

Time: 2:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

MR. CHAIRMAN, Abe Kovnats (Radisson): This Committee will come to order. We are on Bill No. 22, Preamble. The Honourable Member for Elmwood has thirty-two minutes.

MR. RUSSELL DOERN: Mr. Chairman, I could use all of it, but our leader has made a commitment to the government to accommodate them in getting out the government cheques and so I intend to limit my remarks to 15 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I also might add in passing that if the government decides to speak on third reading, then we also reserve the right to reply, but I assume that will not occur.

Mr. Chairman, in this debate everybody responds to different things. And I have to say that the mischievous rhetoric of the Minister of Government Services is what I wish to largely deal with in my remarks. I spoke earlier in short about his comments about fire safety, and I think clearly demonstrated that the response of the government in this area has made a mockery of the words of the First Minister. All the promises and all the talk have evaporated, and all the suggestions about action and speed and better quality and so on are all pipe dreams and that the government has in effect replaced the program of immediate action with a 10-year program, and that in so doing they are going to be in violation of the Fire Commissioner's reports for that period of time. So they have made no improvement and all this talk that we heard has just been empty rhetoric.

The other point that I wanted to deal with was the comment that the Minister of Government Services took some delight in suggesting that this government had built monuments to itself and that they had spent all their money on certain massive projects. I will say to the Minister, that first of all, some of those so-called monuments were a reaction to requirements in the field of fire safety. For example, the Brandon Jail was to replace a 90-odd year old jail and fire trap; The Pas Jail and Courthouse the same; and many other buildings were upgradings and replacements.

But where are the monuments that the Conservative government is going to leave as a legacy to the people of Manitoba. There are no programs; there is no construction taking place. All there is, Mr. Chairman, is a painful memory. That's all that we're going to have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To the honourable member: I said he had 32 minutes. I should have said 22 minutes. Time is limited to 30 minutes during debate.

MR. DOERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Committee of the Whole House, 30 minutes.

MR. DOERN: Thank you, but if you had listened to me, Mr. Chairman, I said I would only take another 10.

Mr. Chairman, the legacy of this government will not monuments or so called monuments. It will be the absence of programs and the absence of accomplishments, and I think in the end all we are going to have is a painful memory of the administration that we see across from us. They say that we didn't do certain things because we spent money in the wrong areas of priorities, but they can't do anything either because they are on a budget, they are on a restraint program. I mean where is the superiority? I know what the consequence is. For instance, we asked them to do something about high interest rates and about the prospect of high rents, because of the fact that people

will be unable to move from apartments into homes, and we got some confusion. The Minister of Finance appeared to say to me a few days ago that they were looking into the possibility of extending rent controls. A day or two later he got up and said he wanted to clarify it for everybody, but this was not what he had said or meant.

Similarly the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, the Minister of Consumer Affairs, also suggested that there would be no particular action taken here, because of the fact that the province at this point in time is in very sad shape. The housing market is in the doldrums; the apartment market is confronted with apparently high vacancy rates. I would like to hear some of those particular rates mentioned, but we know that there is apparently a soft demand for housing and there is also a soft demand for apartments. Why is this, Mr. Chairman? Because of the fact that there is a steady drain of population, that we have had in the past few years, 10,000 Manitobans leaving this province, voting with their feet.

If you want to know what people think of the Lyon administration, there are two ways to find out. One is to look at the outmigration figures, and the other is to look at the federal election figures; both clearly indicate that the people of Manitoba, if they can't vote with their hands in voting against this government, are voting with their feet in leaving this province.

Mr. Chairman, I heard a program the other day on the CBC. They mentioned that the Gaspé Peninsula is one of the most underprivileged and impoverished regions of Canada, loses 10,000 people a year. That is what Manitoba is losing under the Lyon administration. That is why, if you want to ask the government to do something about housing or to do something about rent controls, they say that it is not necessary, because there is no demand, there is nobody here, everybody is looking elsewhere. I don't know about you, but I talk to a lot of people and I know a lot of people who have left Manitoba in the last few years, gone to the States, gone to Toronto, gone to Vancouver, and Saskatchewan. --(Interjection)-- None of my friends went to Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, there is a method in their madness and that is, rather than extend rent controls, which is what I believe should be done, their technique of control is to reduce the population of Manitoba. So there is a method in their madness. They want to keep rents down by keeping the vacancy rate high. They want to keep the housing market down by cutting the demand and the way to do that is to let people leave and encourage - well, there's a madness to your method and vice versa.

Mr. Chairman, if I were to pick, what would be the symbol of this administration in 1980, I think it is signs; a forest of signs throughout the city of Winnipeg; for sale signs, for leasing signs and for rent signs. Go down the streets of Winnipeg, go into the suburban areas and into the downtown part of Winnipeg and look, look at business prosperity, and what do you see? Signs for rent, signs for leasing, for sale; all through the residential areas houses are available. All through the downtown area stores are available for rent. There's all kinds of vacant space because nothing is happening in Manitoba. There is no action taking place in this particular province of ours.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, please. Could I just once again remind the Honourable Members that there is a member standing in his place and speaking, and there's a murmur that seems to be very, very distracting. I don't know whether it's to the member who's debating, but I find it for myself to be very distracting and I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to the member and to the House for giving him a wrong statement, inasmuch as he does have 32 minutes from 1:30, rather than 22 minutes as I had corrected. And I would correct another error; it's 2:30 rather than 1:30, and I guess - to the Honourable Members, it appears that I'd better quit while I'm ahead for one thing. I don't imagine that I'm the only one who's made any errors here today, so, I wouldn't . . . The Honourable Member for Elmwood.

MR. DOERN: Mr. Chairman, I draw your attention to the old adage that silence is golden. No, I was drawing that to his attention, not to my own.

Mr. Chairman, the final point that I wanted to make concerns the treatment of this government in relation to the city of Winnipeg. I think that one of

the best points that I have seen made in a newspaper editorial in recent times came from the Free Press a few days ago, and I also think that the editorial page of that paper has improved recently. I don't know if it's the new editor; I don't know if it's the new owner. But there is a distinct tone of small "l" liberalism creeping into the pages of the Free Press.

Mr. Chairman, one of the points made was this, that the fact that the provincial government did not give sufficient moneys - I say this to the Minister of Education - the fact that his program has failed to provide additional support to school boards throughout Manitoba has not only hurt the school boards - and it has hurt the school boards, and it's hurt the quality of education in this province and we'll have an opportunity to debate that at some length. --(Interjection)-- Prove it; we'll prove it.

But there's been another effect. It starts with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance. The fact that they have given inadequate funding to school boards has also meant that the municipalities and the municipal programs have been adversely affected, and the city of Winnipeg, which has kept its tax rate down and its mill rate down, has done so, not only at the expense of its schools, but at the expense of its municipal programs, that many programs that they had planned in the capital area have been deferred. And you know, this is a case of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. The government has done this in their program. They have deferred capital expenditures that are necessary at the provincial level. They have deferred maintenance. They're like a person who owns a car who puts off getting it checked in the spring and checked in the fall and keeps driving it, and eventually the thing totally breaks down. That's what they're doing. That's what their doing to the provincial government. They are creating a need that is getting worse by the year, and at the same time they are driving out our architects, our engineers, our blue-collar tradesmen and many other people who could do something useful at this time. So they are forcing the city to do the same, Mr. Speaker. They are forcing the city of Winnipeg to postpone our municipal projects, to delay an aqueduct, to delay a garbage disposal system, to delay the construction of overpasses, to delay the talk about the possibility of the CN east yards development, and so on. And as a result, I say that they are setting back not only the provincial seed, but they are also hurting the city of Winnipeg in terms of future growth and development.

Mr. Chairman, I hope to have an opportunity to discuss the future of Winnipeg further with a government that has little interest in its development.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Preamble--pass. The Honourable Member for Ft. Rouge.

MRS. JUNE WESTBURY: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I heard people say, oh no. I would like to suggest to the government that if they want unanimous consent on any bill, they should consult all members of this House and not take it for granted that those of us who sit singly will go along with their wishes.

Mr. Chairman, because of the straits in which the government finds themselves, I have no intention of making a speech, but I would like to point out to this House that I have a right to make a speech, and I have a right to the same consideration as any other member of this House. And if, in future, they expect me to co-operate in a unanimous consent, it might be to their advantage to make that request of me.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Preamble--pass; Title--pass; Bill be reported. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

The Chairman reported upon the committee's deliberations to Mr. Speaker and requested leave to sit again.

IN SESSION

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Radisson.

Thursday, 3 April, 1980

MR. KOVNATS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Virden, that the report of the Committee be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

THIRD READING

BILL NO. 22 was read a third time and passed.

ROYAL ASSENT

The Honourable the Administrator of the Government of the Province of Manitoba having entered the House and being seated on the Throne, Mr. Speaker addressed The Honourable the Administrator in the following words:

MR. SPEAKER: We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in session assembled, approach the Honourable the Administrator with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and Government, and beg for the Honourable the Administrator the acceptance of this Bill:

Bill No. 22, An Act for Granting to Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money for the Public Service of the Province for the Fiscal Year Ending the 31st day of March, 1981 and to Authorize Commitments to Expend additional Money in Subsequent Years.

MR. CLERK: The Honourable the Administrator of the Government of the Province of Manitoba doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accepts their benevolence, and assents to this Bill in Her Majesty's name.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Speaker, I have perceived a disposition on the part of all members, it compels me to make the following Motion, seconded by the Minister of Government Services. Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn.

MOTION presented and carried.

MR. SPEAKER: The House is then adjourned and stands adjourned until 2:30 Monday afternoon, and I hope you all have a good weekend.