal Government's cut back in transfer

payments. I saw the usual criticism of, it is the former administration's problem. It was their responsibility. Anyway, Mr. Chairman, those are just opening remarks. I will continue tomorrow. But I have to say it was quite a shock to see and hear and face what is going on.

Mr. Chairman, there were also some rumours about my future in politics. A lot of people were asking me if I was contemplating my future in politics. I said, Mr. Chairman, if there is anybody in this Legislature who should be contemplating their future in politics, it should be the Members on that side of the House, let me assure you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear hear!

Mr. Chairman: Order please!
Order please!

Mr. Simms: Anyway, Mr. Chairman, I am constrained by time. I move the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Trinity - Bay de Verde.

Mr. L. Snow: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered the matters to it referred and has directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

On motion, report received and adopted, Committee ordered to sit again, on tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Government

House Leader. Stop the clock.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Private Member's resolution to be debated on Wednesday will be the resolution on the Order Paper by the Member for Eagle River.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible).

Mr. Furey: The Labrador fishery.

Mr. Baker: That has to do with the Labrador fishery.

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

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