



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

Name	Constituency	Party
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 15, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lorette Cenerini, Leon Cenerini, Cecile Cenerini and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Licensed Practical Nurses

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Bernice Bartel, El Neustaedter, Dianne Kulcheski and others urging the Minister of Health to recognize the value of LPNs and to consider reversing the decision to cut LPNs in Manitoba.

Seasonal Camping Fees

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lloyd Nelson, Barbara Murray, Audrey Sloan and others urging the provincial government not to increase seasonal camping fees by such a large amount.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

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THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Licensed Practical Nurses

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). It

complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT many LPNs have been eliminated from most acute care facilities in Manitoba, including St. Boniface, Seven Oaks, and most recently HSC; and,

THAT the LPNs of this province are valuable members of the health care system, providing professional, competent, skilled and cost-effective services; and

THAT staffing cuts will only result in declining quality of health care and potentially tragic outcomes; and

THAT it will not be long before the negative results of this shortcut effort are realized, including higher costs and poorer services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to recognize the value of LPNs and to consider reversing the decision to cut LPNs in Manitoba.

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS the provincial government announced its intention to move to an open marketing system for hogs in Manitoba without consulting producers as it promised during the last election; and

WHEREAS a majority of hog producers support single-desk selling under Manitoba Pork, the marketing board; and

WHEREAS the hog industry in Manitoba has doubled under an orderly marketing system; and

WHEREAS processors who will contribute to Manitoba's value-added industry have publicly expressed their preference for orderly marketing because it is easier to deal with one agent rather than 2,300 producers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

* (1335)

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to

request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Manitoba Telephone System

Madam Speaker: I have received the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the Manitoba Telephone System has served this province well for over 80 years providing province-wide service, some of the lowest local rates in North America and thousands of jobs; and

THAT MTS has made over \$100 million since 1990 and this money has stayed in Manitoba; and

THAT MTS contributes \$150 million annually to the Manitoba economy and is a major sponsor of community events throughout the province; and

THAT MTS, with nearly 4,000 employees including more than 1,000 in rural and northern Manitoba, is one of Manitoba's largest firms, headquartered in Manitoba and is committed to Manitoba; and

THAT the provincial government has no mandate to sell MTS and said before and during the 1995 election that MTS was not for sale.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) not sell the Manitoba Telephone System.

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Licensed Practical Nurses

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT many LPNs have been eliminated from most acute care facilities in Manitoba, including St. Boniface, Seven Oaks, and most recently HSC; and,

THAT the LPNs of this province are valuable members of the health care system, providing professional, competent, skilled and cost-effective services; and

THAT staffing cuts will only result in declining quality of health care and potentially tragic outcomes; and

THAT it will not be long before the negative results of this shortcut effort are realized, including higher costs and poorer services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to recognize the value of LPNs and to consider reversing the decision to cut LPNs in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: I have received the petition of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). It complies with the rules and regulations of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes? The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT many LPNs have been eliminated from most acute care facilities in Manitoba, including St. Boniface, Seven Oaks, and most recently HSC; and,

THAT the LPNs of this province are valuable members of the health care system, providing professional, competent, skilled and cost-effective services; and

THAT staffing cuts will only result in declining quality of health care and potentially tragic outcomes; and

THAT it will not be long before the negative results of this shortcut effort are realized, including higher costs and poorer services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to recognize the value of LPNs and to consider reversing the decision to cut LPNs in Manitoba.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Report for The Municipal Board.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I would like to table the Annual Report Concerning Complaints About Judicial Conduct.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon thirty-five Grade 5 students from J.B. Mitchell School under the direction of Mr. K. McFadyen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe).

Also, we have twenty-five Grade 5 students from Christ The King School under the direction of Mrs. Gendron. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

* (1340)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program Privatization—Study Release

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

Last Thursday I tabled in this House a presentation made by Mr. David Martin, who is the provincial coordinator for the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities.

In his document he raised a number of concerns about the lack of consultation and the fact that there was not a consensus in terms of the government proceeding with the privatization initiative of the government. Mr. Martin goes on to talk about such a large and huge decision affecting so many people, and they were not even consulted.

I would like to know whether the Premier has had time to read the presentation of Mr. Martin, which I tabled for his attention last week, and whether he can respond with any study on the costs or quality of services on the initiative of the government to proceed with privatization.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, last Friday the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews)

and I were discussing the matter of home care services with the media—and, of course, the Minister of Labour and his officials with the union—and put down an offer for agreement that we hoped would bring an end to some of the threats that have been made in recent times: the concept and the offer of a status quo collective agreement for 12 months; contracting home care services to a maximum of only 25 percent and no change outside Winnipeg; employee and client assessment of the initiative. We asked that home care attendants be allowed to vote on this offer.

We also made an invitation to the union to put together its own bid and to assist in the development of a business plan which we felt was a reasonable approach, which the union immediately rejected.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, my question dealt with the policy of government to proceed with the privatization of home care. My question dealt with a client and a credible spokesperson for many clients in this province, a person who has advised many different governments, many Premiers in the past, about the quality of health care and the improvements that have to be made in health care.

My question was to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), whether he had read the brief presented by Mr. Martin, and I am disappointed that the Premier would not respond.

Madam Speaker, you can understand why, after dealing with the emergency ward situation last fall, where we were quite worried about whether we were flying by the seat of our proverbial pants with the decisions being made and then being changed and then being changed again without any study at all, we would be concerned about whether the government has a study in their possession dealing with the costs and dealing with the quality of services.

You are making a decision that is affecting in financial terms well over \$50 million. You are dealing with a decision that affects over 17,000 people and 3,000 working people in the system.

I would like to ask the Premier, can he table today for the benefit of all of us in this Chamber, for the benefit of all Manitobans, any study he has dealing with the costs and quality of services that leads the government to the privatization decision that they have made?

* (1345)

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, as I have pointed out to the honourable member previously, the change that is being addressed here is not an issue of privatization. A good part of the Home Care program is already privatized. The nursing service part of it in the city of Winnipeg is privatized. It is not by virtue of any tenders, but it is an untendered contract with the Victorian Order of Nurses.

So if the honourable member wants to talk about privatization, we can talk about privatization, but what we have is a monopoly with respect to nursing, with the VON in the city of Winnipeg, and other services are a government monopoly in the home care sector in the city of Winnipeg.

So I think the honourable members again, the terminology they use very often, unfortunately, is misleading to the public as we have seen in recent weeks.

Mr. Martin, a gentleman I respect and with whom I have had numerous consultations over the past two and a half years, I have suggested to him and I suggest to you that he and his organization made their decision about the initiative perhaps without knowing all the details of what was being put forward. They did not know, I suggest to you, that the change would be modest in nature and that it would also be the subject of a client and worker assessment of the initiative.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, perhaps the minister, in criticizing Mr. Martin and his organization, would put the details before this Legislature and before the people of Manitoba.

I would ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to order his Minister of Health to put the studies before the people of this province. Instead of blaming people for not knowing all the details, perhaps the government could put the details before all of us.

Madam Speaker, I would like to know from the government—and for the life of us we cannot understand why the government is proceeding with the profit privatization initiative in the health care field—I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the fact that they signed a \$140,000 contract with Connie Curran to study the

status of home care in the province of Manitoba—this contract is less than two years old—I would like to ask the Premier, in the light of the lack of any other information, is the government making its decision on home care services on the basis of Connie Curran's recommendation, and will the Premier today table the contract that the taxpayers have already paid for?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, there is no one consideration that leads to a particular policy initiative or change. We have had problems with our health care system generally and right across the country. I am not referring only to Manitoba. Certainly we had health care problems, big ones, when the New Democrats were in power in Manitoba. We have made some pretty significant improvements, but that has required the expenditure of an additional \$500 million a year, more than the NDP ever spent and, of course, in terms of commitment to health spending in Manitoba, our government has shown that its commitment is at a higher level than that shown by the previous New Democratic—it has been called the Doer-Pawley administration, I believe, Madam Speaker.

The fact is, our government is indeed committed to a properly running health care system.

The honourable member gave his case away again in his question when he brought in that filthy word "profit," Madam Speaker. That is all that is bothering honourable members opposite. If they really care about the clients of our home care system in this province, they will get together with their union friends and have a little chat with them and ask them to get off this course of withdrawing services from people who have Parkinson's disease. Let honourable members opposite stand up for the people who have Alzheimer's disease. Let them stand up for the people who have severe cases of arthritis, multiple sclerosis and other problems.

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, the issue is not the government's attempt to blame everybody but themselves in this issue. In fact, the so-called new government offer to the union is no different than the minister's letter of March 15 outlining what they were going to do in home care privatization. The issue is a

government only wanting to privatize with no studies and no support from anyone in the field.

Madam Speaker, can the minister today indicate whether or not, or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) indicate, whether or not this government is backing off of its own cabinet submission signed by the minister that said they would be privatizing home care, that said they would be setting up a Crown corporation to administer the privatization of home care, that said there would be user fees on core services, in their own cabinet document?

Is the government backing off of this government document?

* (1350)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): One of the problems we have, Madam Speaker, is that honourable members either do not listen or cannot hear when they are told and when they are reminded and asked not to go around scaring elderly and vulnerable people in our province by telling them that they will have to pay user fees or that their services will be cut. We have been very clear about where we stand on those issues.

I am asking the honourable member, will he assist those in Manitoba who require home care attendant services because they have Alzheimer's disease, because they have Parkinson's disease, because they have multiple sclerosis, because they have severe arthritis?

Will the honourable member and his Leader get together with their union friends to get them to provide services to those people?

Privatization—Nursing Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my subsequent question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) or the Minister of Health.

Is the Minister of Health prepared to state today that they will not be privatizing the largest portion, that is, the largest portion of home care services that is offered in Winnipeg, that is, the nursing service, and taking it away from the VON? Will they not be privatizing it for their for-profit friends?

Are they agreeing today that they will not privatize the nursing component of home care?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): All of the short-term nursing services are presently privatized. The Victorian Order of Nurses is the private nonprofit agency that is providing that service, so let honourable members maybe find a new word besides "privatize," because privatize is exactly what goes on for all of the short-term and a good part of the long-term nursing services.

Honourable members cannot find these ideological words anymore. [interjection] It does not work. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, to quickly complete his response.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable members' hidebound version of the way things ought to be, Madam Speaker, that version does not work in the '90s. The world is changing. There is a reality out there which honourable members, because they are in the opposition and do not have to take any responsibility for anything, can gleefully ignore. That is the way they proceed.

I, on the other hand, and my colleagues are responsible to the people of Manitoba and we will carry out our responsibilities.

Privatization

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, will the minister, who refused to comment on his own cabinet document that stated they were going to privatize 100 percent, who refused to answer the question with respect to nursing services in Winnipeg, do the right thing, prevent disharmony, prevent dislocation for patients, do the right thing for patients, do the right thing for the employees, do the right thing for the public of Manitoba and say today, no privatization in the province of Manitoba, that they will put it on hold, they will talk to the public before they move on this?

* (1355)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, let the record show that, by their silence on the issue, honourable members opposite today have confirmed that their backs are turned to people in Manitoba who require home care attendant service, people who require those services because they suffer

from Alzheimer's disease, from Parkinson's disease, from multiple sclerosis, from severe arthritis and other serious conditions. They have turned their backs on those people, and that is very clear today.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, Beaudesne 417 is very clear: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Day in and day out, when we ask questions to the Minister of Health on home care, he refuses to deal with his own responsibility for this matter.

I would ask him to come to order, Madam Speaker, and for once answer the very serious questions we are asking on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, it may be that the honourable member for Thompson, in the guise of raising a point of order, refers to the fact that perhaps in my last answer I did not refer to the fact that the contracting of home care services or allowing for competition in Winnipeg will only be in the order of 25 percent. There will not be any change outside Winnipeg—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order by the honourable member for Thompson, indeed Beaudesne 417 cites that questions must not be lengthy, contain argument or debate and/or provoke debate.

Child Daycare Subsidized Spaces

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, Manitobans know that an accessible, affordable, nonprofit, community-based child care system is important, especially for parents entering work or training or to stay in the job market or indeed to stay in school.

Last year in Estimates, the Minister of Family Services said that her department increased the number of child-care cases by 300, based on an evaluation and an appeal to centres to see whether there was a need for increased cases.

Can the Minister of Family Services confirm that the cap on subsidized cases was increased from 9,600 to 9,900 due to increased demand, as the minister said in Estimates on June 15, 1995?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because, yes, indeed, there were an additional 300 spaces added last year through the process of evaluating where in fact the need was. Although many of the subsidized spaces throughout the province remained unfilled, there was a need in specific centres for specific additional cases, and we provided that support.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to table a document, a briefing note, for this minister which shows exactly the opposite, that due to vacancies in the 9,600 cases, the minister allocated another additional 300 cases.

Why is the minister reducing the total number of subsidized daycare cases as a deliberate, budget policy decision when she knows that any so-called underutilization is due to her policy of increasing parent fees?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, again, I thank my honourable friend for that question, because it does allow me to say again that there were many spaces within our formal child care system that were not being utilized, were not filled, and that was right throughout the width and the breadth of our province, but in specific instances there were certain child care centres that needed more spaces.

We added those spaces to those centres and left the rest of the spaces open to see what the year might present to us, but those spaces were not filled and as a result of that and as a result of our desire to work with the child care community and undertake a comprehensive review of our child care programming right throughout the province, we have frozen the spaces that are filled.

I want to indicate to all Manitobans, if in fact there is a need specifically for individual circumstances to be addressed, we will address them.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to table Treasury Board documents which prove that removing \$4 million from the daycare budget was a deliberate decision to downsize the number of subsidized cases in child care.

What is the Minister of Family Services going to tell family daycare providers and parents who have lost subsidized cases and have children needing child care to enter work training or education? They are phoning us, they are telling us—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, again, I thank my honourable friend for that question because, indeed, if he is receiving calls that indicate there is a need for a space because there is a parent in training or in the workforce, I would suggest very strongly that rather than waiting to bring it to the Legislature through Question Period that those individuals, he recommend that they call our department directly, because in fact if there is a need we will attempt to address that need.

Human Rights Commission Funding Reduction

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

A few sittings ago we received the Annual Report for the Manitoba Human Rights Commission for the year 1994, which reports a 34 percent increase from the previous year in the commission's education projects because, and I quote, policy adopted by the commission continued to direct staff to give priority to activities which would tend to prevent discrimination. Then it goes on to talk about programs regarding discrimination against aboriginal peoples and business education respecting sexual harassment.

My question to the First Minister is, would he explain, especially to Manitoba's women, aboriginal peoples and minorities—indeed, it is Holocaust Awareness Week—why the government targeted the Human Rights Commission for a cut of 6 percent while he takes an increase of 21 percent?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, as the member

knows, throughout this process very difficult decisions had to be made in all areas. However, the member I am sure will realize that what was preserved was the Human Rights commissioners, those people who actually deal with the issues of human rights complaints. We believe that was a very important area to preserve.

Mr. Mackintosh: The question then to the minister: A 6 percent cut is one thing, but can the minister explain why the government specified, indeed targeted commission staff devoted to education for the cut, indeed gutting the education function of the commission?

Mrs. Vodrey: The member often phrases his questions in a way that I think perhaps he does not intend to.

Let me just clarify for the member, it is the educational area in which, yes, there has been a reduction. However, in the area of Human Rights commissioners, in the area of dealing with complaints that would go through the Human Rights Commission, a very important area, this government has in fact maintained its commitment, Madam Speaker.

* (1400)

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister explain, with investigation staff already backlogged with complaints, how the commission can now effectively develop and promote educational programs as it is required to do by law under the Human Rights code?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, as the member knows, the Human Rights Commission has been dealing in fact very effectively with the cases which come forward which require investigation. He continues to refer to issues of backlog, but he has been consistently wrong when he has spoken about courts. We believe that maintaining the number of Human Rights commissioners, there are still officers to provide the investigation, that we will continue to provide this very important service to Manitobans. That is an area this government has made sure to preserve.

Home Care Program Labour Dispute

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The Minister of Health often refers to the client and the patient, and what we find today, once again, is that the health and well-being of Manitobans is being put at risk. We saw this last fall when the emergency services strikes took place and the lack of action from this particular government. Tomorrow we, in all likelihood, will see again another strike that is going to threaten that health and well-being.

My question to the Minister of Health is, the reason for this strike is because of this government's actions towards privatization. What of any significance is this Minister of Health going to do between now and tomorrow to avert this strike from taking place? Does he have any—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, my colleague the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) can tell the honourable member about—sorry. [interjection] The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should not interrupt the honourable member for Inkster when he is trying to get an important issue addressed. The member for Thompson from his seat is taking up all my time and it is a very important question the member for Inkster has asked. So if the honourable member for Thompson would kindly allow me to do so, I would like to answer the honourable member for Inkster's question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am sitting tentatively waiting for a response on behalf of thousands of clients who are out there. I would appreciate if the Minister of Health would cut back on some of the rhetoric and just indicate an answer.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, to quickly provide a response.

Mr. McCrae: Well, the problem was, Madam Speaker, I could not hear myself think with the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) nattering away over there from his seat and showing no respect whatever for the honourable member for Inkster and his question.

Anyway, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) has been working to attempt to resolve the issues. We have put an invitation to the union to come into the '90s, join the rest of the world and get involved by putting in a bid yourselves. You claim to offer competitive and quality services. Well, we would invite you, in fact, we would assist the union in getting involved in that way.

But I will ask the honourable member for Inkster the same question as I asked the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and that is, will he stand up for people who have Alzheimer's disease, people who have Parkinson's disease—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable Minister of Health that when the Speaker is on her feet attempting to maintain order that he please take his seat.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the questions, from my understanding of Beuchesne should be answered as briefly as possible and they should not incite debate. In the answer he asks a question. When we cannot respond with an answer, it incites debate. It is not appropriate for the minister to ask a question in his answer.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for The Maples indeed does have a point of order. I would remind the honourable Minister of Health—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health is baiting all members of the opposition—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I recognize that sensitivities and emotions are running high today, but I would ask for the co-operation of all honourable members in observing our rules.

Privatization—Tender Process

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, following the minister's response, let me then ask, is the minister prepared to take the next step and allow for nurses and organizations such as the Victorian Order of Nurses the opportunity to have preferential treatment in the bidding process? [interjection] Very good. Now do you understand the word?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I think the honourable member and I discussed this last week. The honourable member is not suggesting, is he, that in a bidding process that there be some kind of preferential treatment? When tenders are let out you put it in your tender that so and so and so and so are going to get special treatment. Is that what the honourable member is asking? I am not sure if I heard him right, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would suggest the Minister of Health listen very closely, and the question quite simply is, is the Minister of Health prepared to give preferential treatment for nonprofit organizations that want to be able to provide home care services for our seniors and other individuals who require this service in order to have a way of life that is reasonable in the communities? Is the Minister of Health prepared to—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. McCrae: So now, Madam Speaker, the honourable member wants to deal in a preferential way with people who will not put in an essential services agreement the fact that people with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and other serious disabilities and conditions—he wants to give special treatment to people who would treat our citizens that way. Not me, Madam Speaker.

* (1410)

Brandon General Hospital Speech Language Program

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a question for the Minister of Health as well.

As he knows, as I know, this matter has been discussed in the Westman area, but many constituents, including many teachers, continue to express their concern about the plans of the Brandon General Hospital to eliminate the Department of Communication Disorders, which will result in the discontinuation of speech and language services for children and adults in the area. The elimination of this program, of course, results from the, I believe it is a \$2.2-million cut of the BGH budget by the minister for this year.

Will the minister in this House now officially ensure the continuation of the speech language program at the Brandon General Hospital?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, my concern is that there be a speech language program. For me, it is consistent with health reform, in some circumstances that services not be delivered behind the brick and stone walls of a hospital building.

There is no problem in my mind with the proposal to remove that service from Brandon General as long as the service is provided somewhere else where it is accessible and convenient for the people of Brandon and southwestern Manitoba, but to this point no decision has been confirmed by the Department of Health that this is something that they ought to do, so that is where we are at. I do not want the honourable member—oh, he can make up his own mind, but it seems to me that it is not necessarily where a service is delivered in a community as long as it is delivered in a place that is accessible to those people who need it.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I thank the minister for the answer.

I would like to ask him by way of supplementary then, if it should happen that Brandon General Hospital discontinues this service, is his department or some other department of government prepared to fund another program that would provide the necessary services of speech therapy for both adults and children?

Mr. McCrae: Well, the only thing I will say today, until something more definitive comes along with respect to this matter, is that I would not want to see these services withdrawn or removed from the people who need them. That is why it is taking so long to get a decision about it

as to what will be the future of that type of service in the Brandon area. So when we know, the honourable member will know.

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, throughout Question Period we are hearing reference to the clients of home care, those who have Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, and the minister, in his more than decade-long vendetta against labour, seems to be forgetting one thing, and that is the interests of the clients.

I would like to ask the minister a very simple question, why the Minister of Health has never once sought the support nor gained the support for any kind of privatization, why he continues to push ahead with his ideologically vendetta-driven program to privatize home care when the clients of home care do not want to see it privatized.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, honourable members opposite can choose, day in and day out, to the exclusion of all other priorities, to fight the battles of their union boss friends, both here and outside and everywhere in the province. They can do that all they want, and they will pay a price for that when they turn their backs on ordinary Manitobans.

Privatization—Consultations

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): A supplementary, Madam Speaker.

What is so difficult for this minister to do in asking the question to the clients, to the patients with Alzheimer's, with Parkinson's, with multiple sclerosis, he keeps referring to? Why will he not ask them what they think? Is it because he knows they want to maintain a publicly run home care system?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The one thing about honourable members opposite that is consistent is their slavish adherence to the principals that are brought forward by their friends in the union movement. You know, it has been referred to by Professor Allen Mills as an organic fusion that exists

between the union bosses and honourable members opposite, and it is very evident here today.

Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism Reorganization

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, recently the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism issued an O/C creating an SOA for EITC. A new ADM is being sought for I, T and T and several senior managers have been reassigned or have left. Can the Minister of Industry, Trade and—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Sale: If government members opposite do not know what an SOA is, I guess we have a problem.

Madam Speaker: Would the honourable member for Crescentwood completely put his question.

Mr. Sale: Can the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism tell the House why all these changes are being made all of a sudden?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Sale: Did the minister receive any external advice on dealing with the sorry state of his department?

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, I do not accept the premise and, yes, I have.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, can the minister tell the House what firm provided the advice and what was the cost to the department?

Mr. Downey: Yes, Madam Speaker, Price Waterhouse, \$70,000.

Department of Highways and Transportation Engineering Layoffs

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Highways.

During the last session, this minister was asked about the status of Engineering Aides 2 in this province. These

approximately 150 full-time employees were required to take mandatory layoffs for the first time in their history. At that time, the minister claimed it was due only to early completion of construction projects. The minister failed to answer any questions about job security for these workers, and now we get an inkling of why that is so.

Can the minister inform the House why Engineering Aides 2 were offered severance packages in September of 1995 but not informed that their job would go from full time to seasonal work until March 12, 1996?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, the Department of Highways' mission is to build roads, and there is a tremendous demand for that in the province of Manitoba.

On the other hand, where there is work, we can hire people. Where there is not work, it is difficult to say, but we have to have the flexibility to lay the people off. Last summer we had a very good season in terms of the weather, being able to accomplish a lot of projects and spend the budget, in fact slightly overspend the budget. The principle is, when there is work, people can be employed; when there is not work, it is difficult to do it.

I would like to also remind the member that we have recalled those people. In Saskatchewan and British Columbia they have laid off over 200 people in the Department of Highways in both provinces. We have chosen not to do that.

* (1420)

Mr. Jennissen: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question to the same minister is, can the minister explain why the Department of Highways did not file a 1996 work reduction plan with UIC? Because the aides who opted for severance were told by directors that they would be eligible for UIC when severance ran out and now find that they are not eligible.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, the member asks a very technical question. I am sure we will be into Estimates someday and he will have an opportunity to get the detail from the management in the department.

Mr. Jennissen: Can the same minister explain why, since the privatization of roadside highway mowing in

1989, the wildlife-vehicle collisions have increased from 2,000 annually to 6,000, a threefold increase?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, I think it is fairly straightforward. There is a tremendous expansion, particularly in the deer herd, in fact basically all wildlife, but particularly the deer herd. The expansion is very evident to those people who travel rural Manitoba. That is the reason why there are more incidents of accidents.

Regional Health Boards Appointments

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the Minister of Health knows there are two sexes and the health care of each varies. Furthermore, common sense and respectful process suggests that the best way to protect the health care needs of each is to hear from stakeholders and advocates, both women and men.

It is in this context that I ask the Minister of Health to confirm or deny whether the appointed chairs of his regional health boards, nine out of 10, and possibly 10 out of 10, are men.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member may know of the process that led to the selection of the board members. As I have acknowledged in the past, it would have been better, in my view, had we been able to appoint more women, both as chairs and as members. We also, though, had to review all of the circumstances that were part of that process, one of them being the nominations that came in, the number of nominations of men and the number of nominations of women. We also had to look at other factors, but I am not going to tell the honourable member that I am pleased with that set of circumstances as she has laid out.

Madam Speaker, we had the names of people before us who were nominated by facilities, organizations and fellow citizens, and decisions were made based ultimately on the best people for the jobs.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the Minister of Health, we are not pleased with his appointments either.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Osborne was recognized for a supplementary question. Would she please pose her question.

Ms. McGifford: Will the minister immediately release and table in this House the names of the regional board members in order that he can assure us somewhat and assure women, aboriginal people and other groups that their health care needs will be fully represented and recognized?

Mr. McCrae: I share the goals laid out by the honourable member in her question.

Madam Speaker, we are working on the last round of appointments, and we are trying to address those shortfalls that existed at the end of the first round of appointments. I hope that we can address them all. I do not know if we can address them all, but I will certainly try my best to ensure that all the appropriate people in Manitoba get the representation that they should have.

Woman Representation

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Can the minister tell Manitoba women who will advocate for the following: breast cancer and other female cancers, gynecology and obstetrics, reproductive technology, eating disorders? I am only citing a few of women's special health needs.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Those matters are indeed important. That is why we are pleased to have been the government that brought in the province-wide breast screening program located at Misericordia General Hospital and at Brandon General Hospital with future further development in Thompson for our breast screening program.

The other initiatives in women's health in my department have been supported by this government. I am pleased about those things too, and I think the honourable member would be too. Indeed, throughout Manitoba we know that there are women's health issues that are real and require appropriate attention from the new regional governing authorities in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

I am not certain why three people are standing simultaneously, but I would remind all honourable members that we are still on Routine Proceedings. It is Members' Statements.

Point of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, just to seek clarification, my intentions are to introduce a matter of urgent public importance. Would this be the opportune time to do it or do we wait till after Members' Statements?

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, it is definitely not the appropriate time at this point in the Routine Proceedings. As soon as I start Orders of the Day, it is very much in order to start and move a MUPI.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Tartan Day

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, as the MLA for Sturgeon Creek, I am pleased to rise in the House today. Nine days ago the Legislative Building was host to Manitoba Tartan Days, a wonderful festivity put on by the Manitoba Highland Dancers' Association Incorporated under the direction of Deloree McCallum.

Manitoba Tartan Day acknowledges the role that the Selkirk Settlers and Scots played in the establishment of Manitoba during the early 1800s. This day has as much significance to the Scots as St. Patrick's Day has to the Irish. After all, the Scots were one of the four founding cultures in Manitoba, and it is fitting that we set aside a day to recognize the role that Scottish Manitobans played in our history and which they continue to play.

Fittingly, Manitoba Tartan Day is also a legislated day. With the encouragement of the Scottish community, I introduced private members' Bill 206 into the Legislature. This bill added Section 6.1 of The Coat of Arms, Emblems and Manitoba Tartan Act stating that April 6 in each year is declared to be Manitoba Tartan Day.

The private members' bill that I introduced received Royal Assent on July 11, 1994. The tartan itself is a

wonderful collage of colours that embodies a multifaceted message. Dark red squares represent the Red River Settlement and fur trade posts which developed many of Manitoba's urban centres; green squares for the rich natural resources of our province; azure green lime for Thomas Douglas V, Earl of Selkirk and founder of the Red River Settlement in Winnipeg; that where the blue lines intersect a fitting symbolism of the forks at the Red River and Assiniboine River, site of the first permanent settlement; dark green lines for the women and men who have enriched the life of our province; golden lines for the Manitoba picturesque grain crops and farm produce; and white squares to represent Manitoba's winter snows.

Madam Speaker, it is our honour to be part of the Scottish heritage of the magnificent multicultural Manitoba.

* (1430)

Rise in Crime

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): I wish to make a statement on the rising level of crime and violence in the city specifically and in the province generally.

Auto theft, mugging, physical attacks, drug dealing, child prostitution have risen as a result of this government's neglect. Innocent people who live in the areas of the city are subjected to constant fear daily for their property, their safety and their lives. This is obviously a very undesirable situation that should not be tolerated. The Tory government has proven itself unsuccessful in crime prevention. It seems to have tolerated rampant criminal activity in our community.

What are the facts, Madam Speaker, with respect to the budgetary action of this government relating to the issue of crime and violence? This Tory government has cut funding to the Department of Justice by 2.5 percent. The Victim Assistance Program was cut by 6 percent. It also cut Adult Corrections by 7 percent and Community Corrections by 7 percent.

As a result of this neglect, Madam Speaker, what are the other consequences to the other aspects of city life? Insurance companies apparently have red-lined much of the inner city and this has lowered the value of property leading to inner urban decay. This is in addition to the budget cuts on family services, on child care, on

education and health care. All of this contributed to the sense of alienation and hopelessness felt by the inner city residents.

As a result of this awful sense of anxiety, this last Saturday, April 13, the people have spoken. They got together to discuss the issue. After listening to their heartbreaking stories in daily fear, I was led to the conclusion that this government has to do something about criminal activity in the city and in this province. Thank you.

Snowfire Seeds Inc.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge another example of the entrepreneurial spirit that is taking hold and driving the economy of Manitoba, and particularly the constituency of Morris.

Later this month, Ken Dyck and his family will officially open a new \$250,000 sunflower seed processing plant in Domain under the name of Snowfire Seeds Inc. Madam Speaker, this is an initiative that was undertaken to add value to an already existing grain and seed farming operation, and is only one of the many instances of Manitobans looking for and finding opportunities in our economy.

Madam Speaker, the seeds that are processed at this plant will find a market in Europe and the Far East and will employ a staff of 11 people at full production. This is only one example of how rural Manitobans are taking up the challenge that this government has issued and are diversifying our rural economy and creating jobs for all Manitobans.

This is the type of entrepreneurial spirit that is driving our rural economy to new levels, and it is a type of initiative that has resulted in the creation of over 9,000 new jobs in Manitoba over the first three months of this year. This is almost as many jobs as were created all of last year, which in itself was a strong year for Manitoba's economy.

It is the kind of news, Madam Speaker, that the members opposite continually try to discount and dismiss, despite the fact that it is Manitobans themselves who are benefiting from it. While the members of the

opposition continue to paint a dark and pessimistic picture, Manitobans are experiencing hope and renewed excitement in their economic future. Through sound fiscal management, this government has created the economic climate for this growth and Manitobans have responded and are taking charge of their own future.

I congratulate and encourage Mr. Dyck on his initiative, as well as all those Manitobans who are answering the challenge and creating growth and prosperity in Manitoba.

Holocaust Awareness Week

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, starting today and running until next Sunday is Holocaust Awareness Week. The Holocaust was the planned destruction of an entire people, and for this reason it is important to remember and mourn the 6 million Jews who were killed during World War II. Tomorrow evening is the beginning of Yom Hashoa and the official World Day of Mourning for these people who underwent unimaginable pain and torture in their struggle simply to survive and to live.

It is important that governments all over the world and in every jurisdiction become sensitive to the discriminatory actions against minorities. Gerda Frieberg, the founder of the Holocaust Education and Memorial Centre in Toronto believes that cultural oppression is a global issue today because the world allowed the prosecution of Jews in concentration camps during the Second World War. All governments and people must recognize that political legitimacy does not necessarily justify all actions undertaken by a government.

In recognition of Holocaust Awareness Week, I am urging and I am sure all members are aware of the many activities taking place in this city over that week, and I urge with all of us that we shall never forget the terrible destruction and pain of the Holocaust and pass it on to our children and to generations henceforward. I urge all members to be very aware of the implications of Holocaust Awareness Week.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Home Care Services

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, our Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) announced today that he has appointed a conciliator in an effort to avert a strike of the Manitoba home care attendants. It is unfortunate that despite our government's effort to achieve a postponement of the MGEU strike deadline tomorrow at 6 a. m., this has not happened. Our government has repeatedly sought an approach that would protect home care clients from this dispute. It is these individuals who should be and must be put front and centre. These individuals are being used as pawns.

Our government has offered to MGEU, presented on Friday, April 12, a status quo collective agreement for 12 months. The contracting of home care attendants will be to a maximum of only 25 percent, home care attendants will be allowed to vote on this settlement offer and an invitation to the union to submit its own bid for one of the contracts, in which case we would assist in the preparation of the business plan, but the opposition members are protecting their union bosses. The rejection by the MGEU of all aspects of this offer as well as their offer to provide services to only those individuals who are terminally ill is a slap in the face of the home care client.

We have been accused today in this House for failing to act in the interest of the client, that the path our government has chosen is as a result of ideology. They are correct. Home care reform is a result of ideology, the ideology that represents the best care for the client and the people in need of home care. That is who we protect and that is who we want to service, and we do care as a government. The facts about the new home care initiative are clear. Only 25 percent of the services in the city of Winnipeg will be affected. There will be no changes in service to anybody and the protection of the home care client, not the protection of the union bosses, is what we care about.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Home Care Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that under Rule 27 the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public

importance, namely the threat to the health care system posed by the government's plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I believe I should remind all members that under subrule 31(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other party in the House is allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beauchesne's Citation 390, "urgency" in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not the subject matter of their motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

* (1440)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, there can be no other urgent or important matter that affects Manitobans more than the state of our health care, particularly those who are unable to leave their homes or require treatment in their homes with respect to the provision of home care services.

Even though we are in the Budget Debate, this matter is of such significance ~~because~~ all members will not have the opportunity to speak this afternoon—that I am asking for an opportunity for all members to discuss in the House the implications of the government's decision to privatize home care, which has put in place a process that will undermine and destroy the home care system that has been built up in this province since the 1970s.

Let us be perfectly clear as to what is at stake here. What is at stake is not the minister attacking individuals; we can live with that. What is at stake may be the friends of the government who will get big-time contracts; we can put that aside. What is at stake here is the issue of the delivery of home care services to patients in the city of Winnipeg.

As we speak, we are moving towards a deadline in terms of strike. All the government has to do is say they

will put on hold their plans to privatize. All the government has to do is say, we will consult with the patients, we will consult with the workers, we will consult with Manitobans, we will see that the privatization plan is impractical, unworkable and inappropriate. Then the strike will be averted and we will have no difficulty.

But members, by steadfastly sticking to their ideology, unsupported by any documentation, any evidence, any study, any report, to privatize—unsupported, on a wing and a prayer and their friends—they are attempting to privatize home care services and have forced us into a situation where it is not just the workers who are upset with this, it is the clients—to a person—it is the clients. It is the Parkinson's disease patients, it is the Alzheimer's patients, it is the MS patients, who the minister flows around and tries to turn into political pawns, who are opposing the initiative of this government to privatize their service.

Let members opposite have a chance to debate in this House, and with the public of Manitoba, the privatization. That is what we require, a chance for members on that side of the House to debate and put on the record their position, what their constituents are telling them, what the home care patients in their constituencies are telling them. That is what Manitobans need in terms of the debate in this Chamber.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan, to quickly complete his remarks on the urgency of the matter having to be debated immediately.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, patients' concerns are the most urgent and the most significant. All the government has to do is turn its back on its cabinet submission that was approved by cabinet to privatize home care; all the government will have to do. All the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has to do is say he will put on hold their plans for privatization, and we will not be facing the situation we are facing where patients will suffer the consequences.

Madam Speaker, members opposite ought to have an opportunity to debate this issue with members on this side of the House and hear what the patients are actually

saying, hear what the workers are actually saying, hear what is at stake in this debate. We would laud the government if they had the political courage and the political face to say, yes, we made a mistake; yes, we will put on hold their privatization plan; yes, we can avoid the strike; we can avoid the difficulties by simply putting on hold our privatization plan. That is what the debate is required for. As we move—and I noticed that members on the opposite side are nodding in the affirmative and I think will support the motion to have an opportunity to debate.

The public has not had a chance to debate. The clients have not had a chance to debate. The workers have not had a chance to debate. At least we members of the Legislature ought to have an opportunity to debate this issue here in the Chamber of Manitoba. So I urge all members to support this motion, provide those patients, provide those workers, with an opportunity to have their voices heard in this Chamber, express their opinion in this Chamber, so all Manitobans will understand what the ramifications are of the government's plan and the government's proposal to privatize home care services in the city of Winnipeg and ultimately throughout the province of Manitoba. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I would ask for leave. I am sure if you can confer with the government House leader and opposition House leader that there is a will to give me leave in order to address this particular emergency debate—given that I will then withdraw mine.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Inkster have leave to address the urgency of the debate? [agreed]

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): If he is prepared to withdraw his motion for a matter of urgent public importance, which I think he did, but if that is the case, then fine.

Madam Speaker: That is my understanding. Is that accurate? The honourable member for Inkster will have five minutes to address the urgency of the debate.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, and, indeed, I will withdraw the emergency debate request that the Liberal caucus had put forward. I think that in itself says a lot in terms that you have both opposition parties that

have seen the opportunity to have an emergency debate, see that in fact it is very much so a legitimate matter of urgent public importance.

Tomorrow morning we could have home care service workers out walking on picket lines, and this will have a very dramatic impact on the health and well-being of hundreds of Manitobans throughout the province. This will be our last opportunity to have this sort of a debate prior to the strike actually taking place. The Estimates actually will occur after the potential for this strike to begin, and in terms of the Budget Debate, we have three or four members that will likely be contributing this afternoon to that process.

Madam Speaker, that does not allow for this Chamber and the MLAs that have expressed concerns regarding the government's decision regarding the pending strike, does not allow for us collectively to be able to suggest potential solutions for the government to articulate why it is that they feel that they have to take the position that they have.

Madam Speaker, I would cite specifically Question Period today where I posed a question to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), where the Minister of Health was really not in tune or did not really have any idea in terms of what it is that we were attempting to propose to this government to take under consideration.

Madam Speaker, the reason why this strike is going to occur is because this government has seen fit to privatize home care services. The government needs to rethink this idea and to put on the table other potential alternatives that will at least have this strike put off. What I suggested today, for example, was to see a commitment from this government that would ensure that home care services that are delivered would be delivered by nonprofit organizations or at least allow the opportunity for nonprofit organizations to be in a better position to be able to deliver these services.

If this government is so bent on getting out of home care service and the delivery of those services, then at least open their minds, the collective minds of the Conservative caucus, and allow for the nonprofit groups to have that opportunity to be able to pick up the void that this government wants to create in terms of the delivering of this program.

Madam Speaker, the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) talked about the conciliator being appointed today, and maybe what we should do is hear about some of the different ideas that not only opposition members have but also government members might have. We should attempt to do whatever is possible, ultimately, I would argue, to prevent this strike from occurring.

We cannot blame the workers. The workers are not to blame for this, Madam Speaker. We have to be very clear on this. It is the government who has thrown this, without any consulting, in the laps of the clients, and time and time again we hear the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) asking all members of this Chamber to take into consideration the clients.

I would ask and request and appeal, if you like, to all of the government members to listen to what the Minister of Health has said, in particular, the government House leader, because, if the consensus of this Chamber is that this is an urgent matter, you will take that into consideration. I ask the government House leader to acknowledge what the Minister of Health has said: Put the client first. Let us all put the client first. Let us allow for this emergency debate today in hopes that we will be able to prevent a strike, which is going to have a very dramatic impact on the clients, from taking place tomorrow.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be able to comment on this, given that we will now, as a Liberal Party, not introduce our matter of urgent public importance as a result.

* (1450)

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing some difficulty hearing the speakers address the urgency of this debate, and a MUPI is indeed a very important matter.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, as I was about to say, the question of a matter of urgent public importance is indeed a serious matter and should only infrequently be brought

to this Chamber, because it is so important and ought not to be abused. It ought not to be used for partisan politics. It ought not to be used for grandstanding. It ought not to be used for a host of things, but should be dealing with the question of urgent public importance.

Madam Speaker, we have been in this House since the 2nd of April. We have had an opportunity every single day since the 2nd of April, Madam Speaker, to debate this issue and, in fact, some members have. But we have known that this privatization or commercialization or whatever you want to call it has in fact been around since before the House sat, so all members opposite knew this issue was pending. Members opposite also knew that strike votes were being taken, and so on. So the question of urgency I submit is not there.

They have had that opportunity and they will have that opportunity depending upon your ruling again later this afternoon. They will have an opportunity to discuss this issue in Health Estimates which the opposition House leader and myself have agreed would start tomorrow right after Routine Proceedings. With all of those things related to the issue of urgency, I do not see where a case has been made at all for the question of urgency.

Now that does not take away for a minute the fact that withdrawal of services was a very serious matter. It does not for a minute take away the fact that certain individuals who were receiving home care may not receive that same level of home care because of those withdrawals of services.

But, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter remains we have had this opportunity to debate it. A matter of urgent public importance ought to be dealt with at its earliest opportunity, which was not. They have had two weeks to introduce a motion such as this and have not done so and have left it to the last minute. So I submit it is not quite so urgent as the members opposite would have us believe or rather they may have other concerns related to the particular issue, but I submit this is out of order and ought to be ruled so.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Before ruling on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) should be debated today, I

believe I should draw to the attention of the House that the provisional rules recently adopted by the House will impact a matter of urgent public importance for the balance of this session.

First, the notice requirement has been extended from 60 to 90 minutes, that is, the Speaker must now have a minimum of 90 minutes notice that a member intends to move a motion that the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance. Second, the ruling of the Speaker on whether or not the motion is in order is not subject to appeal, and the third change is that the overall debate on a matter of urgent public importance is limited to two hours.

Turning now to the motion proposed today by the honourable member for Kildonan which reads, that the ordinary business of the House be set aside in order to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the threat to the health care system posed by the government's plans to privatize home care services, I am advising the House that the required notice of 90 minutes was indeed given. Provisional Rule 31 and Beauchesne Citations 389 and 390 set out the other conditions that are necessary for a matter of urgent public importance to proceed, is the subject so pressing that ordinary opportunities for debate will not allow the matter to be brought on early enough and will the public interest suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention.

It is my understanding that privatization of home care services will be begun in July. The honourable member will have then opportunity to discuss the matter during the upcoming review of departmental Estimates. Other opportunities to discuss the issue are available to the member, exist in his use of a grievance and in his use of a member's statement.

While I am cognizant of the importance of the issue of privatization of health care, I do not believe that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not discussed today. Therefore, I must rule that because there are other opportunities, including consideration of Health Estimates, to discuss the matter, and because there is still time for the House to debate the matter, the honourable member for Kildonan's (Mr. Chomiak) matter of urgent public importance cannot proceed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a couple of matters of House business, firstly with the question of Estimates, I have had discussions with my colleague the opposition House leader with respect to Estimates and I will table a schedule of those Estimates, hopefully a little later this afternoon, to advise all members when the Estimates will occur, but so people are aware, we will have Executive Council Estimates in the Chamber starting tomorrow as first item under Orders of the Day. Secondly, we will have Health occurring in the committee room at the same time. I understand that the Executive Council Estimates may take two or three days, in which case Health would remain in the committee room until Executive Council is done here in the Chamber, then we will switch and have the Health department come in here to finish their Estimates, following which Education will start in the committee room.

A little confusing, Madam Speaker, but that seems to be the way it is best arranged so far.

Madam Speaker, also, as I did announce the starting date for the fall sitting as September 16 earlier, I also want to announce that Public Accounts will sit this Friday, April 19, from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. to discuss various issues related to that committee. I had not had the opportunity of talking to the opposition House leader with respect to this call of the committee, so if there is a difficulty perhaps he can let me know. [interjection] Public Accounts. Well, if there is a problem at some point—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the government House leader's last advice to the House, you will require leave because, technically, the House is sitting. Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted to have Public Accounts sit on this Friday morning from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, under our rules, Friday is to be a committee day, but I had forgotten that the technical requirements dealing with that brings it up to the fact that the House is actually sitting. Thank you, that is all I have.

BUDGET DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in further amendment thereto.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I had actually anticipated maybe getting into the debate on Friday, but we ran out of time at that time. So it is a pleasure that I can participate once again in a Budget Debate, having had the occasion to do this many, many times. [interjection] Well, we had some sessions in between; I think it could probably be No. 20, in that area, somewhere along the line.

Before I start my remarks, Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the Committee on Rules that basically came up with new proposals as to how we will be operating in the House this year. I have to say that I personally am elated with it. It took a lot of effort. I think it has been in the making for many years. When I think back to the rules when I first got elected in 1977, we would sit three nights a week, sometimes four based on committee work. We would sit on Friday afternoons, and we would have no time limits really on the debates in Estimates. We would be sitting till two, three o'clock at night sometimes. Oh boy, I will tell you something, I was chairman at that time, and what a frustrating experience. So I want to compliment all members of the Legislature for having cooperated with the changes in the rules. Changes come very hard here because it is always a matter of making sure that no members get offended or that there is an impact on them.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

I wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if all of us can remember what we did last year at this time.

An Honourable Member: Yes, we were fighting an election.

Mr. Driedger: We all were trying to win an election. Of course, the election was on April 25. It was quite a summer. We had the election on April 25, had a short break, and then we got into the House business. We had a break for the summer, which I thought was good, and then we came back and further worked with our business of the House. The one thing I think that some members sometimes forget a little bit is the fact that less than a year ago we did have an election, and the people of Manitoba at that time made their decision and elected Premier Filmon and his colleagues to form government again for another four or five years. Seemingly, in the debate that has taken place in the last little while, it seems that somebody has forgotten that from time to time. The members of the opposition feel that we should go back out there and ask for a re-endorsement again. I will tell you something, that time will come. That time will come.

* (1500)

The one thing I found interesting is the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), in this time around, has been very personal. We have not had that ideological debate that takes place very often in a Budget Debate or in a Throne Speech Debate, but the Leader of the Opposition—I have never seen him actually as agitated, as attacking in personalities, as he has been this time, but then I thought about it and it makes sense. It makes sense. I mean, if we had a leader and he had lost three elections in a row, I think we probably would have booted him out already. I think possibly what makes the Leader of the Opposition so edgy at this point in time is the fact that I think he hears knives being sharpened in the background—can you hear that—the knives being sharpened not only in the back of him but beside him as well maybe.

It is serious business. Politics is serious business. We take it seriously, and so do the NDP, the people in the opposition. When a leader has lost three elections, there

is concern. There should be concern. I keep facetiously calling to the Leader of the Opposition from time to time, watch your back, watch your back, but this is the truth. It is time to do that, and that is why I think he is getting on a more personal basis when he attacks. He knows that he has run his course, to some degree, and that there are people in there that want to make changes, so I think that creates some of the anxiety.

Related to the budget itself, on the day of the budget, I got contacted by our local media, and I told him I thought this was one of the strongest economic statements that I have ever heard in this House, and I can recall many times the budget, the Ministers of Finance making their speeches, both when I was in opposition as well as on the government side. Of course, I always preferred the ones when I was on the government side, but I will tell you something, it is a very strong statement that basically has been made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I realize, due to circumstances, that my remarks are going to be very, very brief today. I had things that I wanted to actually put on the record, but there is always opportunity here. I want to talk generally about the differences of philosophy. I wanted to also talk about the impact of the budget on my department, and I also wanted to talk, to some degree, about issues that affect our seniors.

I changed my comments from when I started to now because certain circumstances started that I was exposed to on the weekend where it was related to seniors. I was called to a seniors housing unit, where people expressed concerns. It was not the home care issue that was a matter of concern; it was a matter of, the Council of Canadians had sent out a brochure to senior people saying, give us money because your pensions are being threatened, and we will fight for you. It created a lot of concern out there because people thought that, you know, I have to send money so that I can have my pension.

Many people do not fully understand that this is a lobby group, the Council of Canadians, and basically, when they send out these forms, they say, fill this out and you have to send so and so much money. We will process it so we can look after your pensions for the future. You know, it really upset me because my mother-in-law was one of the people that got all concerned about this. She is 85 years old. She says, why do I have to

send money so I can keep getting a pension? They did not understand it. It is that kind of thing that I basically wanted to address, to some degree, and I think there should be a law against allowing the fearmongering that happens to our people—[interjection] Yes, sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to raise that kind of an issue, and I hope people that have this correspondence, by and large, will acquaint themselves with the circumstances. It does not affect their pensions. They do not necessarily have to send money. There are other issues that are related to seniors that I will take and address at some other time. Thank you very much for the opportunity for the few remarks.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to represent my constituents in this debate on the budget of Manitoba. It is in budget, I think, that we see the real priorities of the government. It is here that we see where the ruling political party really has its allegiances and its political debts.

Tory throne speeches, ostensibly where governments indicate their general direction, have become famous for their orgy of self-congratulation, but the last one I began to wonder if even the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) could keep a straight face as the clichés trickled forth. It is therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a notable contrast in a budget speech. What is written here calls forth neither amusement nor mockery. It is a deadly serious business for the people whom I represent.

The general direction of the budget is consistent with the path the Tories have been taking for the past few years. Simply put, it consists of a kick at the poor, a swipe at the public service and a handshake and a pat on the back for the friends of the government. As I say this, I think it is characterization which most Manitobans now would recognize. Three years ago, that might not have been the case, but now it is. I know of one family this Easter who looked around a normally crowded dinner table and counted up to seven people who in the past year had left the province, all of them young families with good education. They had high hopes that they knew could no longer be realized here. How many families are in this position? I do not think it is an isolated event, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Even a cursory glance at the statistics for interprovincial migration show that here is one chart

where Manitoba ranks very highly in the loss of our young and our well-educated.

They are leaving most immediately for jobs, of course, but they are also leaving a province which has become a very different kind of society from the one in which they grew up. A budget, a public policy which kicks the poor, rewards the rich and has no vision other than the low-wage, low-skill economy has now been made visible so often that it does not require my speech or opposition press releases to explain it. The home care workers whose jobs will be lost and whose remaining wages will be cut are well aware of the impact of this budget. The seniors whose home care and Pharmacare costs will rise are well aware of the impact of this budget. They know who is to pay for the high cost of drugs; the high prices manufactured in part by the Mulroney charter for the multinational drug companies. It is they who will pay and those who are sick. A tax on the sick is a phrase that did not need to be conjured up by any opposition member. It is there in the language of the coffee shop and the street.

The dismal state of the Manitoba economy, particularly in public sector losses and in lack of construction, is one of the reasons that this family is smaller this Easter. Engineers, architects, builders, construction workers will tell you the same thing. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am always struck as I cross the bridge over to Norwood, the bridge of the two forts, of the Forks, by the amount of public interest in that construction. It is probably the only time some of those young children have ever seen the heavy equipment and the cranes. How different is British Columbia or Alberta. No wonder the exodus continues.

The cuts to the public sector are clearly ideologically driven, and they are also driving our young and our well-educated elsewhere. They see no hope here and no expectation of change, and the budget has confirmed that. Where is the nurse with the university education, research experience, teaching experience, to go? The government has an answer. Five dollars an hour for the private home care services. The de-skilling of the labour force is one of the hallmarks of this government in health as it is in other areas of the public service. It is an end game, it is a vicious circle, and it ends in emigration or in the desperate and dispiriting descent into the world of welfare.

Many of us in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are fortunate. Like many of our generation we grew up in a world where public education was valued, where public service was something one aspired to, where public policy sought to distribute the wealth of the land in some form of rough equity. It was not Utopia, it was not perfect, but its ethos was one of a recognition of some age-old principles that we are our brothers' keepers and that we should do unto others as we would be done by. Some may choose to associate these with Christianity. They are present in many religions of course and I make no claims for their particular origin. What I do want to underline however is that I believe nearly a decade of Tory budgets have made Manitoba a meaner and less cohesive society. Public health, medicare, public schools, accessible universities and colleges, an active public sector enabled many of us, many Manitobans to lead healthy and productive lives.

Those opportunities are being reduced for young people, and many are voting with their feet. Those who cannot or choose not to leave face in many cases a future in part that will depend on welfare, and what is evident in my constituency is that many in the middle class who might, by reason of education or skills, have thought themselves immune from the prospect of welfare are now finding that it is indeed a real prospect. The middle class is dividing into two. One small part of it will survive and the larger portion is becoming part of the "flexible labour force," the part-time labour force with no security and no benefits who are gradually sinking in status as they struggle to keep up mortgage payments through their bouts of unemployment. The prospect of welfare is there for a much larger segment of our society than it was five or 10 years ago. The parallel crises of welfare and unemployment are, in fact, worsening.

* (1510)

As Martin Woolacott [phonetic] wrote in a recent article: Cutting welfare has become almost automatic as the layoffs mount up. It is insidiously and continuously presented as the bitter pill we have to swallow if things are to get better. He laments the widely held belief that money and jobs are saved by cutting welfare. The certain result of less welfare spending is higher spending by the state and by individuals on other forms of security, financial and physical. The agencies that spend may not be the same, but the spending goes on.

Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was at a meeting in Gimli this last week, where exactly those sentiments were expressed by somebody who asked the question, which areas of government budget have been increased, and, of course, it is the Department of Justice and the social services budget. Unfortunately, there was not a Conservative of the 31 of the members opposite who was prepared to come and defend their policy at that particular meeting, which was something that does not surprise but still, I think, shocks, given the issues in education and in health care that people are so concerned about.

How important it is then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to recognize the significance of the attacks on the poor which have been generated by the new right, now baring its teeth in Manitoba. Again, the government cannot dismiss this as merely the talk of social democrats. It is evident in rural Manitoba in the coffee shops and among the families of those who face shorter benefit times from their unemployment insurance, the short cut to welfare.

How has the government attacked the poor? Do I have time in this speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to count the ways? Unfortunately, I do not, but most evident is the 20 percent cut to single people who are on welfare. There are corresponding cuts to single mothers with children over six and to families with no children. The fundamental assumption behind these cuts is that people on welfare do not want to work, and there are jobs out there for which they are qualified. This is so far from reality that if I did not sit in this Chamber and listen to it from the other side of the House, I would be hard put to believe that any sensible person could argue that.

Parts of my constituency have deep pockets of unemployment and welfare. What are they now facing as a result of this budget? Well, one woman has taken the trouble to show me exactly what it means. She is on welfare because she is ill with a recurring illness that makes stable work difficult. She has been told that she must face a 20 percent cut in her income, to be taken out of a food budget, a clothing budget and a transport budget. She was fortunate enough to have that. But a 20 percent cut out of something which was keeping her at a very bare minimum is something that is very, very hard to bear, and, on top of that, she must now search for work on that and use a transport budget which, I think, is about 58 cents a day.

It is the slyness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the secrecy of the government in these cuts, which is one of the most distasteful things about it. Unlike the Harris government, the Filmon government will not cut rent rates. They saw the problems Harris had to face in Ontario when he did that, and they decided that that was not the way they were going, but would they tell Manitobans this? Not at all. Several calls from our office to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) produced no answer. The deputy minister did not even know, even after the budget. We are still working out the details, they said. Is it incompetence or is it something worse? Did they know and try to hide the truth? Why does this government believe that the truth delayed is the truth concealed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, can there be any doubt in the minds of Manitobans that what young people need in Manitoba is education and training, but there are clearly doubts in the government's mind? There can be few governments, even right-wing ones, which have so systematically eliminated training opportunities. Does anyone remember New Careers? How many hundreds of Manitobans were trained under that program? Entire families were assisted. New skills were added. Basic literacy was dealt with and permanent changes made in families and communities.

Remember the Gateway Program, diluted and then gutted by this government? Remember Student Social Allowances which allowed people to complete their Grade 12, the first step on the ladder of change? Remember access programs when they were accessible? Remember colleges and universities where students and staff thought they were working in the long-term public interest? Do we remember student fees that could be paid for in a summer's work? Well, that relationship no longer exists. This year the government, in spite of its promise, will not have in place a fee policy, or at least, should we say, their fee policy is in effect to leave it to the market. Fees will increase again and again, and this time more unequally across the disciplines and the faculties, but then does equity, does accessibility concern this government? Apparently not.

I was struck, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the speech of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) last Thursday, and it is interesting to have it in writing, and I congratulate Hansard, in fact, on producing this so quickly.

But the Minister of Agriculture wanted to talk about wealth production, and he spoke of wealth production in terms of the farmer, the miner, the businessman, but not, he said, education, not, what he called, simply the service industry. I wondered if indeed I had heard him right. This was not just a bolt from the blue from the Minister of Agriculture. This is a bolt from the 18th Century. This is an 18th Century physiocrat presentation, quite perfectly placed in the mind of the Minister of Agriculture. How can it? Which century is this government living in? The creation and indeed the marketing of information is one of the fundamentals of the revolution in learning and the revolution in the economies globally at the end of the 20th Century. No wonder there is no support for education and accessibility and democracy of education from this government. They are still in the 18th Century. No wonder they want to talk about change. They have got a few centuries to make up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to add for a few minutes a little bit about the impact of this budget on my critic area of education. The heart of the matter, of course, of education funding was not dealt with in this budget. It is another area where the government deals with it outside the Legislature in funding announcements which somehow they do not want to include in their budget presentation. This year we saw a minus two cut, again, to public education. Every year since the Tories have been elected, the education funding has been below the level of inflation, and, apart from an election year, the past four years there have been clear-cut reductions every year.

I suppose in the next election year the Tories will try the same freezing, the same fine speeches on how devoted they are to education, but I think they should take warning because I do not think people believe it anymore. I think the trustees and the superintendents and the teachers and the parents who are seeing the impact on classrooms of these cuts year after year by a government which essentially washes its hands of education, I do not think they will buy it the next time. They will have to think of another promise to make with which to try and convey their sense of concern for education.

Over the last number of years we have seen a loss of teachers. Over 600 teaching positions have been lost in Manitoba. We have seen class sizes increase. We have seen the loss of assistance. We have seen less money

available for the number of special needs students who are in our schools. The minister and the government and the Premier seem to think that they can wash their hands of this. It is the trustees who make the difficult decisions. It is the trustees who must face their electors in the supermarket and on the street the next day. It is the trustees who must decide upon which programs are to be cut, which class size must be increased, and which special needs student must do without their aid or must share that aid with someone else. The trustees are bearing the brunt and the burden of this government's cuts. Again, it is the deception which is so unsettling and so unnerving.

One of the parents in one of the groups that I sat in with at the Weekend Parents' Conference in fact said very clearly at one point, you know, we can have all the best advisory councils in the world, we can have the best school plans in the world, but, when there are no resources for the classroom and when we see our classrooms losing resources and our class sizes increasing over the years, then the parents' advisory councils will have little impact.

* (1520)

There are fixed costs attached to education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they are increasing: the cost of textbooks; the cost of all the material related to distance learning and to communication with computers; the cost of fuel; the cost of building maintenance. Those are fixed costs, and they inevitably, over a period of years, will increase. But it is the minister again who has imposed cuts to public education, and those cuts inevitably come out of the classroom.

What I see developing in education is in fact a two-tiered education because the government has, and indeed they did announce this in the budget, increased the funding again to private schools, but there is a mystery here which the minister does not seem to want to resolve. It is not the mystery of the Manitoba school question, which I do not have time to deal with here—we will certainly be dealing with it in other places—but the mystery is, how much have the funds been increased to public schools? Where is the new agreement that the minister has made with the private schools? Why is the minister afraid to show us the new agreement she has reached with private schools? Why will the minister not table the new agreement she has made with private

schools? Why will the minister not tell us how much money is going to be given to private schools this year? Why will the minister not be straightforward? Why will she not table this new agreement?

It is a complete mystery to me why the numbers, why the information, why an agreement made on behalf of Manitobans is not available to Manitobans. Whom are they hiding it from? Whom do they think they can hide it from in the long run?

In post-secondary education, there is also a reduction that goes to the very heart of training and of the long-term development of our young people. What it adds up to is an attack on public sector and essentially an undermining of public schools and undermining of the accessibility of post-secondary education, a use of the state power to tip the balance to a privatized world, a world where it will matter whether you have money. It will matter who you are; it will matter who you know.

I think, as Manitobans look at the growth in food banks, as they look at the loss of opportunities for youth, as they look at increased taxation on those least able to bear it and as they look at the increasingly narrow and privatized world in health and education that this government has created, they will find it hard to recognize the Manitoba that they grew up in.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I want to first of all indicate that I have always appreciated the opportunity to participate in budget debate because budget debates allow us to debate, not only the particulars of any particular budgetary document, the question of revenues, expenditures, et cetera, but also the broader issues of public policy.

I have taken the opportunity, in preparing for today, not only to listen to a number of the speeches that have been made but also to read through Hansard and follow some of the commentary that has been made by members of all sides of this House.

I want to comment because I thought that there were a number of very good speeches. I particularly appreciated the speech of the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns). Regardless of any debate on the source of the member for Lakeside's ideas, I certainly believe that his speech was probably more in keeping with the tradition of budget

speeches, not only in this House, but other Houses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than perhaps some of us in this House who have less experience than our most senior member. Indeed, the debate over the Budget Debate should be over the broader principles. Unfortunately, at times, it seemed to be more a comparison, reading some of the speeches, of favourable columnists and what they had written that particular day or a few days before on the budget.

I saw a number of articles that were quite adroitly recycled on numerous occasions by members opposite. I realize, of course, the timing was rather appropriate because many of them spoke before the most recent article by someone I have a lot of respect for, but someone who is certainly not known as a New Democrat—Mr. Fred Cleverley. His comments, I think, probably would be good reading for many members opposite because he talked about the legitimate concerns that are being expressed to the government over health care issues, how the government has done little to persuade the public that home care delivered by a private organization will be as satisfactory to those receiving this care as under the present system. In fact, it said that “the government did not explain to the satisfaction of most Manitobans why the majority of them will lose the benefits they had become used to when buying prescription medication,” and referenced as well the fact that “the government’s failure to do so is probably a product of the arrogance that besets any government in power as long as the provincial administration has been.”

I throw that out because I do not believe debate should be over one’s favourable newspaper columns or not. It should be over the broader principles. But it is interesting, I think, that Mr. Cleverley, who is generally sympathetic with the government, would pinpoint to what I think is a very obvious situation with the government opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very interesting because we are seeing a consistent theme. Take health care. We are seeing the home care system that is one of the best systems in North America being privatized. We could quibble about the words. In fact, I know the government House leader actually used the word, the “p” word, privatization. I think most Manitobans know what this government is doing. It is what they perceive as privatization. But you know what is interesting, there have been several studies that say that the system works.

Statistically, our system is inexpensive, certainly in comparison to some of the mixed systems in British Columbia and others where there is already some significant private aspect to ownership. It saves a considerable amount of money. The average expenditure in home care for a home care client is approximately \$1,100. You look at a personal care home bed, it is \$20,000. So the arguments are very much in favour of the system that we have had, that has been a model for many other jurisdictions, I believe. It has been, in many studies, shown to be the best system.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have you noticed something, that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) does not want to engage in debate, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) does not, over the substance of the home care issue? The Premier, in fact, called one person, who is an expert in this area, and who is not a New Democrat, a New Democrat, as if that were some particularly disparaging comment, and had to then withdraw the comment because that individual was indeed not a New Democrat. But, rather than engage in that, the Minister of Health is doing the same thing. Accidentally, coincidentally, the Minister of Health is starting to get into his more-than-decade-long vendetta against the labour movement, against working people. I remember much of the same rhetoric that the member used when he was the so-called Labour critic for the Conservative Party when they were in opposition. Anyway, I note that because they have been particularly worked up that it is these unions—interesting how they ignore the clients—who want the current system maintained. They put that up.

In education it is much the same. Their paper on collective bargaining—which, if it were a trial balloon, I would suggest, is very much a lead balloon—has been trotted around the province by the deputy minister and a couple of MLAs who have been trying admirably—the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render)—trying to promote this, and it is a lead balloon. But, you know, is it coincidental that the group that I think this is targeted towards is the Manitoba Teachers’ Society. I want you to mark that down mentally for one moment, the MGEU, they talk about that, the Teachers’ Society.

Let us move to labour, and I want to talk about the so-called Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) because I do not believe this so-called Minister of Labour can even have

a straight face to use that term. I read his speech. I saw his comments. He talked about co-operation. But what is this government doing in labour? This government is now going to move with the fourth bill to roll back labour legislation.

Instead of dealing with workplace, safety and health and those type of issues, they are going to be dealing with what? Union contributions for political purposes. Is that not coincidental, Mr. Deputy Speaker? You add it up. What do you have? The MGEU, Manitoba Teachers' Society, labour in general, what do they all have in common? They all dared to speak out in the last election and raise issues of concern.

An Honourable Member: They support the NDP.

Mr. Ashton: The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), they all support the NDP. Well, I know of at least one, the labour movement generally does, and I am proud of that connection. But you know, it is interesting, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, all they did was say, think about education. That is enough, however, for this government to target them in this session of the Legislature and in this budget.

* (1530)

But you know what I think is particularly interesting is that they do not stop with this new agenda, I believe driven first and foremost by a spirit of a vendetta, but now they have wrapped themselves in the sort of corporate, right-wing rhetoric of one Mike Harris and Ralph Klein. I remember the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who used to deny any sort of affiliation whatsoever with Ralph Klein, now I believe is probably moving ahead in more of a right-wing direction than even some of those Premiers.

But you know what is interesting is how they are turning their back on the history of their own party. As I have gone throughout rural Manitoba talking to rural Manitobans and all Manitobans about the Manitoba Telephone System, for example, I will say to you, everybody, every community I have been to, support for the Manitoba Telephone System has been more than 90 percent. I have been in communities such as Morden. I have been in communities such as Neepawa. We have

been in Dauphin. We have been in Swan River. We have been in The Pas. We have been in Thompson, and we have received ballots from throughout rural Manitoba. Guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government has lost the way blazed by even its own forerunner, the Conservative party of 1908, most Manitobans are ready to deal with the challenges and changes in telecommunications with a publicly owned phone system.

But you know, there are other issues. It is the hog marketing board. We are finding in rural Manitoba we are getting many people coming to us—and let us put this charitably—they are not New Democrats. Many of them have never voted NDP in their life. Many of them have a tough time even talking to us. But guess what? They do not agree with this government. It is turning its back on the marketing system for hogs.

But what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask you, what is driving this wholesale renunciation of decades if not, I would suggest, more than a century of political thought by the so-called Conservative party? I realize there is an identity crisis now with the Reform Party and the Conservative party fighting over the right to be the only right-of-centre party in Canada. I am not going to get into that family squabble, but what has convinced them? Has it been some great philosophical idea? Has it been some great work of political philosophy? Has it been some inspiration? I suggest to you the answer was shown on the front page of the Free Press recently when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) indicated that what is driving his government are the wise words of a management guru who recently appeared in Winnipeg. I believe he charged \$250 for the privilege to hear him speak. I do not even want to mention the name. I do not want to publicize it any more than the Free Press already did. But our Premier is being inspired by this management guru, not the great thinkers of the Conservative party, not some great right-wing philosophical view of the current time, not even any type of inspiration other than a management guru.

I am really sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but where does the Premier (Mr. Filmon) believe he has the mandate from the people of Manitoba to do what he is doing? He was not elected to implement some of the drastic changes from not only his own party's philosophy, but his own stated philosophy. I remember when this Premier used to say, well, I am a pretty moderate person; I am middle of

the road. You know, I may be right-wing, but I am sort of, you know, a kind of gentler right-winger.

Home care, Pharmacare, public education, Manitoba Telephone System, hog marketing—Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a reason why I, in Question Period, said that this government was elected on a fraudulent campaign. It is because it is not even living up to its own campaign promises, let alone the philosophy of the Conservative Party.

I want to conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying there is a clear alternative, and it is a party that has always been based on principles. I make no bones about that, and my inspiration is not Steve Covey or any management guru, but none less than J. S. Woodsworth, who I believe summed up a philosophy that is timeless when he said what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.

This government was elected on a platform in the last election. They have broken many promises, but their greatest political sin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that I do not believe that they even represent many of the people that voted for them less than a year ago. It is because this is a government that is rudderless, it is government that has no guiding principle, and as one Fred Cleverley has pointed out, it has reached a level of arrogance that defines a government that is going to, in a very short period of time, get a very clear message from the people of Manitoba that they want not only this government to change its policies, they want a change in government. Thank you.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to have an opportunity to respond to the budget speech, the ninth budget introduced by this administration, and indeed I am absolutely delighted to be able to support the efforts of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). I want to congratulate him, as well as the members of Treasury Board, along with all members of government and indeed all of those within the public service who contributed to the preparation and development of this budget.

I also want to say that it reflects the input of hundreds of people from throughout the province who came out to public consultations that were chaired by the Minister of Finance, opportunities for them to share with us their

priorities, their goals, their own vision for the future of this province. Indeed, I think it was a very positive experience, as it has been for a number of years now, that these consultations have been held. I thank the Manitobans who contributed to this effort, because I think it is very, very important to us as publicly-elected officials, to us as government, to be able to hear from the people we serve, the people we represent throughout this beautiful province of ours.

This budget, of course, like every other budget, reflects I think the differences between members on this side of the House and members on the other side of the House. In fact, I might argue that this is one of the clearest indications of difference in philosophy, difference in approach and style to government that we have ever seen. I know in preparation for last year's election campaign, the thing that those of us on this side of the House wanted most was to be able to clearly differentiate ourselves from the alternatives that were offered by the opposition parties. We believed that if that happened, there was no question as to which choice that the voter would make. I believe that indeed was the case, and I believe that regrettably the members opposite have learned absolutely nothing from that process. In fact, they get further and further entrenched in their old ruts, in their old ways, in their old failed ideology, and we certainly have seen plenty of evidence of that thus far this session and certainly within the contributions to the throne speech that have been made by members opposite.

The budget, in my judgment, is the document that is probably the most significant policy statement of any government in any session of the Legislature. A friend of mine always used to say that every dollar spent by government is a policy statement, and indeed that is why the budget is so important in the context of an annual event, a debate in this Legislature. It is why I always enjoy the opportunity to rise in this House and to offer my perspective and my views and perhaps to counter some of the views expressed by members opposite.

* (1540)

The budget of course gives us, I believe, as Manitobans a great deal in which to be proud. It features what I have referred to in speeches in recent time, some of the most optimistic and positive trends in an economic sense than we have seen for decades in this province. Clearly the budget referred to that assessment of all of the

provinces in Canada that was conducted recently by the Conference Board of Canada and in a Manitoba context it said, Manitoba economy steamrolling ahead. That was, and the supporting documentation and information that is contained in that Conference Board report, a picture of a province that in my judgment has a solid economic foundation and in the Conference Board's judgment, a province that has excellent opportunities in the near term and foreseeable future, a province that is fiscally sound and a province that economically is becoming known as a very attractive place in which to invest and create your future. All of that, of course, is reflected, I believe, in the information that is contained in the budget and I will just hit some of the highlights as a preamble to the comments that I wish to make on the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Among many things, the budget portrays a very strong picture of job creation and new economic opportunity in Manitoba. Ten thousand net new jobs in Manitoba in 1995 led by 2.7 percent growth in private sector jobs. In addition to that, of course, there have been again in the first three months of this year an additional 9,000 jobs created in this province, so 1995 was tremendously strong; 1996 has started off on the same path. What is really interesting is that at the end of 1995, we had 19,000 more people employed in Manitoba than we had at the time we took office in April of 1988, but the shift that has taken place within that number is even more dramatic because we all know that in the public sector employment has been declining. In all of our Crown corporations, in our own public service here in Manitoba, in the federal public service in Manitoba and throughout the federal Crown corporations in Manitoba, there has been a major decline in jobs, but that has been more than made up for by the fact that the private sector has added 33,000 net additional jobs in that period of time, between April of 1988 and the end of last year. That is very significant because huge investment and huge job creation opportunities have resulted. I think that it is, as I say, as strong a picture of economic growth as we have ever seen, certainly in my recollection during my time in office here in the Legislature.

The job creation level of 1995, of course, was better than the national rate, and, in fact, it saw the largest decline in Manitoba's unemployment rate in over 30 years, the largest single-year decline. So it was a very significant year, 1995, added onto a continuum of several years of progress.

Now, the members opposite used to—and I remember the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) and I remember from time to time the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) or even the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) berating our government about youth unemployment rates, and I remind everyone that, in 1988 when we took office, the youth unemployment rate in Manitoba was 3 percent higher than the national average. It was one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Canada. As of 1995, we now have the lowest youth unemployment rate in Canada, and we are almost 3 percent below the national average rate for youth unemployment.

As regards population, I remember when the member for Brandon East used to put out his annual economic document. He always talked about population growth, and he always had a negative perspective on population growth. Our population growth, of course, was at a nine-year high in 1995 and continues a strong performance.

The interesting thing is that the strength of the economic performance is spread amongst virtually every area of the provincial economy. We could pick them out one by one and go through an analysis of what is happening in each one of those sectors. Agriculture, even in the last six months of 1995, we had announcements of almost a billion dollars in that field of value-added agriculture, new capital investment to take advantage of the opportunities that exist. The net farm income increased at double-digit rates for the third consecutive year, very significant in terms of what is happening in the agriculture economy.

If we were to turn to manufacturing, we find there, too, the strong performance in the increase in capital investment, the increase in manufacturing exports, and the increase in manufacturing employment levels. If we were to turn to mining, I know that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) has even written the odd column to his constituents in which he has referred to the fact that he was with us as we opened two new mines last fall. Regrettably, he chose, in that kind of hangdog manner that the opposition members have, to attribute it to the fact that mining investment was increasing everywhere in the world, and he did not want to really acknowledge the fact that mining investment and mineral exploration are increasing much more dramatically in Manitoba than anywhere else in Canada, indeed, throughout the world.

Those are the kinds of little compliments that they just absolutely cannot in any way make toward our government. They want to acknowledge that these mines are opening, but they think that it is somehow magic, that something is happening somewhere, somehow, but they will not acknowledge that there is a different policy approach toward mineral exploration investment here, and that indeed companies from all over the world, companies that have not invested here since the bad old days of the Schreyer government when they instituted that back-in provision, under Sid Green as Mines minister, that absolutely killed mineral exploration and investment in this province and carried on throughout the years of the '80s of the Pawley administration as they foresaw as their answer to it, feeding money in through a government Crown corporation to try and keep up the investment in mineral exploration, because it was not being done by the private sector.

The area of telecommunications, and certainly we recently had a report to the Economic Development Board of Cabinet that there have been over 3,000 additional jobs in this whole call centre field just in the past couple of years in Manitoba. Ironically members opposite, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, refer to those as McJobs.

They, again, have to take that kind of hangdog approach to acknowledging when good things happen in the economy. They have to sort of knock it, because it is not good that there are over 3,000 additional jobs, they have to talk about them in a derogatory manner. I might tell you that the average income level of the jobs that are being created throughout our economy, those 10,000 net new jobs, is yet higher again. In fact, I know it was in one of the recent articles that was written about it, talking about the fact that it is not just that they are additional jobs but they are well-paying jobs. In fact, on average last year—here it is here—it says full-time jobs at a higher rate of pay than the previous year, an average of \$26,224.64 compared to \$25,965.68 per year, so they are good jobs indeed that are being created in the economy, and some of them happen to be in the telecommunications field.

Transport, an area that keeps being reinforced as a huge area of opportunity for us. Certainly this province is home to headquarters of eight of the 13 largest trucking

firms in Canada, and this province continues to grow and prosper in that whole field of truck transport.

Retail sales, another huge success story with our retail sales up 4.9 percent in 1995. In 1994, of course, we experienced the best increase in nine years in retail sales, and then we topped it last year and significantly better than Canada as a whole—very, very significant. Of course the improvements continue. I saw the February figures, and they are yet again up dramatically over the previous years, so those are areas of the economy that continue to do better.

* (1550)

The really fascinating thing is that the overall total capital investment in our province for 1995 was just around \$4 billion, not only the highest increase in capital investment in Canada but indeed the largest level of capital investment in any one year in our history.

These are very significant matters that I know should be very encouraging to members opposite, but they just absolutely cannot bring themselves to recognize it, to say anything positive about it. You can just see the anguish in their faces as they try and make something bad out of all of this good news in an economic sense. They really do have a difficulty with that, and I will talk a little more about their attitude and their approach to life and particularly their approach to the fortunes of this province.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Export sales increased at double-digit rate, a very significant increase, particularly to the U.S. It was, I believe, 21 percent in '95, following a year in which it had been 29 percent in '94, a significant increase. Our exports to the U.S., a major world market for our goods and services, have doubled in the past four years, hugely significant to the economic opportunities of this province and its producers.

Business bankruptcies, another area, because we were talking with some bankers recently, Canada wide there is a bit of softness occurring. Some of the areas in which we have very wealthy economies, particularly Ontario, Quebec, bankruptcies are starting to increase again. Our

business bankruptcies reached the lowest level in 15 years. So it does not matter what area of the economy you look at, the economy is faring better than it has been, certainly, for a long time, in many cases, best-ever results and figures in terms of economic performance. So, as a result of that, with a great deal of hard work, difficult choices and, I think, priority setting that meets the tests of what the public expects of us, the budget once again comes in with a surplus, the second consecutive surplus budget for Manitoba, the first time that has happened since 1971. It does so without increasing any of the major taxes, Madam Speaker. That is a nine-year tax freeze. No other administration in North America can match that record. It is extremely significant, not only for us, not only for us here in this Legislature, not only for those who have to do business in this economy, but for our children and our grandchildren.

For far too long, the governments of this province have been engaged in a great transference of wealth from the next generation to those who are living in our economy today. Indeed, the burden of the debt and the responsibility to pay for that debt was, for many, many years, the better part of three decades, being transferred off the backs of this generation to the next generation, and that is something that I do not think anybody who has served in those administrations, anybody who promotes deficit financing as the way to go, that is something that I do not think they can take much pride in, Madam Speaker. We have reversed that, and reversed it dramatically. The trend is now, what I would say, youth friendly. It is friendly to the upcoming generation of people, because they know, as has been demonstrated unequivocally, that deficit financing is really a transference of the burden to the next generation. Deficits are simply deferred taxes, because they have to be paid and they have to be paid with interest in future by some other generation.

One of the things that I think is significant about the trends is that every government is now having to examine that. I read with interest coverage of the committee that is chaired by the federal member of Parliament for Winnipeg North Centre, who is going out and studying the CPP. David Walker is looking at it along with some colleagues because people now recognize that the CPP is unsustainable in its current form, and they have to plan for how that program can be sustained without the next

generation having to pick up a disproportionate share of the responsibility for those who will be collecting it, those who in our generation probably did not pay as much into it as should have been the case, and now it is catch-up time. The questions are, of course, who is going to be held responsible, and how is the burden going to be fairly shared?

Over and over again, as you look at the actions of governments everywhere in the world, they are trying desperately to reverse policies that have been in place for decades that, in effect, transferred the burden and the responsibility for paying the cost to a future generation.

The interesting thing, of course, is that members opposite have not in any way accepted that principle. They have not accepted the negative consequences of the old way that things were done, and they continue to argue that we can always go back to the way we did it before. Their only solution is to go back and turn back the clock to the bad, old ways of deficit financing, of ever-increasing taxes, and of promising people everything and anything with their own money, I might say.

So the fact is this budget very clearly puts us on a different path and, I would argue, a much better path. It has led, of course, to the clear recognition by many people that we are indeed becoming much more attractive as a place in which to invest, and there was a recent summary, a summary that I have often quoted from, of different companies that in recent times have made commitments for additional investment.

I talked about \$4 billion last year, but these are companies that are making commitments for additional investment in the near future in Manitoba and, along with that additional investment, very strong job creation opportunities: Ancast Industries, \$1.5 million in investment on an expansion there, 40 additional jobs; Apogen Pharmaceuticals, \$40.8 million investment, 55 additional jobs; Apotex Fermentation, \$18 million additional investment and 76 additional jobs; AT&T Transtech, one of these call centres. It is very significant. I just heard a story today that indicated that they are expecting to get even more additional work at the local centre that will create yet more jobs over and above this one. This list is a little bit old, a little bit out-of-date, but even on this list they were in the midst of a \$45-million investment that would create 447 additional jobs.

Canadian Agra, of course, is building their canola-crushing facility at Ste. Agathe, a \$55-million investment, with 45 additional jobs; Crocus Foods, \$1.5 million investment, for 36 additional jobs; D.W. Friesen & Sons at Altona, a \$5.3 million investment creating 50 additional jobs; Isobord, of course, looking at a \$120-million investment with 100 jobs associated with that; J.M. Schneider announced a \$40-million investment with 500 additional jobs in hog processing; Laser West Fabrication, a \$3.7 million investment for 55 additional jobs; Loewen Windows, \$7.1 million investment, 236 additional jobs; McCains, of course, are making a major commitment in the Portage la Prairie area; the National Healthcare Manufacturing, \$9.3 million investment, 49 additional jobs; Nestle-Simplot, a major investment, of course, in the Carberry area in the french fry potato production field; New Flyer Industries, \$10.4 million investment, 200 additional jobs; Palliser Furniture—

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): It was a good privatization.

Mr. Filmon: Well, the Leader of the Opposition says it was a good privatization, and indeed I accept that from him, and I compliment him for acknowledging that privatization can be good. Indeed, the proof of that is going to be based on results, not on ideology, and I know how painful it was for Eugene Kostyra, who was the then-minister of the day to have to acknowledge that the public sector could not continue to operate and be true to the taxpayer, to operate that business that was losing hundreds of millions of dollars over the years. [interjection] Well, Madam Speaker, we are making progress because we are acknowledging that privatization can work, can be effective, and we are acknowledging that we have to look at things on their individual merits. Then I think that we are halfway there when we have that kind of solution and acknowledged by the Leader of the Opposition.

* (1600)

Prosperity Knitwear, \$5.6 million investment, creating 60 additional jobs; Repap, now there is a good privatization, I would say, \$250 million investment, 250 to 300 additional jobs. The New Democratic member of the Legislature for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) at the time it was done thought it was a good privatization, and in fact

flew out with me to the announcement in The Pas when the papers were signed. I would hope that New Democrats would continue to believe that is a good privatization. [interjection] Absolutely right. Simplot Canada, \$215 million investment in Brandon, some significant new opportunities there; Standard Knitting, \$2.3 million investment, 121 additional jobs; Triple-E Canada, \$1.1 million investment, 45 additional jobs.

These are very significant announcements. These are very significant investments and job creation activities. In fact, the total, Madam Speaker, is just under a billion dollars, and, more importantly, over 3,300 additional jobs. I think that is the kind of impact that we have been waiting for for a long, long time in this province. I think it is the kind of investment climate that we have been working for for a long, long time, and I think it is the kind of positive outlook that all of us ought to be very proud of. I think that with that outlook we on this side of the House certainly believe that Manitobans ought to walk a little taller and be a little prouder of what this province has to offer. I believe that Manitobans want to feel good about their future, about the future of their children and their grandchildren, and I think that is one of the areas, again, in which there is a very significant difference between us and the members opposite. You know, of course, that there have been recent articles written and certainly, I think, a great deal of discussion from people mentioning the negativity, the constant unrelenting negativity, of the members opposite.

The point of view that they have is such a dark and gloomy point of view. It is led, of course, by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). I think that he must have difficulty in taking that position, because I remember him from a long time ago, probably more than a decade ago when I always thought that he was a pretty positive individual, that he was a person who was a solution seeker and possibly even a solution maker, but today he is so unrelentingly negative in his point of view that I think it is difficult to understand what has transpired.

The fact is that in order to be credible you have to, from time to time, at least acknowledge when things are going well. When the Conference Board said Manitoba economy is steamrolling ahead, his response was some glib eight-second clip about hope that the steamroller does not run somebody over. He hoped that the steamroller did not run somebody over.

The fact of the matter is those are the kind of desperation shots that are taken by somebody who is going down for the third time. Madam Speaker, it really is sad that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) is leading his colleagues in such a negative direction. It really is sad because these are not helpful things, and, of course, they are not helpful to the public. They are not helpful to the economy. They go so far as to phone companies that are investing heavily, creating hundreds of jobs, and try and talk to them about their negative view about how things are here. It really is disgusting.

The fact is that the opposition Leader is making a name for himself, and it is not the kind of name that one would like to have. It is not the kind of track record or the kind of reputation that one needs to have in order to be seen as a credible alternative to be elected to government. Really, in my view, it is the reason why they are where they are. It is the reason why the election results a year ago last April were as they were. It is why they will be in the same position whenever the next election is called, because you cannot ask people to elect you when all you put forward is negativity, doom and gloom.

The reason that people voted for us—and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) says it is because they misunderstood our promises, they misunderstood what we said—the fact is that they knew that if they elected us that they would get a balanced budget, that they would start to finally have this province on a path of living within our means forever in future, that we would create the jobs and economic opportunity that I have just been talking about for the last 20 minutes. They knew that if they voted for us that they would have a sense of optimism and confidence in the future, and they knew if they voted for the members opposite they would not get any of those things.

That was and is the major difference and the defining difference between what we offer, what we did offer, what we still offer, and what the members opposite offer to the public. That has been rejected categorically by Manitobans over and over and over again and will continue to be. The sense of confidence and optimism comes through in so many different ways. One of the things that I feel best about is the amount of consultation that our government has done in the past and continues to do with members of the public. The kinds of things that we engage in, such as rural economic development

forums, a wonderful opportunity, and I recommend to members opposite that they attend the forum that is coming up in the next short while in Brandon.

To see people from every corner of this province, from small communities and large, come out and talk about their hopes and their goals and aspirations for the future, it is wonderful to see, to see the display of so many different small businesses, and many of them are small, some medium-sized, but, certainly, really cottage industries in many cases that have come up with a new innovation, a new idea, a new product that they are prepared to sell to the world. It really is exciting. This has been going on for a number of years now.

In addition to that, the forum draws members of rural Junior Achievement programs, and they are even more exciting because these young people, they have a great confidence in the future. They show that confidence by the initiatives and the programs that they develop and the little companies that they form in Junior Achievement. It is just really a wonderful thing to see, and I recommend that to members opposite.

I recommend to members opposite that they participate in discussions with people about the usefulness of trade missions. I have heard members opposite knock the fact that some cabinet ministers, myself included, go out on trade missions, like the Team Canada mission or missions that we have had in the past to Mexico and other parts of the world, and they take shots about, you know, is the Premier going to be travelling and all those kinds of things. The fact is, this is a very, very global environment in which we are, and I will talk a good deal more about that in the future, and trade missions are a very positive thing.

* (1610)

I get letters from people whom I do not even know but who have benefited by and participated in trade missions that this province has organized and participated in, and they know how important it is to have the visible support of the government and cabinet ministers as part of their efforts to break into new markets. Unsolicited, they write letters saying, that was a great opportunity, we have so many contacts, or we have this business or that contract that we have signed. It is really a positive thing, but, you

know, the members opposite, unfortunately, are not, I think, tuned in with this, are not aware of it.

Parental involvement in education—I want to compliment the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) for being in Portage la Prairie on Saturday to see the enthusiasm of parents who are feeling empowered by the changes that this government has brought in to the field of education to initiate and enhance the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Yes, there are vested interests that are represented at a forum such as that, and, yes, there are people who are perhaps not 100 percent on board with the concept. Yes, there are some who are resisting change, but, overwhelmingly, the people who were there were there to find ways in which they could better participate in the education of their children and enhance the quality and outcomes of the education that their children are receiving and will receive in the future because of that extra parental involvement. I hope that members opposite are taking note of that because these are people who feel good about the future because they see a role for themselves in the future as part of the education process.

Tourism. People opposite criticize tourism advertising, say that the government is doing this to enhance its own image and things of that nature, but the fact is as well that tourism is a rapidly growing part of our economy, that tourism operators are speaking glowingly of the reversal that has occurred with American visitors coming up here as opposed to Manitobans going down there. We have had publicity that has certainly gone across the nation on places like Gimli.

I happen to know about Gimli because I spend time there from time to time, and I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) does as well. There was a major feature on Gimli in several magazines last year, including *Canadian Geographic*. I forget the second national tourist magazine that had it. More recently, a *Manitoba homes* magazine featured it. More recently, even just last week, there was a half-page article in *The Globe and Mail* on Gimli.

Tremendous impact from that. Gimli, of course, was featured in some of our tourism commercials over the last couple of years, and the host community for *My Life as a Dog* TV series that was filmed mostly in Gimli over the past year. Interesting how all of this fits together to attract people. It hosted the world boardsailing

championships the year before last. All of these things were part and parcel of our efforts to build up the attractiveness and the knowledge of all of these tourism centres that we have throughout our province, but it is everywhere.

I was out on the Red Coat Trail a year and a half ago down in southern Manitoba and was fascinated by the historical documentation that was given by a local high school teacher of how that trail was opened and how they essentially surveyed the Canada-U.S. border off the Boundary Commission Trail. Absolutely fascinating. A wonderful, wonderful way to spend a few days or even a week or two in travelling throughout these historic places in southern Manitoba.

The North—going to some place like Churchill, this is world class. The opportunities are there, and we have to promote them. We have to continue to believe optimistically that people everywhere will see the tremendous attractiveness that we do in that. It is not something to be knocked because of who wrote or produced the commercials. It is not something to be knocked because the advertising somehow may reflect positively on the government of the day. It is something to be celebrated, and we do not do enough to celebrate those kinds of optimistic and positive things that we have going for us in this province.

The other thing that is a great contrast between the members opposite and ourselves is the degree to which the members opposite are supporters of the status quo and how we have become known as the agents of change.

I know that we can argue whether or not change is for the better or whether or not change is a good thing. We certainly have those debates these days, but the fact of the matter is that change is inevitable. It is taking place everywhere in the world, and the only difference is that growth is optional. The changes that we are proposing, we would argue, are to enable our province to grow, to prosper and to strengthen.

The changes that the members opposite are proposing are to just simply cling to an old ideology, to an old philosophy that government, big government did things best, and let us go back to that where all you have to do is rely on big government as your sole saviour whenever you are in difficulty. Whenever you are in need, cling to

government as the only answer. That is the kind of failed ideology that I will talk a little bit more about as I compare places worldwide that are making change, dramatic change that people never believed possible, and here we are listening to members opposite tell us to go back to those things that are being abandoned in Eastern Europe, in Asia and all those areas of the world, Madam Speaker.

But we look at education, and there is a fundamental principle in any area of human endeavour, and that is that if you are going to improve what you do and how you do it, you have to be able to measure where you were before you initiated the change and where you are after. So, in order to measure that improvement, you need such things as standards, benchmarking, whatever you want to call it, and you need to be able to test and evaluate the outcome. Now that is all that is behind what we are doing in education, is ensuring that, when we make change, (a) we have the courage to measure whether or not that change is resulting in positive outcomes and results, and (b) we also have the courage to set our standards high and to ask that our whole public school education system strive to meet those high standards.

Is there anything wrong with that? I do not think so, but members opposite continue to resist and to fight against that, saying that it is back to the future, saying that all we are doing is going back. Well, the fact is we are not. What we are doing is recognizing that the whole world is going forward, and the only way they can ensure that they are having positive results is to be able to evaluate, benchmark, test and measure themselves against where they used to be to ensure that the changes that they are bringing in are positive.

School boundaries review. It is a matter of considerable controversy and debate. I will acknowledge that there is not unanimous agreement amongst my own colleagues on that. The fact of the matter is, though, that it is something that we have to continue to look at to be able to establish a better answer perhaps than what we have today. So we are proceeding with that.

* (1620)

The whole field of teacher methods of evaluation and remuneration. Again, the teacher plays such a critical role. Every study that I have ever seen says that the most

critical aspect of education and learning is that interface between the pupil and the teacher. That is the most important ingredient, and we have to support the efforts of the teacher. So for that reason we ought not to be concerned about the criticisms that are out there by many, many parents who say that our method of remuneration is not fair because whether a teacher is a good teacher or bad teacher, whether a teacher spends a lot of time on extracurricular activity or none, whether a teacher keeps up to date and does professional development, it does not matter, they all get paid the same. Those are the things we ought to look at in a modern society.

We have to look and see how we compare in the method of remuneration and the level of remuneration versus other people in society and other teachers across the country. What is wrong with that? Why is that so terrifying? Why is that so threatening? I do not think that it should be seen as an attack, but members opposite, along with their friends, want to characterize it as an attack. The fact is that all they are saying is they are for the status quo and anybody who proposes any change is going to be automatically berated and their ideas rejected. That, I do not think, is healthy, but that is the kind of debate we are having these days with members opposite, and we saw it throughout the course of this budget debate.

Our health care system must change. When you take a look at the health care system you have to take a look at what is happening everywhere in Canada. Everywhere in Canada there is major change taking place. Time and time again, I am told by my colleagues, the other premiers and other people who work in other provinces, that we have been doing a better job of managing the change process than they have in so many other provinces. When you take a look, why does it have to change? Well, today, of course, we have a system that was put in place for the needs of 25 years ago. We have a system that is heavily based on institutional acute care operations. So you have big institutions, seven of them in Winnipeg, hospitals that were built for the needs of 25 years ago. The bed count, the allocation to acute care needs is all based on what was there and what was needed 25 years ago. Today, things have changed dramatically. I invite members opposite to go out, because many of our institutions are doing a great job in this whole process of quality development.

I was at the quality awards dinner last week, along with the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), and among many people who were being cited for quality improvement, quality achievement in their operations, were several public sector organizations, not just private sector companies, not just manufacturers, but several public sector organizations, including Victoria General Hospital, including a personal care home, Middlechurch personal care home.

What is exciting about these institutions is that they are very much involved in the process of change. Victoria General Hospital will tell you that a decade ago they used to do two-thirds of their surgery on an in-patient basis. Today, it is only one-third on an in-patient basis, two-thirds out-patient, massive change. So all those people who used to be in hospital beds for recovery are no longer in those hospital beds, those acute-care beds. So those beds, those tens of thousands of beds that were needed, patient-days of beds that were needed, are no longer needed in the system.

If you were to go for any major procedure from a birth of a baby to hip replacement to open-heart surgery today, you would spend less than half the time in hospital recovering that you did a decade ago, and your outcomes would be better, your health circumstances would be better; again, tens of thousands of patient days not required in the system for that reason.

One simple area of excellence that has been developed is in ophthalmology, in eye surgery. We do 6,000 procedures of one type a year in Misericordia Hospital on an out-patient basis that used to require a 10-day recovery time—6,000 procedures times 10 days, 60,000 patient-days of bed time per year not required in the acute-care system of the hospitals anymore.

These are the changes that are taking place, but the system has not changed with the needs and the procedures. New technology, laser surgery, laparoscopic surgery, all of those things that have changed the technology and our ability to deliver services, those things have changed dramatically, and the system is now built for the wrong purposes. On the other hand, the other side of the coin is that we need more long-term and geriatric beds. Because of the aging of the population, there is a dramatic increase in the number of geriatric and long-term-care beds that are needed. So what is our

answer? Are we going to just simply close down some beds in some areas and build new beds for these needs that are not being fulfilled, or do we reconfigure the system so that we provide the long-term and geriatric beds in the new system of today using some buildings that are still very, very much functional, structurally sound? They can be changed to accommodate the new needs without us having to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to build 500 or 600 new geriatric or long-term-care beds. Of course, we should be looking at these alternatives, and that is exactly what we are doing.

What about the whole field of home care? Things are changing there. The problem is that as the demands on home care continue to increase, the system is rigid. It lacks the flexibility to give us choices and alternatives to meet the needs of those who depend on home care. They want assurance of service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and they want it to fulfill the needs that they have for the service.

You know, it is ironic that for years, the last number of years, this House was getting many, many complaints brought to it by members opposite for home care, saying home care was not doing this for this patient, home care was not doing that for this patient. We had to bring in an appeal system, a formal appeal system and an appeal committee, to deal with those complaints. Now that we are saying we have to make the system evolve with more flexibility and more choice so that we do not have all of these complaints, so that we do meet the real needs there, they are saying hold on, hold on. There is nothing wrong with the system, they are saying. There is nothing wrong with the system. Well, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot have hundreds of complaints that dictate that there are problems with the system, and then, when you seek to find ways in which you can be more flexible and give more choice and more opportunity to solve those problems, you cannot say, no, no, no, the system is terrific the way it is. Do not change it. It cannot be both. Well, the members opposite are stuck in reverse.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) often brings up the issue of, why are we looking at privatization of the telephone system? Well, I do not know what the final determination will be, Madam Speaker, but the fact of the matter is that when the Crown Corporations Council came up with an assessment of the Manitoba Telephone System in which they pointed out that 70 percent of its

revenues today, over 70 percent of its revenues today, are in fields in which they are in competition with private sector operators, that said to me that we were in a vastly different circumstance than the one that is often quoted by the member for Thompson when he says Sir Rodmond Roblin in 1905 referred to it as a natural monopoly. It was a natural monopoly in those days, but today telecommunications has been deregulated. The regulatory environment is now federal not provincial. We have \$850 million of debt that is guaranteed by the taxpayer, which puts us at significant risk, and we have to look at it from a perspective of whether or not it is serving the best interests of the public today, given this vastly changed environment. Madam Speaker, it is a vastly changed environment.

So rather than simply just rail against change, we have to be open to evaluate whether or not that change is positive or whether or not that change is going to be in the best interests of the people of this province. That is precisely what we are doing. The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) was roasting members on this side saying that we are going to be in conflict with and losing a lot of support from some of our supporters because of the dual marketing of hogs.

* (1630)

Again, you have to evaluate the business taste for this and see whether or not we can achieve the kind of growth and opportunity that we need to within the framework of the current system. Of course, in that respect, we have the potential, very, very modestly, to double the production of hogs in this province within the next decade, in fact, by the year 2000, because demand for our hogs is increasing in so many foreign markets, particularly Asia-Pacific.

Chilled pork, the exports increased last year alone by, I believe, \$86 million was the figure last year for chilled pork exports to Asia-Pacific. Two decades ago, we were not exporting any because we did not have the technology. It had to go frozen. So we have a whole new area.

The dramatic demand increase that we are seeing is something that we would be foolish not to respond to. I have said many times that I believe that in the next decade we are going to see food production be a greater source of wealth creation for the prairie provinces than oil

and gas is. There you have this huge shift that is going to take place. The interesting thing is that Manitoba is less than 25 percent of the agriculture production of the prairie provinces, but it is 100 percent of agribusiness. I mean, we have the Wheat Board, the Grains Commission, the Commodities Exchange and all the agribusiness centered here. So whatever happens to increase the sale of food and food products to the world from western Canada, we are going to be huge beneficiaries of it.

With the expansion of hog production here, goes the potential for tremendous expansion to our processing. With that goes marketing jobs, transportation jobs, all sorts of additional jobs that will be included. Now, we can either just accept the expansion of the production-side jobs, which are a small part of the piece, or we can multiply it three or four times and get the potential 8,000 jobs that should occur here if we do it right. In order to do it right, we have to respond to the market signals.

The simple analysis of it is this. If you are asking people to invest \$40 million to \$50 million and employ 500 to 1,000 in a major hog processing facility, you cannot leave them at the mercy of a small, vested-interest group of people as to whether or not they will get their supply of hogs next week to the plant. You cannot have them put 500 to 1,000 people's jobs at risk. You cannot have them have an investment of \$40 million to \$50 million at risk.

Similarly, if you are going to increase production, that is the kind of rate that we are going to need. You are going to have to have major hog production units, ones that can produce 100,000 units a year, very, very major units. That is capital. I mean, we talk about \$40 million to \$50 million in our hog processing facility; these people are going to have put \$2 million into hog production just to get those thousand hogs a year through their operation. That, too, requires a different business environment and a different business arrangement than what exists today. They have to be able to have a long-term producer-processor contract.

Again, they cannot be blocked by a board that has unilateral powers to get in the way of those kinds of arrangements; otherwise, it is not a bankable item. You cannot go to the bank and say, I have a guaranteed contract for supply to this processor, and therefore you

can get the money that you need if you have to borrow a couple of million dollars to create a hog production facility.

Those things have changed. Members opposite, of course, refuse to acknowledge that change is a positive thing, that change is necessary, and that change, indeed, is something that— [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: One of the other major differences that we keep seeing between members opposite and ourselves in the course of this debate is that they believe that government exists to serve the needs of those who work in the public sector, and we believe that government exists to serve the public.

In every one of these arguments that we are discussing, every one of these issues that we are discussing, what we find is that members opposite side with the vested-interest union people who say, you cannot make those changes because it will affect my job. Where does the person who needs the service come into this equation? As the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) said earlier today, how do they care about the people who have Alzheimer's, how do they care about the people who have MS, how do they care about the people who have arthritis?

What they do is they say, fine, we will withdraw our services. That is how much they care about them—to the great applause and encouragement of the New Democrats in this Chamber, I might say, who want to support those who believe that these services exist, that government exists, to serve the needs of those who work in government, not the needs of those who depend upon us for service. I think that is the biggest failing of the New Democrats, and I think that is the biggest crime.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Most honourable members in this Chamber have had an opportunity to put their remarks on the record, and I would suggest, in fact, I would request, that you give the honourable First Minister an opportunity to complete his remarks.

Mr. Filmon: We have presented, as I said earlier, a second surplus budget in a row, and we are going to continue to do that, not because it is the law but because it is the right thing to do. Manitobans have told us over and over again that this is important to them, and I want to just remind members opposite how they derided the balanced budget legislation last year. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), he said, the term “balanced budget” is misleading. What is so magical about balancing the budget every year anyway?

Well, you know what is magical is that most people do it. In their homes, on their farms, in their small businesses, they balance their budgets. It is not that unusual. What is unusual is that governments did not see it necessary to do that for so many decades. That is what is really unusual. Well, the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), said, quote: I know it is a cynical pre-election ploy.

Well, it is after the election. It was passed. It is our second surplus budget in a row, and there is more to come.

* (1640)

Well, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), his was one of the more interesting comments, and this is what he said: Madam Speaker, in many ways, I am sorry to have to rise on a bill that is destined to make Manitoba the laughing stock of the financial management world.

In response to that, this is what the Fraser Institute said, quote: Ottawa should adopt Manitoba's balanced budget law.

This is what a survey of Canadian pension funds managers produced. That survey found that 77 percent of the Canadian pension funds managers felt that Ottawa should adopt a Manitoba-style balanced budget law. This is what the Investment Dealers Association of Canada said: Consistent and responsible fiscal management has enabled the province to maintain one of the most stable credit ratings in the country.

The Financial Post article entitled, Manitoba shows the fiscal way, said, quote: Premier Filmon and his Tory government deserve full marks for proposing a balanced budget legislation with teeth.

This is what one analyst said after this year's budget, Nesbitt Burns. It says, quote: Budget friendly Manitoba.

That is the headline, and then it says: The budget deserves two thumbs up for its aggressive response to the dramatic reduction in federal transfers. It is nothing short of remarkable that Manitoba, in the face of a near 2 percent revenue shortfall, will actually come in with an above-target, \$22-million surplus in fiscal year '97 after posting a better-than-budgeted \$120-million surplus last year.

As well, they say: Manitoba has moved even further to solidify its position as the most frugal jurisdiction in terms of per capita government spending. They also said, holding the line on taxes in conjunction with the transfer hit from the feds will actually result in operating revenues by the end of the decade being lower than they were last year. They said, this cautious approach reflects the fact that Manitoba is the only province that is required to balance its books each and every year. So, Madam Speaker, the only one who is a laughing stock is the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for his inappropriate comments last year when we were debating this.

Madam Speaker, just a little reminder of the contrast between what we are doing today versus what the members opposite were doing for such a long time, because they seem to have forgotten a great deal in the last eight years. But there have been several articles and editorials that have talked about what a terrible situation we were under in this province thanks to the policies of the Pawley-Doer government of the '80s. In a period of just over six years that they were in office in that administration, between 1982 and 1988, our general purpose debt—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: We are talking between the end of 1982's fiscal year, March 31, '82.

Mr. Doer: Well, Sterling Lyon's government changed in December '81.

Mr. Filmon: Right.

Mr. Doer: '81-82 was your budget.

Mr. Filmon: Right. And so from March 31, '82 onward the net general purpose debt tripled during that period of time, just six years. More importantly, interest costs, interest charges on that debt quadrupled to \$545 million from \$114 million in those awful Pawley years. But, you know, were they any more considerate of the people who depended on them for service? Did they make a reasonable or a better commitment than we have to those people? Here are some other comparisons. This year our government will spend 33.8 percent of its budget on health care. This compares to the NDP who spent 31.4 percent on health care—31.4 percent. This year we will spend 30.9 percent of the budget on education, training and family services. The NDP spent 28.8 percent on those programs. So, Madam Speaker, they were not in any way providing greater support or more concern or consideration for people who depend upon government for services.

Here is another interesting article, because it is from Professor Norm Cameron who I think has been acknowledged by most people as being an objective observer. I recall when the Pawley administration utilized him for one of their major commissions or committees, and this is what he said very recently about the opposition. He said, quote, this opposition is in general misguided because it has answered only the easy half of the question that the government faces in budget making. The easy half is to point out that all the victims of budget cuts are deserving and that all the programs cut are valuable and that there are other real needs still unmet.

We can almost all agree with that. What he points out, of course, is the difficult side of choosing priorities and of having to decide how you will raise the funds that you need. When I talked earlier about the opposition just opposing blindly everything that goes on, there was the recent announcement that for the first time in 10 years our fines are going up for traffic offences and for liquor offences, and opposition members even had to criticize that.

* (1650)

Where are we supposed to get funds in the face of transfer payment reductions of \$116 million and all of the various other things that we have to cope with? Where are we supposed to get funds if we cannot even have fines

increased once every decade on things that people are not supposed to do? They will go to the extent of supporting criminals rather than simply be realistic about what it is that government could or should be doing. Unbelievable.

One of the things that I do want to share because my research produced something that even I had forgotten, and that is that in his latter years in the Pawley administration the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was in charge of some Crown corporations. I think the Crown Corporations Council reported to him if I am not mistaken at one time.

In the last two years of that Pawley administration, the five major Crown corporations—MPIC, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Telephone System, Manitoba Development Corporation and Manfor—lost \$317 million. That is, of course, the kind of management that he wants us to go back to. Right? Absolutely. That is the kind of management that he thinks should be perpetrated in a government entity of total public-sector involvement.

Madam Speaker, the fact is that one of the things that our government believes in is that you have to work to solve the real problems that you face. You cannot hide behind somebody else. You cannot duck away from them by saying, oh, we give you everything you want. Do not ask us how we pay for it. We give you everything. Pull in every special interest group and tell them that you are just going to solve their problems, that you will find the money somewhere, and that somebody somewhere in society is going to pay for it. They do not have to worry. Their government will provide everything.

You cannot continue to do that. That is not realistic, and the public knows that you are not playing straight with them. So we are facing up to reality, and reality is that this world is changing so dramatically that everyone of us has to be a partner in this change, that everybody has to be an agent of change and has to share with the public just how dramatic the changes are and why it is important for us to continue to change as the world changes, to take advantage in a positive sense of change.

I looked at a small book just the other day that had a couple of facts that I want to share with the opposition members. In 1900, agriculture accounted for 85 percent of the employment in our economy. Today it is 3 percent. In 1950, manufacturing and production accounted for 55

percent of the employment. Today it is less than 15 percent. In the year 2000, 45 percent of all of our population who are employed will be engaged in handling, retrieving, processing and analysing information. These are huge, huge changes that are taking place. As a matter of fact, there was a sign on a worker's desk in a company I visited that I think said it all, and it said, you think you understand the situation, but what you do not understand is that the situation just changed.

Indeed, that is what we are faced with, such massive and dramatic change worldwide, and we have in opposition a group of people who are stuck in reverse, who are absolutely opposed to change, who will not consider any alternatives, Madam Speaker. I find it absolutely incredible that we are dealing with relatively intelligent people, because I will grant that I think we are dealing with intelligent people, but their ideology and their philosophy is so rooted in the past, in the failed old ways, that they cannot possibly deal with all of the dramatic things that are happening in society today.

Today we are dealing with two major worldwide forces each of which is bigger than anything the world has encountered in the past. One is globalization, the fact that everything, everybody's market now is the same market worldwide. It does not matter where you are. In addition to that, everybody is interconnected through telecommunications, through networks, through faxes. Everybody is interconnected, so every new innovation, every new idea, every new government policy is available to people on the Internet instantly all over the world. This globalization is having such a dramatic impact on us that nothing is the same as it was, let alone a hundred years ago that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) likes to talk about when he promotes keeping the Manitoba Telephone System the way it is. He likes to talk about how things were in 1905. Nothing is the same as it was in 1905. It is not even the same as it was in 1990, Madam Speaker.

The second massive change is that from a production economy to an information economy, and that is why all of these shifts and changes are taking place. You simply cannot expect to judge things on the same basis as you did a decade ago, let alone 90 years ago, as the member for Thompson keeps hearkening back to those good old days. You have to deal with the reality that is today, and

that reality is changing very dramatically, and our policies and our initiatives have to change in tune with those changing needs and more dramatically.

The interesting thing, Madam Speaker, is that members on our side have tremendous confidence in the future because young people have no difficulty with this massive change. Young people have bought into it, they understand it, they are ready for it, and they want to get on with the job. Young people of today not only deal with metric, whereas people of our generation still have to do their calculations in their minds, they use the automated teller machines, they are computer literate, they do all of these things that allow them to accept change and to change with it, to improve with it, to grow with it and to strengthen with it. There is no difficulty.

The members opposite, though, have absolutely no ability to relate to that. All they want to do is take everything back to what it used to be, to stop change, to protect all their vested interests and to protect the people who work for government as opposed to the people who get their services from government.

Another year has passed since we last debated the budget, Madam Speaker, and the fact is that the members opposite, both Liberals and New Democrats, have learned absolutely nothing if you listen to them in Question Period, if you listen to them in this Budget Debate.

This is an historic time for our province. When people go back and look at this time, they will think it is one of the most important and dramatic times of progress and improvement in the history of our province—absolutely right. Those new jobs, those new investments, those new opportunities that I talked about are going to be the stuff that builds this province in a way that it has never experienced in its history. The greatest challenge for us is to continue to work harder and to spend smarter and live within our means all the while, Madam Speaker.

Manitobans are fortunate that we started this process eight years ago when we took government. Manitobans are fortunate that unlike other jurisdictions that have had to make massive, dramatic and traumatic shifts, this province has gone on a plan in a considerate and well-organized fashion to reach the targets that we have set for ourselves.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans know that we are here to ensure their quality health care, to ensure that our young people have the knowledge, the ability and the skills to succeed, and Manitobans know that we are there for them in the long term and that we are there to provide them with the kind of government that they depend upon, and one year ago, they gave us that mandate, and I am delighted that we are able to fulfill that mandate with great confidence and great security for the future.

* (1700)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., in accordance with subrule 27.(6), I am interrupting the proceedings to put the questions necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson):

THAT this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and all amendments to that motion.

Therefore the question before the House is the subamendment of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). Do you wish the subamendment read? Yes?

THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

And further regrets:

THAT this government's 1996 budget document points out the real meaning of their 1995 campaign promise "Manitoba Strong" which we now know to mean "Manitoba for the Strong" and thereby demonstrate their lack of caring and compassion for Manitobans.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the proposed subamendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On division.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House now is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson):

THAT this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Do you wish the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "House" and substituting the following:

Therefore regrets this budget breaks key election promises by:

(a) reducing program spending by tens of millions of dollars despite the Premier's Plan Manitoba commitment to maintain overall spending at \$4.465 billion until 1998-99, and

(b) as a result, this government is cutting vital funds for public education, reducing support for the poorest children and families, reducing advanced training, education and job opportunities, reducing support to rural and agricultural communities and making a mockery of the Premier's solemn election oath that he would not cut health care services, and

As a consequence, the government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the proposed amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker..

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Pallister, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Nays

Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Jennissen, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 29, Nays 25.

Madam Speaker: The proposed motion is accordingly carried.

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a matter of House Business, I would like to table the order of Estimates for consideration by the Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker, earlier today I announced a Public Accounts committee for this coming Friday, April 19. The issues to be considered by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts are the Provincial Auditor's reports for the years ending March 31, 1994, and March 31, 1995, Volumes 1, 2 and 3; Public Accounts Volumes 1, 2 and 3 for the fiscal years ending March 31, 1994, and March 31, 1995.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 15, 1996

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