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Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

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The House met at 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker (Lush): Order, please!

Statements by Ministers

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, it was suggested some time ago that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador host a state dinner to honour a native Newfoundlander, and one of Canada's foremost authorities on the Canadian Constitution, Senator Eugene Forsey. While hosting such an event is a well-known and effective way to honour such a person, it would be costly and of little lasting benefit. However, recognizing fully Senator Forsey's great commitment to Canada, and to this Province - and I emphasize and to this Province - as he constantly presents himself in the Canadian context as a Newfoundlander and talks about his Province and his Government - we agreed wholeheartedly that it would be most appropriate and fitting for this Government to pay tribute to a gentleman who has given so much of himself for the benefit of others. The consensus was that there would be no finer way to honour someone of the stature of Senator Forsey than to make it possible for young people in his native Province to follow in his footsteps. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am announcing today the establishment of a scholarship in honour of Senator Eugene Forsey.

The Government has committed \$25,000 to initiate an endowment fund at Memorial University realizing, Mr. Speaker, that this is a modest amount in terms of scholarship funding. However,

others wishing to honour Senator Forsey in a similar way will now have an opportunity to do so by contributing to that scholarship fund if they wish.

The Senator Eugene Forsey Scholarship will be valued at \$2,000 annually and will be awarded to a student in third year or beyond who has shown excellence in Canadian Policy Analysis or Canadian Governmental Studies. The first award will be made in the 1991 Fall semester. If the fund grows through public support, additional scholarships can be realized.

Mr. Speaker, we want to honour in the same manner a native Newfoundlander who died recently, Rufus Guinchard. Mr. Speaker, I doubt very much if there is anyone in this Province who hasn't heard of Rufus Guinchard and marvelled at his musical talents. His name is synonymous with Newfoundland culture.

I am today announcing the establishment of an endowment fund for a scholarship in honour of the late Rufus Guinchard. The Government has committed \$25,000 to the establishment of an Entrance Scholarship to be administered by Memorial University and tenable at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook for students intending to pursue a course of studies in Newfoundland music, art or folklore. As is the case with the endowment fund for the Senator Eugene Forsey Scholarship, the establishment of the Rufus Guinchard Entrance Scholarship will make it possible for others who may want to honour Mr. Guinchard in a similar way to do so and thus extend the scholarship benefits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank the Premier for providing us with an advanced copy of this statement and secondly, consistent with what I have said as Leader of the Opposition, as Leader of this Opposition from time to time, I would like to say this morning that when the Government does something positive, then we welcome it, and this is a very, very positive announcement by the Premier and we welcome that announcement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: I want to publicly congratulate the Government for taking this initiative, to honour in a very substantive way, not just doing it in the way of having a dinner or something like that, but in a lasting and substantive way to honour two very famous Newfoundlanders.

Two Newfoundlanders whom I had an opportunity to know and to work with during my public career. Senator Eugene Forsey is a credit to Newfoundland and Labrador and to Canada, and Rufus Guinard, I knew him very, very well and I got to know him much better while I was Minister of Culture.

He contributed greatly to the music and culture and folklore of this Province and as I said, the Government is to be commended for the initiative that it has taken here today and we commend them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to announce today an approval of a school lunch program for three schools under the Avalon and Roman Catholic School Boards.

Funding totalling \$141,000 has been provided through the Departments Employment Opportunities Division. This approval represents an increase in last year's funding. The project would operate from October 31, 1990 to the end of the school year, June 26, 1991.

The Department has worked closely with the projects sponsor, the Gower Street United Church Committee for hungry children. This nonprofit organization is comprised of volunteers including the teaching and the dietary professions necessary to supervise and support this program.

Mr. Speaker, the committee has obtained approval from the Avalon Consolidated and Roman Catholic School Boards, to run this project at Bishop Field, Harrington and Holy Cross.

Bishop Field was supported last year as a result of needs identified through a survey. Facilities were nonexistent at the centre, however, the Gower Street United Church generously provided their facilities at no cost to prepare meals.

Mr. Speaker, last year's program received an extensive evaluation by an independent agency and was supervised by Dr. Abe Ross, head of the Psychology Department at Memorial University. The results

were extremely positive in terms of the children's health and school improvements as well as providing very meaningful employment experience and training for social assistance clients.

It is anticipated that between 250 to 300 meals per day will be prepared. A menu developed by professional nutritionists with the Department of Health will ensure all lunches are well balanced and nutritious.

The staff will consist of an administrator, one food coordinator, two lead workers and eight food service trainees who under the direction and supervision of the Coordinator will prepare, cook and serve the meals to the students.

The trainees will be involved in the clean-up operations and will also assist in the preparation for the next day's meals. These duties will be performed from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this program is being sponsored by an agency which has been successful in raising \$5,000, which demonstrates that the agency is taking the lead in supplementing the overall project cost. This amount will be used for operating while additional operating funds will be provided by those school children who can pay for the full cost of the meals.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Hear hear!

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

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all I wish to thank the Minister for

sending us a copy in advance of his statement. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all the people involved in this project: the Gower Street United Church Committee for Hungry Children should be congratulated for initiating this type of program; Dr. Ross's help in evaluating last year's programme certainly has to be recognized. And the improvements that Dr. Ross found in the school children in attendance and attentiveness speak well for this type of program and for the United Church Committee for Hungry Children.

The \$141,000 is to be recognized as a Community Development Programme through the Department of Social Services, but Mr. Speaker I want to congratulate all those involved in the program and suggest that this side of the House will support such programmes. And I congratulate the Minister of Social Services also for being involved in this type of programme.

And I recommend to the hon. Minister of Social Services to try very hard to extend this programme throughout the Province as much as he can. I know it is an expensive programme but it would be good for his Department to go out and try to organize some volunteer groups to take on a project and let them know what his department can do to help them when they have the volunteer group in place, such as the United Church has done.

This is a good programme, Mr. Speaker, and we are delighted that the Minister could announce it this morning.

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

Dr. Kitchen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday of this week I gave, on behalf of the President of Treasury Board, an overview of some of the measures by which Government will address the increase in the projected deficit; measures that will bring about savings of twelve million dollars this fiscal year. Today I wish to inform Honourable Members of the detailed measures that are being taken within the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our contribution toward reducing the deficit and toward making the collection of revenue more efficient, the Department of Finance will be reducing the number of Regional Taxation Offices from four to three by closing not later than December 31, 1990 the Regional Taxation Office at Clarendville. One managerial post and three positions in the general service category will be made redundant as a result of this action, with some of the personnel occupying these positions being offered alternative employment. The greater part of the remaining staff consisting of tax auditors, compliance officers and collectors will be re-assigned to the Grand Falls Regional Taxation Office. The remainder will be transferred to the St. John's Regional Office. These transfers to St. John's will assist us to meet the anticipated demands imposed by the development of Hibernia on the retail sales tax system and to provide the preliminary auditing necessary to ensure our royalties.

It should be emphasized that there will be no reduction in our tax collection effort resulting from

this streamlining of the Tax Administration Branch. Savings of approximately \$50,000 will be effected in the current fiscal year, in part by reduced personnel but more especially by reduced overhead from having one less office and by accommodating all our taxation staff in buildings owned by Government. On an annualized basis we expect the savings to be effected by the closure of the Clarendville Office to exceed \$250,000.

Undoubtedly there will be some inconvenience to employees caused by this move. However, we will try to keep this to a minimum by being as flexible as practicable in allowing time to arrange relocations. Senior officials of the Office of the Comptroller General of Finance are presently in Clarendville discussing with the people concerned the details of the transfers.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to save an additional \$250,000 this year by not filling vacant positions, by reducing travel, consultants' fees and purchases, and by a number of other measures.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Windsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What an example of penny-wise and pound-foolish. If this is the Government's way of decentralizing Government it will not take long before the Premier has the entire Government on the eight floor of this building and nowhere else.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no logic whatsoever in this particular move. The Minister is announcing, simply, laying off four people and saving \$50,000, \$12,500 a job. If the Minister of Development can create jobs at \$12,500 a job he should get on with it and create as many as he possibly can. They normally cost a tremendous amount more than that, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is taking staff from Clarendville and moving them to Grand Falls. Those staff, Mr. Speaker, are responsible for all the Burin Peninsula, all the Bonavista Peninsula, and he is going to spend \$400,000 in additional travel in getting the people from Grand Falls to those areas to do their job. The Minister says we are going to have some of them in St. John's to take on the extra burden from Hibernia. I remind the Minister that a great percentage of the additional burden from Hibernia is going to be at Come By Chance and in the Clarendville area. Now, is when we need them out there. What a tremendous contribution this is, Mr. Speaker, \$50,000 from his \$120 million deficit. Congratulations.

Oral Questions

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, just a couple of days ago the Dunne Task Force on how the Federal Government should go about implementing the recommendations of the Harris Report was made public. The Dunne Task Force makes some major and significant recommendations to the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is

that the Provincial Department of Fisheries was consulted in the process of that task force and, in fact, did appear before the task force and had input into it. I would like to ask the Minister of Fisheries if he could tell the House whether or not the Province supports the task force recommendations that there be "An immediate reduction in the total allowable catch of Northern cod", in other words, that the total allowable catch of Northern cod for 1991 be significantly reduced below what it was for 1990?

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

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, the Province went on record last year, shortly after the Harris panel had submitted its report to the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, that we would support the Government doing what is necessary to ensure that fish stocks are given a chance to rebuild, and to sustain a certain biomass that would again sustain a certain TAC. While there is a meeting going on right now, Mr. Speaker, in Montreal, of the AGAC discussing this very thing, my Deputy Minister is there and he will be making known to the group the position of the Province and how we feel about further reduction in the TAC. It is not easy to suggest that there be a reduction, but if it is necessary, then we have to have it.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate what the Minister is saying. In view of the fact that the Provincial Government appeared before and, I assume, made recommendations to

the Dunne Task Force, would the Minister tell the House what reduction the Province is recommending, or has recommended, to the Dunne Task Force to be passed along to the Federal Minister for consideration?

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

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, I cannot, at this point in time, put a number on the amount that we are recommending. I can only repeat what I said a moment ago, that the Province will support the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans doing what needs to be done to ensure that the fish stocks are given a chance to rehabilitate. I have not read the Dunne Task Force report. I have skimmed over the executive copy here, the summary, but Mr. Dunne does not put a number on what the TAC should be.

Mr. Rideout: No, this Province.

Mr. Carter: The Province, to my knowledge anyway, has not put a number on what the amount should be, but certainly, I repeat again, we will support whatever needs to be done to ensure that the stocks are given a chance to rebuild.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister finally provided the answer we are looking for. So the Province has not recommended a number to the Federal Government. The supplementary to the Minister is this: I want to know if the Province supports the Dunne Task Force recommendation to the Government of Canada that there be a fishing ban on Northern cod during the height of the spawning

season on the three main spawning banks in the Northern cod area?

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

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, I think even in the Harris Panel Report it stated that there is probably no scientific evidence to the effect that it is necessary to do that, but there appears to be a strong connection between what is happening out there and the fact that there is overfishing, maybe, at certain times of the year, especially at the spawning time.

Mr. Rideout: Not overfishing?

Mr. Carter: Fishing, generally. Again, Mr. Speaker, the Province will support whatever needs to be done to ensure that the stocks are given a chance to rebuild, and if that means having a moratorium of a month in the two or three key spawning areas, then so be it.

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, if the Province's input or presentation to the Dunne Task Force was no more definitive than the hon. Minister is telling us here this morning, it must have been pretty general. Let me ask the Minister specifically, in terms of the ban on fishing during the spawning season as recommended by Mr. Dunne, did the Province make a recommendation to the Dunne Task Force on that particular matter, and what times did the Province recommend the ban go in place?

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

Mr. Carter: I am not able to say

now exactly what position the Province took with respect to the moratorium on the spawning grounds, but certainly I am willing to take the matter under advisement and maybe, on Monday, even table a copy of the Province's position.

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, thank you and I thank the Minister. I think it would be very, very useful if the Minister would, in fact, table the Province's position, because he is very, very vague in his answers here this morning.

Could I ask the Minister one final supplementary? Would the Minister tell the House what position he is going to take as the Minister representing the fishing industry in this Province on those recommendations when he appears with the rest of his Atlantic colleagues and the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans at the next ACFM meeting which will, I assume, make recommendations on the final decision for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for the groundfish management plan for 1991?

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

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate part about it is, when we had the last ministers' meeting in Ottawa, when Mr. Siddon was Minister of Fisheries, the meeting was called after the fact. In fact, he had announced his management plan one week and I think he called the ministers together the following week to consult, and, of course, that was

meaningless.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Carter: No. I am hoping the Minister, Mr. Valcourt, will call a meeting of the ministers well in advance of the presentation of this year's management plan. I have read the executive copy of the Dunne report and I am impressed with it. There are not too many recommendations I find fault with. So I would have very little problem, Mr. Speaker, adopting the findings of that report and, in fact, supporting it in Ottawa:

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education but in his absence I will ask the Minister of Finance, who is also directly involved with the same issue. The Minister of Education has lately been using the Budget deficit to defend his decision to reduce substitute teaching days by 10,000. I wonder if the Minister of Finance will tell the teachers of the Province and the House the truth about the matter, that funding for substitute teachers was cut in the 1990 Budget last March, the same Budget that projected a surplus of \$10.2 million. I wonder if he will clear up the confusion he is causing and admit that the funding cut for substitute teachers was done in the Budget, the same Budget that predicted the largest surplus in more than a decade?

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

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, first I must correct the hon. member about

the surplus. We never, ever said that there would be surplus this year.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Dr. Kitchen: We were predicting a deficit of \$250 million, and it is high time that people in this House realized the truth. The deficit consists of two parts, a surplus of \$10.2 million on current account and \$258 million deficit on capital account, which combined gives us \$a quarter of a billion dollars deficit. Now it is time for the hon. members opposite to start telling the truth about what is going on in this House and in this Legislature and with respect to the finances of the Province.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that we in this Province over many years have been living beyond our means, and this is the first Government to try to come to grips with this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

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

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Speaker, when you do not know the answer to the question you try to evade it by coming up with false information. Because the substitute teacher vote is certainly in the current account Budget, where you did predict a surplus of \$10.2 million.

Let me ask the Minister, since the cut in substitute teachers had nothing to do with the Budget deficit, will the minister tell the House the real reason for slashing 10,000 days from the substitute teaching days in this

Province?

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

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, we have to live within our means. We have to live within our means, and it is becoming more and more difficult to do so, because the Federal Government is also trying to live within its means. And one of the methods they are using to try to live within their means is to pass on their problems to us; they have reduced the increases in transfer payments to this House, to this department, and as a result, we are facing severe financial problems, much more severe than if the Federal Government did not have their problem as well. It is for that reason that we have to look at substitute teachers and offices of Government and all other things to see if we can reduce expenditures.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, I might point out, that over the strong opposition from the Opposition, we increased taxes our first year. Remember how the grinch was over here increasing taxes? And remember how this present year we increased taxes and they objected again? God help us if we had not increased taxes. What would our present budget deficit be?

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me ask the Minister, when he stated in his budget speech, 'it is with considerable satisfaction and pride I am able to announce in 1990-91 we will achieve our second consecutive current account surplus at a level of \$10.2', and since, during that same budget, 10,000 days were

slashed off the substitute teaching vote, how can he now get up and justify the fact that they are tampering with substitute teachers because they are in a deficit? That has nothing at all to do with it. It was done during the Budget Speech, so how can the Minister justify that?

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

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has to try to realize the financial position of the Province. We are in a severe financial position at the moment. We hope and we trust, we know, that by coming to grips with this problem we have momentarily, for the next year or so, that we will then be able to go onto greater heights. But we must come to grips with the problem.

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

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I want to pose a question if I may to the President of Treasury Board. Last night on the late television news I noticed Mr. Bill Parsons, the President of the Federation of Labour, following a meeting he had with the Premier and the Cabinet yesterday, saying publicly in words to the effect, at least I believe it is probably a quote, 'they thought that labour relations with the previous administration and collective bargaining with the previous administration was bad but,' he said, 'with this Government it is worse, much worse.' And we have seen lots of examples of that, Mr. Speaker, the Government's approach in collective bargaining with the lab and x-ray workers, hospital workers, student assistants. The

most current example is with the Marine Institute.

Now, the President of Treasury Board, Mr. Speaker, is reported to have said that the labour dispute at the Marine Institute is a philosophical one. I might get the Minister's attention. He has been quoted as saying that the dispute at the Marine Institute is a philosophical one. I wonder if he could tell the House what kind of philosophical differences, therefore, have forced 1000 students out of class.

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

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what question he is asking. Do you want an explanation of the philosophical difference?

Mr. Simms: Yes.

Mr. Baker: First of all, Mr. Speaker, in my way of looking at it, this dispute is not a dispute like a normal dispute over money and three per cent or four per cent or whatever. It is not that kind of a dispute, that generally is much easier to solve, it is a dispute over whether the Marine Institute should operate like MUN or like the Cabot Institute. That might be a bit of an oversimplification, but I think that is the crux of the problem.

The Government has decided that the Marine Institute would be more closely allied with MUN. The administration in the Marine Institute sees the Institute running along the lines of MUN with their research work and so on, whereas apparently the instructors see the Institute running like the Cabot Institute. So they want the same types of

things in their contract as the Cabot Institute has, which would restrict time and restrict the ability of management to operate in the freer manner in which they would like to operate. So it is a philosophical difference. Is the Marine Institute going to be like Cabot or is it going to be like MUN? I would suggest to the hon. Member that that kind of dispute is much more difficult to settle than a dispute simply over money.

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

Mr. Simms: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I understand. At least publicly it has been stated that one of the so-called philosophical issues is job security. The President of Treasury Board has described the dispute as a philosophical dispute, yet one of the major issues is job security. Well, isn't job security one of the most practical issues that comes up in any negotiation?

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

Mr. Baker: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I did indicate that I thought that the philosophical difference was the crux of the dispute and it certainly is. There are other matters. Obviously when two sides can not reach agreement, there are generally a number of matters outstanding. Some of them are key matters, some of them are not. I would suggest to the hon. Member that the key problem in this dispute is exactly as I have described it, and I regret very much that the students are suffering.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader, a final supplementary.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the President of Treasury Board can tell the House if there are any other philosophical issues outstanding, such as wages or anything of that nature, which could ultimately prolong this particular strike? And what specifically and exactly is he doing to try to end this dispute?

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

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to bargain in public, I do not believe in doing that. Obviously there are a number of issues involved. The main issue is the one I have described. There are a lot of other side issues. My understanding is that wages is not the issue in terms of this strike at all, that that is not the main issue.

But that does not mean that everything else has been settled. That means that in the process of negotiations, things have been looked at and eventually you come to the basic difference, and we have come to that point. I hope there is a settlement at some point in time. But right now I can not say where it is, and I am not, at this point in time, getting directly involved. The problem is between instructors and the management of the Marine Institute, and I am not going to get directly involved and direct one way or another at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Mr. Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. On Wednesday of this week I asked the

Minister several questions concerning the condition of health care being provided to the people in Postville. Could the Minister advise if he has checked out the concerns I expressed to him on Wednesday?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday the hon. Member for Torngat made some very serious accusations against two of his constituents, two individuals who are engaged in health care up on the Labrador coast. I have since been in touch with the Director of the Grenfell Regional Health Care Services who is doing a detailed analysis of the accusations which were made, Mr. Speaker, to see if they can be substantiated. I am very surprised that the hon. Member would mention names in this House of his constituents, people who are trying their best to operate on very serious situations.

Some Hon. Members: You asked for their names.

Mr. Decker: It is very irregular that such an accusation would be made, and I want to make sure the answer has more depth than the question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Mr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Minister. Does the Minister believe that the residents of Postville are receiving proper health care?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, that is a difficult question because it

involves a value judgement. If the Member had asked me do I believe that the residents of St. John's are receiving a perfect, excellent health care system, it depends, I am sure - as a general rule, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health is delivering health care to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to the best of our ability.

Now I have to concede that there are places where it is difficult to recruit the staff, and for some reason or other the Northern Peninsula and Labrador are having a difficult time recruiting adequate staff to do the job we would like to do. But that does not say we might not discover tomorrow that there are areas in St. John's where health care is not being delivered to the satisfaction of everyone involved with it. So I guess the simple answer is, we are doing the best we can considering the fiscal restraints, considering the unavailability of professional staff, who somehow do not want to go to certain parts of the Province.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Mr. Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Minister said on Wednesday he wanted more information. I am going to table a fax which was delivered to my office yesterday which says, 'Our health care has been left to the local clinic staff, which is a domestic help and a maintenance man.'

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister a question. Does the Minister believe that medical records of a patient are sort of confidential, between a medical

officer and the patient? Why is the maintenance man and the domestic help allowed to look at the records of individual patients in Postville?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, when the document is tabled I will have it investigated. Once again there are certain laws which surround medical charts, and I would certainly hope they would be carried out. Certainly I will take the fax and I will look at it.

But, Mr. Speaker, if past accusations by this Member are the gauge, I would have to suspect, I would have to question the facts, because this is the Member who solicits petitions.

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

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Fisheries. I would like to ask the Minister has his Department carried out an assessment on fishermen and fish plant workers throughout the Province to determine the degree of difficulty they have encountered in most regions of the Province this summer with the failure in the fishery? And if that assessment has been carried out, could he inform the House of the findings of the assessment?

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

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, my officials are constantly in touch with officials or fisheries people around the Province, Fisheries Committee Chairmen, fishermen, and they have a pretty good handle on

what is happening around the Province, and we have certainly made that known to the Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

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

Mr. Matthews: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister. With the Dunne Report, which was alluded to earlier in Question Period this morning, and the potential negative impacts, I guess, from the reduction in the Total Allowable Catch, which will see greater reductions in landings and earnings for fishermen and fish plant workers, has the Minister considered a fisheries emergency response program or some kind of employment generation program for the thousands of fishermen and fish plant workers around the Province who have not yet qualified for unemployment insurance benefits, even with the passage of Bill C-21, and who will not qualify this year? Has he given any consideration to that?

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

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, I think it is obvious now to most Newfoundlanders, and certainly I think it should be obvious to the hon. Member, that a lot of the problems we are now encountering in the fishing industry were brought on by virtue of poor management and some bad decisions on the part of the Federal Government.

We would expect the Federal Government to recognize their responsibility to the fishermen and to the Province of Newfoundland, and in cases where it can be demonstrated that the problem, was caused by their

negligence or lack of good management, then we would expect them to come forward with an appropriate relief program.

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

Mr. Matthews: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister has his Department or the Provincial Government given consideration to financially funding a total provincial fisheries emergency response program, or has he given consideration to participating with the Federal Government in a fisheries emergency response program?

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

Mr. Carter: I suppose when it comes to the depletion of the resource, the full responsibility for that problem must rest on the shoulders of the people who make the management decisions, and they are in Ottawa, and the Province would certainly expect the Federal Government to shoulder its responsibility to the Newfoundland people, the Newfoundland fishermen. We have been urging the minister, and every chance I get to meet with him I point out the need for some kind of relief program to offset the damages which have been caused to the fish stocks by virtue of their policies or lack of them, and I would expect the Federal Government to come forward with an appropriate program to assist the people in the people in the fishery that has been devastated by their bad policies.

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

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the news this morning is the Persian Gulf situation is getting worse and nearer to war, by all accounts. I would ask the Minister of Energy to report any progress in his efforts to monitor and contain rising oil prices.

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

Dr. Gibbons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday the Minister of Justice and I and some of our officials met with Petro-Canada. This is the second company we have met with in the last few days. We are planning meetings with Ultramar and Irving within the next week or so. In the meantime, our staffs, in both departments, are reviewing the pros and cons of possible regulation, and after we have made a decision on that, we will be reporting to our Cabinet colleagues.

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

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do hope that any regulation, if it comes to that, will be better than we have on electricity. However, war could mean a significant jump in oil prices, which would be a tremendous windfall to the Provincial Treasury as our tax is a percentage of the base. I would ask the Minister of Finance, in the event of war, will he agree to freeze our oil taxes at current levels?

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, this is

a hypothetical question and will be addressed if it should come to pass.

Mr. Rideout: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, in view of -

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible) no questions.

Mr. Rideout: There are other questions. The Minister of Social Services can sit back, he is not getting one, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to deliberately put that hon. gentleman on television. But let me ask the Minister of Finance this -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: As much as he would like it, for the sake of Government we are going to do everything we can to keep him off -

Mr. Simms: He is an embarrassment to the Province.

Mr. Rideout: - television because he is an embarrassment to the Province. Anyway, I have been sidetracked, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance, in view of the fact that his gasoline tax is an ad valorem tax, will he not consider as a part of a package to help out the consumer in this Province freezing the tax if gas prices continue to rise, rise, rise, rise, so that it would not rise automatically with the price of gas?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: Right. That is the question.

Mr. Rideout: That is the question.

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

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his question. I have been waiting for him to ask me a question ever since he was reconfirmed as Leader the other day. I want to congratulate him first on being confirmed as Leader, because as long as he is there, Mr. Speaker, we will have good Government. Good Liberal Government.

Mr. Rideout: As (inaudible) the PC Association (inaudible).

Dr. Kitchen: To answer his question, Mr. Speaker, we have in the department, in the Government, a continuation of the policies of an ad valorem tax which was imposed by the previous administration, and we have no intention at the moment of changing that policy.

Mr. Rideout: No intention of changing it. I see.

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

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last Thursday, October 18, the Premier said to the House of Assembly on the subject of the social assistance cut for 1,000 single parents in the Province that he did not have all of the details at his fingertips but he would get them, that he would find out exactly what the situation is. He repeated his pledge for fair and

balanced treatment of all the people of the Province and said if he concludes a mistake was made, he will correct it. I would like the Premier to report on the results of his investigation.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated at the time, the minister knows more about this than I do. Subsequent to this I spoke with the minister and said tell me, are we treating everybody in this Province fairly? If we are not, change whatever is in place to make sure that we treat everybody fairly. His response to me was, Premier, we are treating everybody fairly, on a fair and proper basis, and that is what this adjustment does. He also went on further to tell me, we are doing the same as every other province of Canada with one exception, British Columbia. They did not change it. I said, okay, I am satisfied. I rely on you as being sensitive to the needs of the people, and to be sure that we treat people fairly.

Now I can ask the Minister to give the details, if that is what the House wants. But if the House does not want him to do it, then it is a waste of Question Period. I do not want to disrupt Question Period, but I would say that is the proper course to find the information.

Mr. Speaker: Question Period has expired.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health on a point of order.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, it is concerning the tabling of documents in this House. During my six years here, I don't believe I have seen anything before which can compare with this. We have been hearing many half-truths and much innuendo from members over there, especially from the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains. This document which has been tabled in this House this morning makes some serious accusations and it does not even bear a signature. It says concerned citizen. Is that concerned citizen Warren? Is that concerned citizen cousin? Is that a setup, Mr. Speaker? This is despicable and we should reject this. It should not even be allowed to be tabled in this House.

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I do not blame the Minister of Health for being so sensitive in trying to deflect away from the real issue here, but this particular document was simply tabled. You can table any document you wish in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker. That is an acceptable document. And, I would point out to the Minister, if he looks closely, he will see on top of the document where the facts came from. Obviously the letter is signed by concerned citizens, if you wish, because they do not want their own name publicly labeled here, perhaps. But on the bottom of the telex you will also see two telephone numbers the member provided for you to call the individuals yourself, and that is the whole purpose of the tabling of the facts. There is no point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the

Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are a number of instances in Hansard where reference is made to the tabling of documents.

Mr. Simms: And letters.

Mr. Baker: Yes. But, Paragraph 498, Page 152, 6th Edition of Beauchesne indicates that an unsigned letter should not be read in the House, and by inference, Mr. Speaker, should not be tabled. I would suggest it is not even proper to read an unsigned letter in the House, and the reason for that is obvious. Because when the authenticity of the signature is in doubt, it is not a document that is acceptable in the House. Mr. Speaker, for that very reason Paragraph 499 of Beauchesne indicates that telegrams should not be quoted in the House, and the significant part is the reason: "As there is no way of ensuring the authenticity of the signature." Mr. Speaker, here we have something with no signature, we do not know what it is or where it came from, making serious allegations. I would suggest this is not a proper document to be tabled in this House.

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, just one further submission. Obviously what is happening here, first of all, is there has been a concerted effort on behalf of the Government, led by the Premier in the past, to attack the character of that particular member. They have been at it time and time again.

And, Mr. Speaker, the second point is this: The issue is the issue that has been raised and that is what is important. And the Minister of Health should respond to the issue, that is what is important. Thirdly, I will quote also from Hansard.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: These are the facts: It was not read in the House, it was tabled. The member in asking his question simply said he would table the fax and send it over to the Minister of Health so he could respond to it and provided numbers where the Minister could respond and call. But in Beauchesne, Sixth Edition, paragraph 498, Section 3, it does say, since the Minister brought up about quoting a letter in the House, "a Member must be willing either to give the name of the author or to take full responsibility for the contents." The Member for Torngat Mountains has certainly taken full responsibility for the contents, because he has raised them in this House himself.

An Hon. Member: It was a letter from the member.

Mr. Rideout: Look at the fax number?

Mr. Simms: It is not a letter from the Member.

An Hon. Member: How do I know (inaudible)?

Mr. Simms: Well, we are telling you it is not a letter from the Member. There are phone numbers on the bottom the Minister can call.

An Hon. Member: Go check it out!

Mr. Simms: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it is clearly another favourite tactic, a diversionary tactic of the Government, to set up a smoke screen to divert from the important issue the Member has quite rightly raised. That is all it is.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will take a further look at this before I rule on it, because I want to have something to say about other documents as well, and particularly about a fax. Since we are in the age of technology, the Chair will want to research a little bit.

Before moving to other business, on behalf of hon. Members I would like to welcome to the House of Assembly today fifty Grade XII students from Holy Trinity Regional High, Heart's Content, accompanied by their teachers Harold Peach, Beverley Collins, Ford Sparkes, and their bus driver, Jude St. George.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Simms: We are under Answers to Questions, but I meant to quickly ask a question of the Government House Leader under Reports.

The report of the Committee -

Mr. Speaker: Just a moment.

Mr. Simms: If I may.

Mr. Speaker: If we could just have the consent of the House to do this?

Mr. Baker: Yes, I know what he is talking about.

Mr. Simms: Yes, we have discussed it privately, outside.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Mr. Simms: The report of the Committee chaired by the Member for Eagle River, the television committee or whatever it was called - I just forget now exactly what it was called - I think we have talked possibly about discussing that report, at least a brief debate, so that we can get on the record what we are going to do with that report rather than just let it sit on the shelf and collect dust.

So I wonder if the Government House Leader could give some indication as to whether we are going to discuss it, or what?

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

Mr. Baker: Yes, Mr. Speaker, my understanding was there was supposed to be a notice prepared for a concurrence motion for that particular item. Maybe we could simply agree that that concurrence motion would appear on the Order Paper on Monday.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Baker: By agreement.

Mr. Speaker: Agreement. So that

is Members have agreed to a concurrency motion affecting the Committee on Privileges and Elections with respect to telecasting of the House.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given, I think this is where we were when we asked to go back to the other.

Petitions

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

Mr. Tobin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from my constituency which I would like to present to the House, Mr. Speaker. I will read the prepared petition, which is to the hon. House of Assembly of Newfoundland in Legislative Session convened.

The petition of the undersigned Members of the Rushoon/Terrenceville Newfoundland Teachers' Association:

We are concerned that the President of Treasury Board has written to the teachers directly, attacking the credibility of the provincial teachers of the NTA and deliberately undermining the collective bargaining process. Your petitioners hereby return the offending letters and urge the hon. House to deliver the letters to the desk of the President of Treasury Board.

An Hon. Member: Hear hear!

Mr. Tobin: And that the House urge the President of Treasury Board to bargain in good faith with the elected representatives of the Newfoundland teachers.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great sense of obligation this morning, on behalf of the teachers from my constituency, to present this petition and to return the letters which were the action of the President of Treasury Board in a desperate attempt to undermine the authority of the Newfoundland Teachers' Association.

Mr. Speaker, when one reflects on the comments made yesterday by Mr. Parsons of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour when he said this is the worst Government he has ever dealt with in terms of negotiations and labour relations in this province, and when one reflects on the fact that the office of the Minister of Labour basically has been vacated during the past eighteen months in terms of the Minister accepting any responsibility, and consider that she is a former President of the NTA, particularly, Mr. Speaker, a former President of the NTA who last year, like her colleague for Exploits, used everything they could in trying to obtain a seat in this House, and used the NTA to a large extent in trying to achieve it, to profile themselves, and now we have the President of Treasury Board trying to undermine the NTA in their goals and objectives to reach a collective agreement acceptable to their teachers.

What the teachers in this Province want, Mr. Speaker, is a Government to deal with them honestly, and they want a Government to respect their right to a collective agreement. They want the NTA to represent them, not the President of Treasury Board, there is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, when one looks at these letters and the comments in a letter to me that was attached to them, which says, 'we

don't need Mr. Baker to tell us what is going on. Mr. Baker could save taxpayers' money and spend the time more profitably at the bargaining table. Teachers do not need our employers who undermine the bargaining process and who claim that the NTA has misinformed teachers...'

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious charge. The teachers of this Province have a right to expect their negotiating team, the people they have placed confidence in, to be able to represent them. The teachers as well, I can say, Mr. Speaker, because I know the teachers quite well - as a matter of fact, I am married to a teacher - the teachers in this Province are not at all -

Premier Wells: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: That is right, Premier. The teachers in this Province are not at all impressed by the former president from Exploits, they are not impressed either by the former President of the NTA who is now Minister of Labour and the way they have sat back in this Assembly and supported the Government when the Government attacks the teachers and other people through the Budget process; they are there pounding their desks, Mr. Speaker, louder than most other people in this Assembly. That type of attack and type of way in treating your former colleagues, and that goes for all Members in this Assembly who are former teachers, is unacceptable.

And you, Sir, let me say to the Member for Exploits who sits behind the Premier, should be giving advice to the President of the NTA, not trying to undermine the powers, privileges and

responsibilities of the NTA. You sat there as a former president, as did your colleague, and you know and should understand that no teachers, no NTA, no union should be bamboozled by the actions and tactics of the President of Treasury Board. And for you who sits in the Premier's office not to advise the Premier to have the President of Treasury Board stop that type of action is, in my interpretation of that type of action on your part, the Member for Exploits, despicable.

And let me further state what the President of the Federation of Labour said in this Province yesterday about the responsibilities of the President of Treasury Board in this Government, the Premier in this Government. He said it is the worst form of collective bargaining, the worst lack of respect he has ever seen for the negotiation process.

So, when the President of Treasury Board accepts this petition, I would expect the President of Treasury Board, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the petition. I would certainly beg the President of Treasury Board to respond to the petition so that the teachers from the Rushoon/Terrenceville branch will know exactly where he stands on this type of action. And I would urge him with all the sense and responsibility that his office holds, to show respect for the NTA, and to stop trying to undermine the people who have been democratically elected to represent the teachers.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member's time is up.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much and I look forward

to hearing from the President of Treasury Board.

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me start by responding to the end of the hon. Member's speech, the last couple of sentences. I would like to point out that I respect the teachers of the Province. I respect the job they do and I respect how difficult that job is, with respect to the teachers of the Province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: There is one other thing amongst the many things I respect that I would like to point out, and that is that I respect the truth, and when I see notifications going out to the 8,500 teachers in the Province from time to time, with statements in there that are not true, demonstratively not true, then I feel I have a right to tell the teachers of this Province, who are taxpayers of the Province, who are constituents of mine, who are constituents of yours, I feel I have the obligation to point that out to them. That is what I have done and that is what I will continue to do.

As an example, in June there was a newsletter sent out to all teachers in the Province. A statement was made that this Government has not put one cent extra into the NTA pension fund. Now, all members in this House know that that is not true. Everybody in Government knows that is not true. It was announced in March, the end of March. Everybody knew about it. In discussions that I have had with

the NTA executive, we have discussed it. We discussed in April, May and June. Everybody knew the situation, yet in June a newsletter goes out to all teachers saying the Government has not put a single cent extra into the Teachers' Pension Fund - this Government - implying that this particular Government has not but other Governments have. Now, Mr. Speaker, I must respond to that. I respect the truth.

There is another communique, Bargaining Briefs, which appeared in schools yesterday, and the main contention here is set out in bold print: 'Our position, which we feel reflects reasonableness, flexibility and compromise, was flatly refused by Premier Well's Cabinet on Tuesday, October 9.' Now, I can see the shock on the faces of members because they have not seen this. There are two things wrong with it. Number one, Premier Well's Cabinet has never considered a position from teachers. All Cabinet Ministers know that is true, and the civil servants in the Cabinet room know that is true. We have never, ever considered a position from teachers in the Province, yet it states here, and the NTA executive is sending this around under the signature of Mr. Coombs, signed by Keith, that on Tuesday, October 9, we flatly refused a reasonable, flexible, compromising position from the teachers.

The second thing wrong with it is that not only did we not flatly refuse it, but there is no offer. Since I saw this yesterday I have checked all down through the system, look, is there an offer? Let me tell you that offers were made directly to me right at the beginning of the bargaining, offers like, let us go through

this Collective Agreement but let us put the pensions off. Let us forget about it, put it off for another ten years, put it down the road somewhere. I refused that. It was not Cabinet. I said no, I would not bring that to Cabinet, because that is totally unreasonable.

Mr. Speaker, in response to what the member says is a petition - I suppose it is. It is a series of letters he was supposed to turn over to me - I would simply respond that I intend to continue in extreme circumstances like this, when the truth is not being told, I intend to continue to communicate directly with teachers, because one of these days they are going to be asked to take a strike vote. Now, it might seem strange coming from me, my saying they might be asked to take a strike vote. Mr. Coombs has mentioned it a number of times in the press in the last while. He indicates here about it and he calls it job action, because that is essentially what it is. They are going to have to take a vote, and I believe they have the right to the truth before they take that vote.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words to this petition from Rushoon - was it? - the area of the concerned teachers. What we just heard from the President of Treasury Board in response to that petition is something he has said on many occasions in this House of Assembly he would never do, and that is negotiate publicly. But that is precisely what he has just been doing for

the last three or four minutes, nothing more or nothing less. Negotiating publicly is what you have been doing in response to that petition, something he said he would never do publicly in this Legislature, nor should he.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) is not true.

Mr. Simms: Now everything he was talking about there had to do with a dispute or difference between Treasury Board and the NTA, the Newfoundland Teachers' Association. If he wants to attack the NTA and he wants to say something publicly about the dispute, let him call a press conference and do it as is often done in normal times if a spokesperson for the Government has a difference with one or the other groups. That is the way you do it. You do not do it in the House of Assembly. But you are missing the point. The point is, the purpose of the petition is a response from the teachers who received this very insulting letter that the President of Treasury Board sent out to them.

Mr. Baker: How can the truth be insulting? It is never insulting.

Mr. Simms: The truth may never be insulting in the mind of the President of Treasury Board, but I can tell him, and surely he is not so stunned or blind that he cannot see, that the teachers do not agree with him. The letter was insulting, and they have decided to take up arms, they decided to send back the letters to the President of Treasury Board. In fact, a few days ago I had twenty or twenty-five sent in to me from the NTA Branch in the Exploits Valley and I sent them over to the President of Treasury Board.

Today there is another method for doing it, they have sent it to their member, in this particular case, in the form of a petition and attached there are twenty or twenty-five letters, or whatever is there, sent back to the President of Treasury Board.

It is an insult. The first line of the Minister's letter to all the individual teachers in this Province, I have never seen anything like it in my career in public life, quite frankly. I have never seen anything like it in my public life. He begins with the first sentence to every teacher in this Province by personally attacking the President of the Newfoundland Teachers' Association and accusing him of making misleading and inaccurate public statements. That is his first sentence to every teacher in this Province.

Then he goes and he sends, I do not know, a six-page letter to what, 8,000 or 9,000 teachers. My God, how much would that cost at all?

Ms Verge: About \$3,900.

Mr. Simms: About \$3,000 or \$4,000 at least. I mean, what a waste of expenditures. Plus it has never been done before, because it is recognized by everybody in the collective bargaining field that this is something you do not do. That is why it was never done before.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know this Government has absolutely no experience in collective bargaining. They are totally lacking in experience. They have no idea how to deal with matters at the bargaining board. We heard the President of the Federation of

Labour last night saying on public television they are an absolute disaster in terms of labour relations and collective bargaining. When are they going to wake up? When is the President of Treasury Board going to take a different approach to collective bargaining and try to learn something?

An Hon. Member: And tell the truth.

Mr. Simms: Today, for example, on the Marine Institute debate or discussion, when I asked the question in the House - I am not going to get involved. I am not going to get involved. My God, Mr. Speaker, there sits the Province's chief negotiator.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simms: That is the Province's chief negotiator and he has a responsibility to the people of the Province, to all those people who have suffered as a result of his inadequate, woefully inadequate performance as President of Treasury Board, like the people in the Province who will be patients in hospitals, as well as students who have been out on the street, not to mention, of course, the people directly involved in the dispute.

So, I say, what the President of Treasury Board has done in this particular instance is shocking and he will hear more and more about it. Because I understand that teachers around the Province are going to take up arms and he had better be ready.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

O O O

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

Ms. Verge: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present.

Mr. Speaker: Back to petitions?

Mr. Baker: Yes.

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

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My petition is from several students attending Memorial University in St. John's. The prayer of the petition is, 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, students at Memorial University, the same as other people throughout the Province, were terribly upset to discover the surprise attack on poor people mounted by the Minister of Social Services in late September, Mr. Speaker, without any announcement to the public or direct notice to the people affected.

The Minister of Social Services, on October 1, instituted a change in the social assistance regulations. That change, Mr. Speaker, resulted in an instant decline in income for about 1,000 single parent families in the Province. The extent of the drop in income was up to \$115 a month, and for families at that very low income level, that constituted as much as 20 per cent of the total family income.

Now, Mr. Speaker, imagine any of us getting a 20 per cent drop in our income and not even being warned about it ahead of time. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that none of us can really understand what that drop meant for the single parent families on social assistance, because most of us are earning quite good incomes.

\$115 a month for most of us does not mean all that much, but just imagine if your total family income for a parent and two or three children is only \$500 or \$600 per month and then you lose \$100 of that and do not get even any advance notice.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, October 18, the Premier promised the House of Assembly that he would get all the details about this change. He acknowledged that he did not understand what had happened, but he said he would get all the details and find out precisely what happened.

He committed to the House that the Government will see that everybody is treated in a fair and balanced way. He said, 'If we have made a mistake, that is entirely a possibility, I do not know, maybe we rushed at approving this and made a mistake and it resulted in unfair or an unbalanced treatment of those people, I can tell you that steps will be taken to correct it.'

Now, Mr. Speaker, last night the Minister of Social Services made a valiant attempt to defend the indefensible. In a rousing speech, a political speech that lifted the spirits of his dispirited colleagues, he tried to argue that down is up, black is white, that a drop in income is fair. He made all those arguments

with verve, but all that rhetoric does not change the fact that approximately 1,000 single mothers and 1,500 children in this Province suffered a surprise drop in income of up to 20 per cent of their total family income.

All that political speech making does not alter the fact that children of parents living together can benefit by up to \$115 a month from their fathers earnings, yet children of separated, divorced or unmarried parents cannot benefit one cent, thanks to the October 1st change of the Minister of Social Services, from an absent father's earnings and payments of child support. Now, Mr. Speaker, how is that fair? How is that balanced.

I regret that the Premier is not in his seat now, because I would like the Premier to rise and undertake to do what he said he was going to do last Thursday and really dig into this and find out what happened.

I am looking at the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations. I really honestly cannot imagine that she supports this decision, because I believe she understands the consequences of these social assistance cuts. I would urge her and her other colleagues who have compassion for the poor people, the Minister of Energy, the Member for Pleasantville, and all the other Liberal members opposite, to get together, for heaven's sake, get together and correct this mistake before any more poor people in the Province suffer.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. member's time is up.

Ms Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a couple of minutes to speak to the petition presented - I was going to say so ably presented by the Member for Humber East, but I will just use the words, presented by the Member for Humber East. I do not know what the problem with the hon. member is. I do not know whether it is that she does not listen, or if it is that she has her mind totally blocked out to the realities of what is happening around her. But the more and more she speaks about the maintenance income, the more and more I understand and believe the people who were under her administration while she was Minister of Justice, and while she was Minister of Education. They used to tell me when I was in Opposition and I would go and try to get an appointment to see her, I would talk to her officials, that there is absolutely no way of dealing with this incompetent Minister. She does not know what she is talking about. She does not know how to administrate or how to listen. She does not understand what is happening around her, and we cannot do anything about it. Now, I took that with a grain of salt. I did not really believe it, because officials who are working in an administrative area sometimes get their backs up if a Minister is trying to make some changes. But now I really believe every word they said. She asked the Premier a question, why would he not report to the House the correct information? I stood on my feet last night for twenty minutes and gave her in detail figures and numbers about the maintenance income. The hon. member did not even know how many

single parents were in her own district.

Ms Verge: That is not true.

Mr. Efford: You did not know last night. You know now, because I told you last night. She said very clearly this morning, in a petition, they are receiving 20 per cent less income. They are receiving 20 per cent less income because the maintenance income is now deductible from their social assistance. That is correct. But we are offering them an opportunity to make twice as much, a 200 per cent increase. That is better than 20 per cent less.

Ms Verge: How? Come off it.

Mr. Efford: That is better than the 20 per cent they did not even give the remaining 5,700 people in this Province who are single parents getting no maintenance income. For God sake, wake up. This year the Minister of Education increased student aid to single parents going to Memorial University. They all avail of a Student Aid loan. When they get a Student Aid loan, it automatically comes off their social assistance. And they can still draw their maintenance income while getting their Student Aid loan. Does the hon. Member for Humber East not know anything? Do you not know anything about what is happening in this world, or in this Province? After seventeen years over there, you do not even know that much. Did you ever go to university? My goodness, just talk to somebody, ask some questions, and accept the answers as factual.

You also said we did not send out any notice. You said last night the only way we notified the

single parents was over the airwaves. That is totally false, totally untrue. In the last cheque in October month, we sent out a notice in every individual envelope going out to single parents, 'As of the next cheque, you will be (inaudible) clearly.' That is not over the airwaves, that is not through the press, that is not through the papers, that was in every individual cheque.

If you are going to stand on your feet and represent the people, represent them honestly. Do not mislead the people of this Province and do not mislead the House of Assembly. The very thing you have to realize is that there is not going to be any change. This Minister is not going to change. Make up your mind to that. We made a decision. The decision is made, but we will change the way in which people live. We will offer them a better income. We will offer them babysitting services when they want to go to work. We will offer them better education programs. We will offer them opportunities to get into vocational institutes.

And if you read The Western Star, read the article about where the single moms attended the meeting with the Minister of Social Services and the Status of Women Council. Read what they said and how satisfied they were as a result of that meeting and the information they received from the Minister of Social Services, and that they now knew there were programmes there they could avail of, which they did not hear before from their own Member, the Member for Humber East, who after all these years in power, in Government, administering a government, did not give them the

information.

So the fact is the hon. Member is fighting a losing battle. She cannot get her own people at that. She is continually on the phone, Mr. Speaker, day after day, trying to rouse up some interest, trying to get something stirred up out there in the Province among single parents, but it is not working. In fact, I don't doubt but the petition she presented this morning was the same one she presented yesterday from a few people at Memorial University.

You just can not get support, because you know you are fighting a losing battle. People would rather be working than drawing social assistance. People do not want to stay home, whether they are single, married, single parents or whatever. Nobody wants to be living on a miserable income supplied by the Department of Social Services in any province in Canada.

There is only one province left, British Columbia. They are changing their legislation also, and they are doing the same thing as every other province in Canada. But they are providing better opportunities. And it is time the Member for Humber East agreed with some sensitivity. If she has tried to display the sensitivity, try to get it out there and encourage those single parents who are going to the Department of Social Services and accepting a few measly dollars that can't even provide the essential things to look, go out there, help yourself provide a better opportunity, get re-trained, get educated, get job opportunities, because we are supporting that. The Department of Social Services, the Government

as a whole, will support education, re-training, early childhood education, whichever career they choose or, at the very least, community development, where their salaries will double, or UI benefits for the remainder of the year and still, while they are working, while they are drawing UI, while they go to school on a training program, they can still draw their maintenance income. We can not take it away from them. So what are you trying to say?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member's time is up.

Mr. Efford: It does not make any sense, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As a matter of fact, he has gone overtime. The Speaker was not noticing the clock.

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

Mr. Parsons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just could not let it go, hearing this hon. Minister up in this hon. House this morning doing something that, as far as I am concerned, is not honourable. First of all he attacked my colleague, the Member for Humber East. That was the basis of his speech, to attack the Member for trying to do something for poor people by bringing in a petition which addresses the needs of single parents. Last night that Minister stood in this House and talked for thirty minutes. He said when he got up today, I do not have much time. Well, I am only going to spend a couple of minutes.

That is the same hon. Minister who

here last night spent thirty minutes talking about pickles - pickles were more important to that hon. Member than the poor people of this Province, the people who were cut \$125 a month by that Minister.

An Hon. Member: One hundred and what?

Mr. Parsons: One hundred and twenty-five dollars a month.

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

Mr. Parsons: One hundred and twenty-five dollars. He talks about the hon. Member for Humber East not knowing there were 850 instead of 1,000. What difference does that make? There are people out there from whom you have taken money. And just listen to the rationale you used. The only reason you cut that money was because some people in that category were getting a little more than others. The maximum is \$6,000 a year. They were getting a little more, and the Minister cuts the higher person off, the person who is getting perhaps \$50, perhaps \$100 more a month than the other person. Instead of raising the lowest on the totem pole, he takes the few dollars away from the person who is getting a little more. Shameful! That Minister - he has left the House now, he has left the Legislature because he could not take it, and so he should. He should leave.

Imagine a man standing up here last night for thirty minutes and making a joke, a mockery, by talking about pickles, and then this morning say he only had a couple of minutes to talk about this which affects people, human beings, who are not able to make

ends meet.

How would you like to live on \$600 a month? The only thing the minister can portray is, cucumbers.

Mr. Simms: And they are paying him \$100,000 a year to do that.

Mr. Parsons: That is right.

The minister talks about putting people to work. Every day I come to work I can see what the minister has done. Most of the single parents out there are women, perhaps 99 per cent. The only job creation, Community Development Programs, coming from the minister's department is down cutting brush.

Mr. Efford: The only? The only?

Mr. Parsons: Well, that is the main one.

Mr. Efford: Oh, now.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: The hon. Member for St. John's South, his comment is not worthy of comment. If you want to talk to me about that, you talk to me any time at all but not here. We are talking about the poor people out there, the poor people from whose measly allowance this minister cut \$125. That is what we are talking about. We are talking about the minister who can get up and make a big joke about pickles. The people who were cut \$125 a month cannot even afford to have pickles on the table, boy. Wake up.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about putting people back into the work force. We have an 18 per cent unemployment picture here right now and he is going to put

people back into the work force. Where is he going to put them to work? And in the interim what are the people going to do, starve to death? It is time for this minister and this Government to wake up to the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and take some kind of a sensitive approach.

Look, this is coming to me more and more everyday. I am surprised at the Minister of Social Services, I really am, that he can get up in his place and defend this policy. I am surprised, because I thought any callousness there certainly would not come from that minister. You should be ashamed of yourself. I mean, let us go over it again - \$600 a month, twelve months, \$7,000 a year maximum, and this minister cuts \$1,500 off that.

Mr. Efford: How much?

Mr. Parsons: Approximately \$1,500.

Mr. Efford: You do not even know your math.

Mr. Parsons: Approximately, I said.

An Hon. Member: One hundred and fifteen times twelve.

Mr. Parsons: One hundred and fifteen times twelve is how much?

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: It is not very much. You figure it out. You did a poor job of figuring out the people out there who are in need.

An Hon. Member: \$1,380.

Mr. Parsons: Well \$1,380, I am not that far out. But you are way

out. You are off the beat completely, because you are not being sensitive to the needs of the people who need help most, the poor people, the single parents, the little children out there whose mothers you said you are going to create employment for. In the interim what are the little children going to do? Are they going to starve to death?

Mr. Efford: They can go to work right now, today.

Mr. Parsons: The little children can? The mothers can? Who are they going to look after the children, boy?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. member's time is up.

Mr. Parsons: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

Mr. Baker: Motion one, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider certain resolutions, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

Bill No. 39

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I wish to contribute

to the debate on this Bill which gives legislative authority for the Government to borrow about \$325 million. Mr. Chairperson, we in the Opposition do not intend to allow that Bill to be passed until the Government comes across with straightforward answers about what they are going to do with the \$325 million, and, also, what they are not going to do with the money.

This Government got elected on a mandate of creating real change, the kind of change they indicated was progressive. There were many promises made when the Liberals were campaigning in the winter and spring of 1989. Two made a great impression on people, and perhaps persuaded 47 per cent of the people to vote Liberal versus the 48 per cent who voted PC. Those two significant promises were the creation of jobs, so that every mother's son on the Mainland could come home to Newfoundland for work. I note Ray Guy's comment, that presumably the Premier assumed that every mother's daughter on the Mainland was content.

The other promise that made an impression on the voters, Mr. Chairperson, was the commitment to open more hospital beds and upgrade health care. What has happened in the eighteen months since the Liberals have been in office? - just the opposite, Mr. Chairperson. The Liberals, first nor last, have not presented to the people of the Province a coherent plan, they have not shown a logical idea for achieving the lofty goals on which they campaigned. And their actions indicate an absence of thinking, planning and research. They have lurched from one decision to another. They have brought about abrupt reversals.

Last March the Minister of Finance delivered a budget speech that was slick, packaged in Liberal red. He announced with apparent pride: however we have been able to produce a budget that addresses in a very significant way this Government's three basic priorities of economic development, health care and education, a budget that does not come down hard on the people. And as the former Minister of Education, my colleague from St. Mary's - The Capes, reminded the Minister of Finance in Question Period this morning, the current Minister of Finance announced: 'it is with considerable satisfaction and pride that I am able to announce that in 1990-91 we will achieve our second consecutive current account surplus at a level of \$10.2 million.'

Mr. Chairperson, it was that budget that we passed at the end of May and that we assumed would govern the management of the Province when the House recessed for the summer at the end of June. Low and behold two months later the Premier and the Minister of Finance had to announce that they lost about \$130 million, that instead of expecting a \$10 million current account surplus they were then, in August, projecting something like a \$120 million deficit. Some observers forecast that by the end of this fiscal year the actual deficit will be worse.

Mr. Chairperson, what happened to that money?

Mr. Simms: We are not the Government. You are the Government.

Ms. Verge: We discovered that Federal transfer payments are down

and that the Provincial Government knew about that last spring when this House was debating the budget. That accounts, we now understand, for about \$160 million of what is called the negative variance. But what about the other \$60 million, Chairperson, where did that go? We have not been provided with clear answers.

Chairperson, the Ministers of the Social Departments, Health, Education and Social Services, in the last couple of months have been announcing freezes and cuts, yet the Minister of Health, having told the administrators of hospitals and nursing care homes that their budgets will be frozen, then gets on his feet in this Chamber and denies that the Government has cut funding for health care, denies that there will have to be bed closures and layoffs.

Chairperson, as one of my colleagues here speaking last night or yesterday said, the Liberal Government seems to be trying to hide its head in the sand, trying to deny facts, trying to delay accepting the inevitable, trying to evade the truth, trying to make people believe that it will not be as bad as it is going to be. They have worried and upset thousands of people in the Province in the process.

A teacher called me last evening and said to me: what disturbs him most about what is going on is the absence of proper communications by the Minister of Education and the Department of Education with school boards and teachers in the field.

The teachers keep preparing news reports about statements of the Minister of Education and school

trustees about Budget changes, freezes, cuts. Some of those cuts were contained in last spring's Budget, Chairperson, one was a reduction in funding for student assistants who work with disabled and handicapped students now integrated into regular school programs and another, as the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes reminded us this morning, was a built-in reduction in funding for substitute teachers.

Chairperson, the Minister of Education is now trying to blame school boards for the fact that the Government promised to NAPE, to parents, to teachers, to student assistants that student assistance would be maintained at, at least year's level to serve the disabled students, the Minister is trying to blame the school boards.

Now, Chairperson, where do school boards get their money to employ student assistants? They get their money from the Department of Education and they get their money from school taxation. When the Liberals opposite were campaigning for election, many of them promised explicitly, that if the Liberals were elected they would abolish school taxation. For many years that has been a rallying cry of the Liberals.

The Member for the South Coast, the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation made explicit promises when he was campaigning, that if the Liberals formed the Government, they would abolish school taxation, but what has happened, Chairperson, the Liberals brought in a second school tax in last spring's Budget. The Liberals brought in the payroll tax, which they style a health and education tax, so as of last spring, Chairperson, the

Liberals brought in two school taxes, they were then supposedly reviewing the original school tax, now, Chairperson, we do not know the results of the review, but we understand the Minister of Education is telling school boards to jack up the school tax rates and bring in more revenue from the original school tax, the same tax that the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation promised his voters that the Liberals would abolish, if only they had the chance, but, Chairperson, now we have two school taxes.

The Member for Exploits, the former President of the NTA, keeps interjecting -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Ms Verge: I have a friend who works in Education, Chairperson, who keeps saying to me, well, thank God, we have got Roger and Patt there, how bad would it be for the teachers if we did not have Roger and Patt there, sticking up for us. How bad indeed, Chairperson.

Now, where is the plan of this Liberal Government, what plan do they have for job development education and health? - there stated three priorities. Well, on economic development, the Premier has assigned responsibility to an unelected, unaccountable commission, The Economic Recovery Commission.

Chairperson, when the Economic Recovery Commission was announced in the spring of 1989, the Province's economic position was quite good. We had enjoyed three or four years of steady substantial growth, jobs were up, unemployment was down, however, in

the eighteen months since, we have declined steadily and now we really do have something to recover from. Perhaps Economic Disaster Commission would be a more apt title though, because the only jobs the Economic Recovery Commission has created are jobs for themselves, many of whom are prominent Liberal campaign workers and supporters. The central vice-president of the Economic Recovery Commission, NewCorp Enterprise Newfoundland and Labrador, is the Liberal campaign manager. A couple of the other vice-presidents have strong Liberal ties.

So the Economic Recovery Commission has generated jobs for Liberals, the former Provincial Liberal campaign managers. It has resulted in a swelling of the bureaucracy, but what has the Recovery Commission contributed to the economy of the Province? The Finance critic, the Member for Mount Pearl, asked the Premier last week to list the jobs the Economic Recovery Commission has created. We are still waiting for the list, Chairperson. Off the top of his head the Premier said he thought they had created about 1,500 jobs. The only ones he could specifically think of were the 400 or 500 jobs at the fish plant in Twillingate which the Government, including the Minister of Fisheries representing the district of Twillingate, buoyed up with extra special grants and funding.

Chairperson, we on this side were glad to see the Twillingate plant maintained under the operation of Dr. Ches Blackwood's group. We wondered about the treatment to the former operator but we were glad to see Twillingate continued. But we only wish that

the Government had been true to their word and treated all the fish plants in the Province the same way. We only wish that there was fairness and balance for Port aux Basques. The Member for LaPoile is not in his seat now but I am sure he wishes that the Port aux Basques plant had been treated as well as Twillingate.

It was interesting though, Chairperson, when the Premier was praising the Economic Recovery Commission for saving Twillingate and creating, in quotation marks, "400 or 500 jobs there," he pointedly said that Dr. Doug House, the Chairperson of the Economic Recovery Commission, was solely responsible. He said the Minister of Fisheries, the Member for the district, really did not have anything to do about it. We sat here watching the Fisheries Minister's face redden. He had to sit still and take what the Premier delivered, which of course is what all the Members opposite are doing.

Chairperson, last night the Minister of Health in the late hours started characterizing the political leanings of his seat mates. He was telling us which ones were centre, he described the Premier as being dead centre. He talked about which ones were right and which ones were left. Chairperson, the name Liberal with a capital L implies compassion, empathy with poor people, a commitment to redistribute income and narrow the gap between the rich and poor. Chairperson, the Premier is one of the most ultra-conservatives, with a small c, people I know.

The Premier is running a board of trade government, he is presiding over massive programme changes,

lacking a coherent plan but with the overall result in widening the income disparity. He is quite empathetic with the interests of the business and utility leaders in the Province, but I would say completely out of touch with the vast majority of people of the Province.

Chairperson, I would like to come back to the heartless cut in social assistance payments that I have been crusading against for the last twenty-six days. The change came in on October 1. Chairperson, the people affected found out either through the news media after I publicized the change at a news conference on October 1, or else in a form letter that was enclosed with their first social assistance cheque for October.

As I pointed out, the result of the change was a drop in income of as much as 20 per cent for close to 1,000 single parent families. One thousand single mothers and 1,500 children were hurt by the change. Where is the fairness and balance in that regressive move? How is that cut doing anything but harm to the single parent families involved?

Chairperson, the Premier keeps hanging his hat on fairness and balance. Fairness and balance is the answer for everything. But I would just like to repeat my analysis of the effect of the social assistance change, Chairperson. That change has led to a sharp drop in income of the people that I have described, the single parent families, who had been getting some child support or maintenance, usually from an absent father or an absent spouse. Those are the people hurt, Chairperson.

Children whose parents are together, who live together as a family unit, are able to benefit from any earnings of their father. If their father can get any kind of a job then the family can have its income level increased by up to \$115 a month. Because under Social Services' regulations, current regulations as well as previous regulations, any income derived by a social assistance recipient is deducted from welfare payments on a sliding scale basis, and the social assistance recipient is able to benefit by up to \$115 a month from that income. I assume one of the reasons for that policy is to provide an incentive for social assistance recipients to find work and earn some income. I would suggest, Chairperson, that the incentive is not enough for single mothers especially, for after all a single mother has to arrange for child care to free herself to go out and hold down a job, and child care is costly.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Ms Verge: Plus single mothers have to pay for transportation -

Mr. Simms: If the Member wants to -

Ms Verge: - between home and work.

Mr. Simms: - speak let him get up and speak, stop interrupting.

Ms Verge: Chairperson -

Mr. Simms: Do not be so ignorant.

Ms Verge: - just to complete my illustration of how unfair the policy change is, if that same couple separated or divorced, then the children could no longer benefit from the man's earnings

and his payment of child support to his estranged wife for the children. Now how is that fair, Chairperson? How is it fair for children whose parents are together, living on social assistance, to benefit from their father's earnings from a job, up to \$115 a month; and for the very same children, should the parents separate or divorce, to get zero benefit from the man's earnings and payment of child support from those earnings to the mother for the children? How is that fair? Chairperson, this change is indefensible. There is no way the Government can continue to defend such a regressive social assistance reduction for close to 1,000 single parent families in the Province.

The President of Treasury Board is the Minister responsible for the status of women. The Minister of Employment and Labour Relations considers herself a feminist. Some of the other Members over there are responsive to the needs of their constituents. Some of them really try to help their constituents. How can they live with themselves? How can the President of Treasury Board live with himself, being part of a Government that slashed the income of close to 1,000 single parent families by as much as 20 per cent and did not even give them any warning? How can the President of Treasury Board live with himself? How can the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations sleep at night knowing that her Government has done this?

I do not know if the Members on the other side get the same kind of calls that I get, Chairperson, perhaps because I am a woman and I have many contacts with women centres, single mothers' groups,

transition houses for battered women and children. Perhaps I get more calls from the people hurt by this change than other Members, I do not know. But all I can tell hon. Members is that I have been extremely upset listening to the sad stories of single mothers who have been hurt by this change.

As it happened the change came at perhaps the worst time of the year. It came just after school opened. And as any parents in this Chamber must realize the opening of school in September brings with it extra costs. Children of social assistance recipients attend classes with children of middle income and upper income families, and the children of social assistance recipients are pressured to have the same clothes and to have the same fads as their friends in school. Children do not understand why their parents cannot give them what all the other children have.

So the single mothers on social assistance as school opened this year, as every other year, were under that kind of pressure. October also is the start of cold weather and as we all know only too well energy costs are soaring, partly because of the budgetary measures of this Government in jacking up electricity costs, and partly because of the world situation which has recently caused a very steep increase in oil prices, the price of oil for home heat as well as gasoline for automobiles.

Chairperson, some of the single parents hurt are really at their wits end. There is an alarming incidence of mental illness among this group, because sometimes the pressure is just too much to bear.

Chairperson, the Minister of Social Services has never explained to this Chamber how much money the Government is saving on the backs of the single parent families whose incomes he cut. The Minister of Social Services is not paying attention now, but I invite him to tell the House of Assembly and the people of the Province how much money his department is saving as a result of the October 1 cut? I have been told it is only about \$300,000 or \$400,000 and, of course, those dollars are 50 per cent recoverable from the Federal Government under the Canada Assistance Plan. All the Provincial Government's spending on Social Assistance and indeed most of the programs administered by the Department of Social Services are cost-shared on a 50/50 basis by the Federal Government. So I suggest, Chairperson, that the Government is achieving minimal savings on the backs of some of the poorest people in the Province. And I say to the Members opposite that if they have any liberal, small 'l', blood left in their veins, for heaven's sake reverse the cut, admit the mistake, and if it is necessary to find \$300,000 or \$400,000 savings then cut out the public relations directors, cut out the public relation gurus, cut out the Minister of Development's advertising on CBC television, cut out the Ministers' car allowances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms Verge: There are thousands of ways the Government can tighten spending before the Government has to stoop to the low, low level of hurting the poorest and most vulnerable people in the Province.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms Verge: Chairperson, I invite the Member for St. John's South, who I think was listening to me intently and I think really wants to understand what has happened with the social assistance cut, I invite the Member for St. John's South to rise and address this issue.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible).

Ms Verge: Yes, I will yield to the Member, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Simms: No, he cannot ask a question, he is not in his seat.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

Ms Verge: Chairperson, I would be interested in discussing this with the Member for St. John's South. I understand it is just because he is not in his own seat that he cannot rise.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms Verge: Chairperson, I cannot explain why the Member for St. John's South has not gotten any calls about this issue. I do know that most single mothers on social assistance have all they can do to survive. Most individuals in that position are not in a position to lobby.

When you stop to think about it, for a woman who is a single mother on social assistance getting a total income of maybe \$500 a month, to pressure politicians to lobby for change is not very realistic, not very realistic, for people in that situation even a taxi ride often is out of the question, attending a meeting is out of the question because babysitting costs money.

So it is extremely disturbing to

see that in a desperate, lurching effort to try to contain the Budget mess, the Government has targeted these poor and vulnerable people who are not organized, who do not have tools to fight. Chairperson, the single mothers do have the women's movement to serve as advocates for them.

Personally, as I have mentioned before, I have had calls from individual single mothers who are hurt by this change. I have also had calls from women centres, single mothers groups; there is a provincial association called, Single Mothers Against Poverty, and also the battered women shelters, the Transition House in Corner Brook, the Iris Kirby House, here in St. John's.

Chairperson, I really think that many of the Members opposite are concerned. Perhaps they do not have all the information, and I would urge them over the weekend, before we meet here again on Monday, talk to women's groups, talk to single mothers groups, talk to people at transition houses.

I suggest to the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, for example, that she get in touch with Kirby House here in St. John's, and talk to the people who work at Kirby House, about what the October 1st social assistance cut has meant for residents of Kirby House or former residents of Kirby House, who are trying to make it on their own and who, after escaping a violent marriage; after fleeing domestic terror, have had to resort to social assistance, but now are not getting enough income to last.

It is very tough, it is very tough for a woman to break out of an

abusive relationship, and when the women make the break but get only social assistance income, sometimes it is just too much to bear, sometimes it is just too much to bear.

The Minister of Social Services takes great delight in pointing out shortcomings of the previous Government and I would be the first to admit that there were shortcomings. I am in politics to achieve improvements especially for groups like single parent families. I have never been content to rest on laurels, I have always tried to build, to go ahead, to go forward to make things better, and when the Government changed on May 5th of 1989, we had not progressed to the level I was aiming for.

If we had been returned to office I would have been digging and working to make policies more compassionate, to improve funding for single parent families, and the Minister is probably quite correct in pointing out shortcomings of the previous Government but he as a Minister now -

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Ms Verge: Thank you, Chairperson.

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

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do not know, Mr. Chairman, how long I am going to take up this morning, but I have to rise and point out a few of the misleading statements which the hon. Member for Humber East has given again

this morning.

I do not know, probably she just really is, I do not want to believe that the hon. Member is really playing politics with such a serious situation as the poor of the Province. This is the reason why she does not understand what is going on in the Province, because now she is going to leave - she is coming back. Okay.

Ms Verge: I am talking to my colleague here.

Mr. Efford: First of all let me correct her on one mistake she has already made in her speech. I did it last night, I did it last week, and I am now going to take it very slow, and do it in a very low tone of voice for you. The Department of Social Services in Newfoundland and Labrador will pay babysitting services, and day care services. They have been paying, will pay today, and will continue to pay in the future, for any single parent who wants to go to upgrade their education or go into the work force, either supported by the Department of Social Services, or into the private sector, whichever comes first. Whichever request they make to the Department we will pay the babysitting services as long as the allowable amount of their income is within the realm of the Department of Social Services. Now if somebody is earning \$2000, \$3000, or \$4000 a month, we are not going to pay babysitting services, that is ridiculous. If they are social assistance recipients and they go into the work force we are paying today and will pay in the future. Do you understand me? Do you really understand that simple explanation? If you do not I will put it in writing, I will have it hand delivered, or I will deliver

it myself to the hon. Member and I will explain it word for word on the letter. It is very simple, we do pay babysitting services, even for the single parents going to Memorial University. All we do is take the amount of social assistance they receive against the amount of the Student Aid Loan, we then calculate that and we pay up to \$65.00 per week. Why does the hon. Member keep saying that we do not provide those services? How can anybody with any genuine interest in their heart, in their mind, or at all, be able to stand day after day and talk about the single parents who are not receiving the maintenance income and saying their children are hungry? All the while the Member was in the former Government, and up until the present day, we only have 850 of those single parents in that position, but we have 5300 single parents not receiving the maintenance income, and who have never received the maintenance income. Are there children hungry? You have never once expressed any concern whatsoever about those 5300. Why? Their children are just as hungry, if what you are saying is factual, as the other children, 5300, and you never raised the issue. You were a Minister in Government when the numbers were the same and you never did anything about it then. You never met with the single mom's groups, you never met with the Status of Women Council, saying we have to do something about these 5300. Do not go shaking your head, you tell me when you did. Give me the dates and the time of the meetings. It does not make any sense. You have to come down and face reality. It is not only the 850 but there are 6500 single parents. Why would anybody stand anywhere in this

Province and tell us that they want people to stay on social assistance? As Minister I am ashamed of the amount of money that we are giving to the poor people, all poor people in this Province, \$575 a month for a family of four. It is the responsibility of not only the Minister of Social Services but for all people, and especially the Government, to provide a better opportunity, and not to support people staying in that dilemma. The hon. former Minister, the Member for Humber East, a former Minister of Education, a former Minister of Justice, how can you advocate and how can you stand up day after day saying that we should keep people on social assistance? It does not make any sense. If you take \$237 million that is spent in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and you spend it to the best benefit of the people, is the best benefit giving it out, this measly amount of money, and let them sit home in the house doing absolutely nothing. If that is the best I can accomplish as Minister I will resign today. You can have the job. If I am going to collect a salary for just handing out social assistance and starving people in the Province I may as well go back to Port de Grave, take the squid rigs on the boat and go out and jig a few squid. It is disgusting, and for anybody to give any support to that, to support people living and begging for social assistance.

I am going to tell you, I have not, and I will say this in the House of Assembly and you can quote me, I have not had one person in this Province call me in my office as a single parent and said, 'Mr. Efford, I want to stay on social assistance.' I have not

had one person.

An Hon. Member: And you will not.

Mr. Efford: Not one. I went to Corner Brook the other day and I met with their group our in Corner Brook. Read the Western Star. Read what they said. It is very, very clear. They were not aware of the programs that were available. They were not aware that there were better alternatives. Read the Western Star, I will table it on Monday when we come back to the House of Assembly. I will table it for everybody to see how supportive they were, not before they came into the meeting because the hon. Member had to make a few phone calls, but when they left the meeting they were supportive. When they left the meeting they had a totally different attitude of what is going on.

Now, I heard the hon. Member stand up a while ago and condemn the Minister of Education and condemn this Government and the Minister of Finance for the teacher aids, teacher assistants. Now, let me ask the hon. Member and let her answer this question when she gets up, when she was Minister of Education, how many teacher assistants for the physically disabled and developmentally delayed were into the schools? How many?

An Hon. Member: Zero.

Mr. Efford: Zero, zero, zero. Zilch. Not one when she was Minister of Education..

An Hon. Member: What hypocrisy.

Mr. Efford: What hypocrisy is right. Now, this is what we have to listen to. The Department of

Education under this Administration this year took over the teacher aids from the Department of Social Services. Why? We admitted it was wrong. We were putting people into schools on a community development program for ten weeks. Just as a developmentally delayed or physically disabled student would get used to an individual we took them out, put them on unemployment and put them with somebody else. So it was total confusion and frustration. As Minister I made a recommendation. I talked with my colleague the hon. Minister of Education. The decision was that this was not good for the students. It is not good for the students. We admitted that it was wrong. First of all we admitted that there was problem. Secondly, we did something about it. The hon. Member for Humber East, a former Minister of Education, cannot even stand to her feet and say that she had, as Minister of Education, had one student assistant. In fact I would like to know, and I am not too sure of this, was there integration into the school system then? Was there?

Ms. Verge: We brought in the policy.

Mr. Efford: When you were Minister of Education? Not when you were Minister. I would like the hon. Member to table facts as to that.

Ms. Verge: A point of order, Chairperson.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms. Verge: History records that when I was Minister of Education I

introduced legislation in this House of Assembly that was passed, making it legally necessary for school boards to provide programs for all students, including students with disabilities. That legislation, which required integration of handicapped and disabled students, was and still is heralded by advocates for the disabled in this Province and in other parts of Canada.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

There is no point of order. The hon. Member is using the point of order to give an explanation.

The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The hon. Member for Humber East is in a really desperate situation now because she knows very well that everybody in this Province is looking at the statement that she is making in the press and wondering why. She is trying to dig herself out of a rut. You may have introduced the legislation. I will not argue, but that is where it stood, because when I became Minister of Social Services that is when social assistance clients were working in the schools. It is only within the last year that we changed the policy. There were no teacher aids in the school system when you or any other of your colleagues in the Department of Education were Ministers. Even the hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes will admit to that one.

Now, the hon. Member also said this morning that I take great delight. No, I do not take great delight in anything, any amount of money that we are giving anybody in this Province, not only the

single parents, not only the disabled, not only the developmentally delayed, the working poor, I do not take any delight in any of it. That is the reason why we are trying to make some changes and get people of social assistance into some productivity, whether it be in education, upgrading or training or whatever, as I said last evening, and into the work force. How can you take great delight in handing out \$575 a month to a man, his wife and two kids. How in the name of God can you take delight in that? And that \$575 must buy all the essential things in life, except their mortgage or their rent, pay their light bill, pay the heat bill, buy their groceries, buy school lunches, buy clothes and every other essential that an average human being would try to get out of life, just the bare essentials. Make no wonder people call me and say the only thing they can buy out of the \$575 a month to feed their children is to go to the supermarket and either pick up rice or Kraft dinner, and that is not exaggerating. That is factual.

Now the hon. Member, if she was serious about what she is saying, she would know what people are going through on social assistance. She would know very well that it is absolutely impossible to live. That is the reason why we are developing better programs. That is the reason why we put people to work last year under the Community Development Program. The hon. Member for St. John's East Extern said the only thing we have going in Community Development is cutting brush. Yes, we are cutting brush on the side of the road for a number of reasons, not much job stimulation in it, but it

is something that needs to be done. I think there are 670 social assistance people across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador cutting brush. Not the best project, but it is necessary and it must be done. We could put it in other areas, but those people need work too.

He said that is the only one. Last year we put 11,000 people who we inherited on social assistance from that former government to work on hundreds and hundreds of different projects. One thing I did stop, I stopped quilt knitting, I stopped garbage pick-ups, I stopped sticking up headstones, I stopped painting fences, and all those other things that were demeaning, taking the dignity away from people.

Ms. Verge: What is disgraceful about making quilts?

Mr. Efford: What you want to do is give people some productivity, give people some initiative. What types of things did he put in?

Ms. Verge: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East on a point of order.

Ms. Verge: I have to take take the Minister of Social Services to task for maligning quilt making. Quilting is one of the most cherished of our traditional Newfoundland and Labrador crafts and it has been elevated to an art form by some of our leading crafts people and artists.

Mr. Chairman: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Social

Services.

Mr. Efford: Oh, I wish I could use the language I want to use, Mr. Chairman. I only wish I could describe the hon. Member for Humber East the way she deserves to be described. It is unbelievable. I am not going to take away the tradition of quilt making in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. But one thing I will take away is quilt making projects from Social Services recipients who want a chance at education retraining and job development.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Efford: There is a time to make quilts and there is a time to be productive in the work force. There is quite a difference.

And when I have a single parent or a social service recipient who applies to the Department of Social Services for a job or for an education program we give them alternatives. We do not tell them the best thing we can give them is go out on the side of the road and start cleaning up garbage. That is what was done. That was their policy. We have taken that away, Mr. Chairman. And we are not going to allow it to stay in the Department of Social Services.

So for the information of the hon. Member for Humber East, the hon. Member for St. John's East Extern, yes, we did employ 670 people for brush cutting. Probably we will save a life. Since I had the accident on Roaches Line, and by the way that policy happened to be approved two weeks before, by Government. But I had an accident and I did beat up my car. Since I had that accident on Roaches Line there were four more accidents in

the same area last Friday night, there was a man thirty-two years old killed, in the same exact spot that I had the accident. Now maybe you can get up and make fun. Probably the Minister of Social Services should have done something else. Probably the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should have, but I am going to tell you one thing, if that brush cutting can save one life in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador it is worthwhile.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Efford: So make fun of it. Do it all you like. I think the family of that thirty-two year old man in Spaniard's Bay, by the way, in the hon. the Member for Harbour Grace's district, who was buried last Monday, if we could have saved his life, I would not be too worried about those hundreds of million of dollars that will be spent in my budget next year. But unfortunately he was killed. And there have been four other major accidents at that exact same spot. I was the luckiest of all. I had the least amount of damage done. Very, very lucky. So, when you stand to your feet and mock that programme, think about what you are saying.

Mr. Simms: Nobody mocked it.

Mr. Efford: Well, the hon. the Member for St. John's East Extern sure did this morning, in his few comments on the petition.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) totally out of context.

Mr. Efford: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of questions to be asked about decisions made by Government. But the one thing we

are going to do is we are going to make decisions in the best interests of the people. Not always in the best interest of the Government. You are not going to get a bouquet of roses thrown at you for being Minister of Social Services and making decisions every day. But you have to look at one underlying fact, that people have a right to an equal and fair opportunity at living. And I do not think that equal and fair opportunity is sitting home in the house receiving social assistance, with nothing else to do, no other way to turn and no stimulation, no job opportunities whatsoever.

Mr. Simms: Presuming they can work.

Mr. Efford: Not if, because that was the policy of the former Government.

Mr. Simms: Assuming that, what about the people (inaudible)?

An Hon. Member: They didn't want jobs.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) all like that?

Mr. Efford: Just let me answer that. We spent \$1 million this year, \$740,000 over the last former Minister's budget in the Department of Social Services, putting developmentally delayed people to work in the work force - one on one support.

Mr. Simms: We did that. That is not what I am talking about.

An Hon. Member: What about (inaudible)?

Mr. Efford: I just told you, \$740,000. You tell me people who

can not work! Physically handicapped, mentally handicapped, socially handicapped, whatever disability. If they can not go there themselves, we will put them to work with support. There is absolutely no excuse. If people do not have -

Mr. Simms: So people with bad backs, slipped discs, you are putting them to work, are you?

Mr. Efford: Make no wonder. Every time they open they open their mouths they substantiate more and more the reason why they are over there. It has to be the reason why. If somebody has a slipped disc and can not walk, that is a different situation. If those people got a slipped disc through work, then they are on workers' compensation, they are on insurance benefits or whatever. And if they are reduced to social assistance -

Mr. Simms: Lots of your clients who are getting social assistance can not work, they are not able to work, they (inaudible) and you know it.

Mr. Efford: Let me answer that. There is always a case where somebody can't get in the work force. But there is also a clause in the Department of Social Assistance Act that provides for people who have special needs.

Mr. Simms: We brought it in. We know!

Mr. Efford: Well, what are you asking me for?

Mr. Simms: I said I (inaudible).

Mr. Efford: What are you asking me for if you know? You are certainly unlike your colleague

from Humber East. Because she doesn't know and she sure proved it last night.

So the underlying fact remains -

Mr. Simms: You do not know what you are talking about. You are getting off on all kinds of tangents as you usually do when you get up to speak. Anyway, carry on.

Mr. Efford: Hitting home again, aren't we?

Mr. Simms: Carry on.

Mr. Efford: Hitting home again.

Mr. Simms: You are devastating me.

Mr. Efford: Mr. Speaker, the two or three points I wanted to cover about day care subsidy, we do pay it. We do help people who are going through the training programmes and we do help people who are going into the work force. We admit that we are not proud, that we are ashamed of the amount of money that people are receiving on social assistance. We do not take any delight in it, as the hon. Member said, and we are doing something about it. And if the people opposite have any ideas to improve the system and situation, bring them forward. We are ready, willing and able to listen to them, take some direction and move on, unlike the former administration.

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

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) down this morning. You should have left last night's speech alone. You were right up there last night. Decker tried to beat (inaudible).

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible) going to be low key so you will understand.

Mr. Simms: You are always low key.

Mr. Chairman: Order please!

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make a few comments on the information given us by the Minister of Social Services. He left some Members with the impression that we did not think very much of his brush cutting project. Actually, to be truthful, the brush cutting project is presently being sponsored by both Departments, I understand, The Department of Social Services employing people who are in receipt of social assistance, and also the Department of Works, Services and Transportation who hired their own crews during the summer and fall to do some brush cutting. It is probably one of the most worthwhile projects on the go presently.

A number of us actually requested from both Departments - I have letters on file to both Departments - that they get involved in brush cutting along the sides of the road.

Ms Cowan: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: Pardon?

Ms Cowan: (Inaudible) you?

Mr. Hearn: Yes, probably so. But I am sure hon. Members also made the same request, simply because of the life saving factor.

Certain areas of the Province, and

in particular areas where we have high populations, we have a tremendous number of moose and we have had a lot of moose/vehicle collisions in recent months, and unfortunately some of them resulted in death.

Just a couple of weeks ago, and ironically it was the evening before the moose season opened, I came up on a car/moose accident which had occurred seconds before I approached, and three young people in the car were severely injured when the moose came out of the woods and practically landed on top of the car. Fortunately it rolled off, because I think if the heavy moose had stayed on the car, it could have perhaps killed all three who were involved in the accident. The person who was driving said he did not see a thing until the moose hit the car. Because the brush had grown very close to the road, he had no chance as the moose rushed from the woods.

The other ironic thing about that accident was that on the other side of the highway, the Department of Highways crews were cutting brush and you could easily see for a considerable distance, perhaps 20 feet or so back from the side of road.

The projects which are being undertaken, by no means do we intend to ridicule them. They are beneficial, they are providing worthwhile jobs for the people who are involved in the projects themselves, but above and beyond that, they are contributing to the safety factor as we drive along the highways and hopefully it will prevent a number of accidents and possible deaths. So I just want to stress to the Minister that we also feel the projects are

worthwhile.

But where he was correct in that part of his statement, he was very incorrect in some of the other information he gave to the House, and I refer in particular to the program involving the hiring of teaching assistants, or student assistants, or teacher aids as they were originally called. The Minister seemed to take great credit in developing the program and giving great credit to his own colleagues for bringing in such a program, and that is far from the truth, Mr. Chairman.

The fact is, back about six or seven years ago, when teacher aids as they were called then were introduced into the schools, they were, at the time, people who were receiving social assistance. These people were given jobs helping handicapped students in the schools, especially in relation to mobility, people who were in wheelchairs, whatever.

This, in turn, followed the integration of the handicapped into the schools. And if we want to back up a little bit, there was a time when handicapped children were not in the schools at all, they were in the homes or eventually in institutions.

After a while we had our integration programs introduced, and little by little such students found their way into the classroom. Eventually, we have seen that handicapped students are now sharing the classes the same as anyone else, as it should be. But the process was slow in developing and required a tremendous amount of assistance. The students themselves required a tremendous amount of assistance, and that was provided by people

who were in receipt of social assistance.

The first couple of years that the program was introduced, it was a very haphazard type of program and only in certain areas were such teacher aids provided. These were people who were in receipt of social assistance and they were hired for the ten or twenty weeks, whatever they needed in order to qualify them for unemployment insurance. They were then laid off and the boards involved had to go out and, in conjunction with the Department of Social Services, find other people who were qualified and who were looking for employment in the schools. They were brought in, and consequently carried on for another ten or twenty weeks. The downside of that was just as the handicapped child who needed help was getting used to the person who was involved, the person was taken away. And just as the person involved was getting used to the child and the function of operating within the school and becoming very productive in that area, that person was taken away and put on unemployment insurance and had to stay there for another year.

It was the former administration who arranged, first of all, for the ten or twenty week employment projects to be extended to forty weeks, and for a couple of years the teacher aids were provided for a full forty weeks. They were people who were receiving assistance, but they were hired for a full forty weeks, for the full school year. That, in turn, was extremely productive, because it did give the person a chance to work with the child all year and there was no disruption during the year. Again, the downside to that

was the fact that at the end of the year the person now had plenty of qualifying weeks for UI and was then put on UI. So if a school board had obtained a person through the Department of Social Services to work in the school and that person did an extremely good job, as they did, then the school board could not hire the person back the next year because that person had to stay on UI for a year. In many parts of the Province it was extremely hard to find someone who was in receipt of social assistance to work in the schools for any length of time in particular, and, consequently, school boards had problems identifying people to work with the handicapped. This, it was realized, could not work and it was the former Minister, the now Member for Burin - Placentia West who was then Minister of Social Services, and the former Minister of Education who sat down with their officials and put together the program that is now in place.

The present Minister of Social Services and the present Minister of Education just inherited a program that was put in place to hire people regardless of whether or not they were involved with social assistance. Those who had been identified through the Department as being good assistants in the schools would certainly be given preference, but you could hire a millionaire's wife if that happened to be the case, if she was the person, or the millionaire up the road if he were the person who wanted the job and was qualified to do the job. There were no restrictions whatsoever in hiring, as long as qualified people were hired full-time to go into the schools to help the handicapped, to make sure that those who needed some

assistance were given it so that they could progress through the school year, the same as the average child who walked in out of the blue.

Firstly I congratulate the Minister on crossing the floor, and secondly, on continuing a good program which he undoubtedly will admit was really there when he came in. A lot of credit, I say to the Minister, a tremendous amount of credit in developing that program goes to his Deputy Minister who is an extremely competent person. He fully realizes all the rules and regulations that are in any department, especially his department, how flexible you are in hiring people, and he certainly found ways around the rules to accommodate the program which we wanted to bring in, which is a good program now, once the present details are ironed out.

A couple of unfortunate things about the program, once the new administration took it over however, was that the original contract signed with the teacher assistants was not a good one at all. In fact, it was far from what was talked about in the original discussions pertaining to contract possibilities, and consequently it immediately drove them to become organized members of unions to look for better working conditions, which they now have.

Right now a lot of the fault in the present confusion that exists out there in relation to teacher assistants in schools has to be laid, not on the shoulders of the Minister of Social Services, who is involved only to a very small degree anymore, but on the shoulders of the Minister of

Education who slashed from his Budget a tremendous amount of money, about one-third of the Budget that would be needed to finance this program. That got everything off to a bad start. And it is only now that he has been convinced to put back into the Budget the amount of money necessary to fully fund the program.

Of course, in between the original announcement, despite the fact we tried to clarify to him that they needed more money and he refused to listen, when he realized that he did, between then and now so many factors have ensued and so much uncertainty has been created out there that problems have arisen which will take some time undoubtedly to iron out. And who is suffering? Not the minister, but the students out in the schools.

Some of the other things we are very concerned with in relation to the present Budget: The cut in substitute teacher funding. This morning I tried to get the Minister of Finance to clarify whether or not the cuts had anything to do with the present horrendous state of Finance here in the Province, and the minister seemed to allude that we had to look at cutting everywhere. I can appreciate that. What I can't appreciate is the fact that substitute teaching funding was cut long before the minister realized that he was running a deficit; it was cut when he was predicting a \$10.2 million surplus. So, consequently, the intent was there by Government to slash the Budget for substitute teachers. Some people might put up a legitimate argument there by saying well, you know, the substitute teacher bill has

escalated, it has grown year after year. Yes it has, because teachers' salaries have grown. Maybe it is time we started curbing, and that, perhaps, is a good argument also.

But there is a collective agreement. Teachers do have so many sick days, teachers do have so many professional days, teachers have a legitimate right to certain leaves that are granted. Now you can say yes they do, and that means they are going to be out of school for X number of days. But that is no reason why we have to bring in substitutes. Well, if you do not bring substitute teachers in, you have two choices. One, let the teachers who are already there overworked try to cover extra classes, and I am sure that will not be accepted by the Newfoundland Teachers' Association, and the second choice is, let the children go home.

We already have the shortest school year in Canada. That concern has been raised by Dr. Crocker in his recent report. One of the reasons why our children might be somewhat behind the Canadian average is because they attend school fewer days. If we are going to let them stay home for any length of time, then consequently we are adding to that present dilemma.

So what do you do? The only thing that has been successful in making sure children have a continuous education is if teachers have to go on sick leave or education leave or whatever, that substitutes be brought in to make sure the education of the child continues.

The Minister of Education in his

statement says, 'Well, you know, there are a lot of leave days there and the boards can start cutting here, there and everywhere; teachers can start doing professional development after school and on weekends.' I suggest to the minister that I wish him luck if he thinks teachers are going to do it. Some of the older members in the House, who were teachers before they became MHAs, might remember that when they joined the teaching profession first, most professional days, most NTA meetings and so on, were held on Saturdays or nighttime. There were very few held - and I see heads nodding - during school days. I remember clearly a bus coming the full length of the Southern Shore on Saturday, two or three times a year, to take you to your annual NTA meetings.

The other thing that sticks clearly in my memory in relation to that event is the fact that the bus would be full. And I remember one occasion quite clearly when there was a discussion over one gentleman who was not there.

It was discovered he was sick. And every other teacher in the whole branch was attending the meeting, having travelled 100 miles over gravel road on the Saturday.

That showed two things. It showed a tremendous amount of dedication by the teachers in the Province and it showed that they did not mind doing the extra work after school hours or on Saturdays. Because that was the only choice you had. But times have changed, Mr. Chairman, and I do not think we can expect that any longer. Teachers now have solid collective agreements and they live

themselves within that agreement and they expect the Treasury Board, the Department of Education and school boards to live within the agreement also.

So when the Minister states that boards should look to cutting their flexible days here, there and everywhere else, boards only have about 20 per cent flexibility, only about 20 per cent of the days are days over which the boards have any control. Eighty per cent of the leaves are not controlled by board at all. They are directly involved with the collective agreement.

So the Minister seems to be insinuating that teachers and boards break the collective agreement, and in fact break the law by going outside the collective agreement and taking away days that teachers legitimately have. I am not surprised at that, because the example has already been set by the President of Treasury Board when he writes teachers and tries to contravene the collective bargaining process by intimidating teachers by writing them threatening letters so that they will perhaps put pressure on the NTA to back off in their demands.

The one thing I guess that surprises all Members on both sides of the House in relation to the present conditions in the schools, is the lack of input by two former Members, two former presidents of the NTA. The former president who viciously attacked me yesterday evening, and the former former president. Both of them when they were presidents of the NTA stood up for their teachers, in fact to the point where they went overboard.

Now on several occasions - I am not sure where the President of Treasury Board is but I am sure he is within earshot - they also sent out letters to their teachers. Sometimes, when I was Minister of Education, I would scrutinize them carefully and I would wonder whether or not everything they were saying was factual. But perhaps as far as they understood the situation it was, and we accepted that. At no time did we stand in the House of Assembly and call the President of the Newfoundland Teachers Association a liar, as was basically done here this morning by the President of Treasury Board.

But you solve problems by talking. Not by sending out letters or negotiating on the radio or insulting people or contravening the collective agreement by sending letters out to the individual teachers. You bring them in and you sit down and you discuss the problems and you find solutions. And it is too bad that the former former president of the NTA is not here. Because he will tell you when he was president and they had some problems, they were solved quickly, quietly and efficiently and to everybody's satisfaction. I cannot say the same thing for the former president of the NTA because when we were negotiating the last contract - the only one, I would remind the House, the only one that was ever signed before the old contract ran out - teachers did not even know negotiations were taking place, everything went that smoothly.

And the Member for Codroy Valley is standing up in the door, and he was a teacher at the time, and he realizes that the last contract that he got, where he obtained

increased pension benefits, as the Member for Carbonear down there nodding his head in agreement with me, they obtained increased pension benefits. They did not even know negotiations were under way. There were no nasty letters from the President of Treasury Board, from the Minister of Education.

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Mr. Hearn: They were smooth talks. They were -

An Hon. Member: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Carbonear. Are you in your seat?

Mr. Hearn: No point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker: No point of order. The hon. Member for St. Mary's - The Cape.

Mr. Hearn: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Reid: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Carbonear on a point of order.

Mr. Reid: I take exception to the fact that the hon. Member would say that I was nodding in agreement with what he was saying. If anything, Mr. Chairman, for the record, I am nodding at the foolishness of what he is getting on with. Because I do not remember ever as a teacher in this Province, especially in the last seventeen years, ever agreeing with anything that this hon. Member did as a Minister of Education and certainly anyone who he was representing. Thank you

very much.

Mr. Chairman: That was no point of order, just a disagreement.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

I have not recognized the hon. gentleman. The hon. Member for St. John's East Extern. On the same point of order?

Mr. Parsons: Yes, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chairman: I just ruled that there was not a point of order.

Mr. Parsons: Oh, I thought you ruled that on the previous point of order.

Mr. Chairman: No, there was no point of order.

Mr. Parsons: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. I would love to say a few a words though.

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am sure my colleague from St. John's East Extern will get the chance to say all the words he wants in the next few weeks as we debate this loan Bill.

I say to the Member for Carbonear, I am not surprised he did not agree with anything we did. He has never agreed with anything. He does not agree with what his colleagues are doing. He does not agree with what his council members did and he does not agree with anybody. But he is only like that on the surface. Deep down the Member is a very conscientious fellow who really does not mean

what he said, he just said that to humor me. I saw him nodding and actually I did not know whether he was falling asleep or nodding in agreement. So, I am sorry that I said he was not in agreement when he really was. But the Member has to admit that the last contract that they signed was the best they had ever signed and the smoothest.

I was mentioning the two former presidents of the NTA and I was saying that the former president cannot take credit for signing that collective agreement, because when she was involved initially there were all kinds of problems and misconceptions and she was thoroughly confusing her teachers, so the executive arranged for her to go on a prolonged trip to Australia, I believe. It was while she was there that they put a rush on and the bargaining committee came in and finalized an agreement with the President of Treasury Board with myself and others, and eventually we signed an agreement and had it all finalized before she got back. But the former, former president of the NTA was a gentleman who was always there himself when negotiations took place and who, on short notice, travelled the length of this Province, in fact, to finalize the former, former agreement which was signed with the Newfoundland Teachers Association.

I remember one night in particular when things sort of blew up at the negotiating table and the president called me in Corner Brook. He said, 'boy, they have problems today.' And I said to him, 'boy, you know that there are no problems between us, you know. Come on out.' And he jumped the first plane at my beck and call and came on over to Corner Brook.

10:30 that night he arrived and 2:30 the next morning we had everything finalized, because the gentleman was a man to his word and I have said that publicly across this Province. When the former, former President of the Newfoundland Teachers Association gave his word, to us at least, we accepted it and there was never one occasion, not once, when we had to doubt the word of that gentleman.

I am sure the gentleman, when he speaks after me, will state that there was never one occasion during the negotiating process that he had to second guess the word given to him by Government officials. And that is how you obtain good, quick, solid, collective bargaining results.

An Hon. Member: There is a different President there now.

Mr. Hearn: There is no doubt about it. And the Member for St. John's South in his despair says - and you know with the tone of despair in his voice - he said there is a different President of Treasury Board there now, and there is. And that is why I suggest to him that they are having all kinds of problems in negotiating.

Now, he said no, no. Maybe he is referring to the fact there is a different President of the Newfoundland Teachers Association now. Well, if that is the case, let me say to the Member for St. John's South that I remarked the smoothness of the negotiations which took place with the Member for Exploits when he was President of the Newfoundland Teachers Association.

But as we got into the next

agreement, the one that was signed before the old one ran out, the first time ever, it was signed not with the former President of the NTA, the Member for Conception Bay South, she was sent off to Australia to get her out of the way by her own Members. And the Vice-President then, who is now the President, moved in and continued the negotiations. It was the present President, the former Vice-President, along with the executive director who was also there in the days of the Member for Exploits, who came over and signed the collective agreement. The first time ever before the old one ran out and with the best pension benefits teachers ever received, benefits now that they are hoping and praying will not be taken away by the present Minister.

So, I agree with the Member for St. John's South when he says that the present Treasury Board President is certainly not like the old ones and he is causing a lot of confusion. But, hopefully, the Member for St. John's South said in a despairing way that the President - and we were talking about the smoothness of negotiations in the past. But he said there is a different President there now, and consequently he is admitting that the present President of Treasury Board is not as effective or efficient as the former President of Treasury Board who by my side negotiated, as I said, two very good agreements without any problems whatsoever, because they were done very simply. The President of Treasury Board undoubtedly knows how far he can go. He also knows how far the Newfoundland Teachers' Association members are willing to go. So our question, and it is a question we

asked the Member for Exploits when he was president, why waste days and weeks and months getting there? You know where you are going. I know where you are going. So why not get there? And you have to have trust.

The Member for Exploits who was the former President trusted the then Minister of Education and the President of Treasury Board, who was the Member for Mount Pearl at the time. The vice-president of the NTA, the last time round, who is now the president also trusted the Minister of Education and the President of Treasury Board, the Member for Grand Falls, and I was telling them that in order to negotiate the last collective agreement the only thing that was a bit different is that the Newfoundland Teachers' Association executive had to send the president on a trip to Australia to get her out of the way, so that we could negotiate the agreement. But it was done.

Mr. Simms: The first time the NTA ever reached an agreement before the other one ran out.

Mr. Hearn: Yes, I have been telling them that this past twenty-five minutes.

Mr. Simms: I am sorry, I missed the earlier part.

Mr. Hearn: I can say it again. It was the first collective agreement ever reached with the Newfoundland Teachers' Association before the old one ran out. And it was done on fairness and balance, fairness, balance, and trust. Because the word 'trust' was in there, and I challenge anyone to ask the Member for Exploits, the former President, if at any time Government generally

and specifically the President of Treasury Board, the Minister of Education at the time, tried to manipulate him or tried to deceive him or play games with him. And he will say, no.

Well let me get to the pension mess. When we got into negotiating pensions, when it became an issue with teachers that they were concerned about their pensions, and they were looking for what has become known as thirty and out.

A lot of people say, I mean, forget it, because the pension plan is in such a mess now, pension plans generally, we have to start addressing that, and, of course, Government admitted, yes, we are responsible for unfunded liability and so on, and we will accept that responsibility. It is not just the former Tory Governments, but the former, former, Liberal Government who also used the monies to do other things. Maybe there is nothing wrong with that as long as you accept the responsibility and put the money back. You borrow here or you borrow there, what difference does it make?

An Hon. Member: How much did you put back?

Mr. Hearn: You will have to ask the President of Treasury Board that. However, what was agreed was that thirty and out was a very productive, a very positive move, not because of the negative affect on pension benefits, and I question negative affect. People say, oh, teachers are coming out earlier, more pension. There are a number of factors you have to look at that former NTA members and I sat down and looked at. Number one, if people leave the

profession earlier they are being replaced by younger teachers who are coming in at a lower salary. A high salary going out and a low salary coming in. If a person leaves five years earlier, and I see the Member for Exploits nodding his head, because he used all these arguments, after we gave them to him to use, and he was right. If a teacher leaves five years earlier that means the lifetime pension is going to be considerably smaller than it would be, because each year besides the increase built on, there is a certain amount of increase, 4 or 5 per cent, or whatever it might be, you also have teachers who after twenty-five or twenty-six years in the classroom are fed up with it, and have no choice except to stay there for another four or five years. That is not good for them and it is certainly not good for the students, and they will admit that. Now, they have a choice, if they are still with it and they like what they are doing, and they want to stay, that choice is there. We are not kicking them out. What we are saying is that the pension improvements were extremely positive but the people who got most out of it were the students, because they had the opportunity to obtain many new teachers. There are teachers out there lined up for jobs now and they have the chance to come in. They are young teachers just out of university, with all the modern technology at their fingertips, and so on, slotting into jobs that were left vacant by people who deserved to go off and get into something else for a change, and in turn it had no great affect. The bottom line is that there was no great affect upon the cost of the pensions.

Teachers recognizing the fact that

they were getting greater benefits than they ever had before, that this was a very positive move, said, we do not mind paying our share. Teachers have never hesitated to pay their share.

Now the President of Treasury Board talks about the millions and millions and hundreds of million of dollars -

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Order, please!

The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: I do not mind. His time is up, is that it?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Baker: I do not mind him going on another two or three minutes, if we could then move that the Committee rise.

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will finish answering the question, then I will go on.

The amount of money that is involved, whether or not you tamper with teachers pensions at this stage, is not going to have any affect here. You are not going to take care of your deficit by saying to teachers, we are going to cut your pension to bits.

The point is, to fund the teachers pension, there has to be a shared agreement, we started moving towards it. We recognized the fact and teachers will tell you, we recognized the fact that there is a serious problem and we made

step number one, more input from Government, more input from the teachers, they agreed. They also agreed that if we are going to extend upon this new plan of thirty and out that we envisaged and started bringing in, that teachers must also put more and more in, Government also must put more and more in, that is fair ball. Nobody said no.

If we were still in power, teachers right today would have a new agreement, they would have greater benefits to their pension plan, they would be paying more and we would be paying more, because it was agreed to do it collectively.

You see, the unfortunate thing about it, what the present Government is doing, is not discussing and planning with the teachers, they are telling them. I used the phrase earlier, I referred to the Premier as cod liver Clyde, because when you were small, your mother gave you cod liver oil and you said, why do I have to take this and she said because it is good for you, take it. Well, the Premier is like this, he is telling the people of the Province, this is good for you, take it, so cod liver Clyde; it is good for you, do not ask, I know best, so consequently it does not work.

Mr. Chairman, I ask that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. Simms: An excellent answer.

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

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

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

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

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