



First Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

39 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARR, James	Crescentwood	Liberal
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CONNERY, Edward, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack, Hon.	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, January 21, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Mr. Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I am sure all Honourable Members share with me a deep concern over the fact that the United Nations has found it necessary to resort to the use of force in the Middle East.

While the safety of Canadian personnel in the Persian Gulf is in all our thoughts, we must also consider the tragic consequences which may accrue or have already accrued to personnel directly involved on both sides in this conflict and to their families and friends and, as well, to the many civilians who will be or have been directly affected by these events.

In a moment I will ask all Members to stand and observe a minute of silence and while doing so to pray or ask, each in his or her own way, for peace to be restored in the Persian Gulf and throughout the world. All rise.

(A moment of silence was observed)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mr. Jack Relmer (Chairman of the Committee on Law Amendments): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Third Report on the Committee on Law Amendments.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Your committee met on Wednesday, January 16, and Thursday, January 17, 1991, at 8 p.m., in Room 255 of the Legislative Building, to consider Bills referred.

On January 16, 1991, your committee accepted the resignations of Messrs. Carr and Stefanson and Mrs. Vodrey, and elected Mr. Cheema, Hon. Mr. Praznik and Mrs. McIntosh to replace them. On January 17, 1991, your committee accepted the resignations of Mr. Martindale, Mrs. McIntosh and

Hon. Mr. Praznik, and elected Mr. Ashton, Hon. Mr. Enns and Mr. Stefanson to replace them.

Your committee heard representations on Bills as follows:

Bill 24, The Environment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement

Mr. Harold Syrett - Friends of Oak Hammock Marsh

Ms. Helen McCullough - Winnipeg Water Protection Group (Winnipeg)

Ms. Deanna Martz - Manitoba Naturalists Society

Mr. David Taylor - Concerned Citizens of Manitoba

Mr. Harry Mesman - Manitoba Federation of Labour

Mr. Ronald L. Carter - Private Citizen

Mr. Jack Dubois - Manitoba Eco-Network

Mr. Brian Pannell - Manitoba Environmentalists Inc.

Mr. Len Sawatsky - Private Citizen

Mr. Bryan Johnson - Private Citizen

Mr. Peter Miller - TREE

Mr. Harvey Williams - Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

Mr. John Shearer - Private Citizen

Mr. Kemlin Nembard - University of Winnipeg Safe

Mr. Cyril Keeper - Private Citizen

Mr. Kenneth EMBERLEY - Private Citizen

Mr. Bill Hunter - Private Citizen

Ms. Jenny Hillard - The Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba)

Mr. Wayne Neily - Manitoba Environmental Council

Mr. Dennis Breed - Canadian Public Interest Organization

Mr. Toby Maloney - Private Citizen

Your committee has considered:

Bill 24, The Environment Amendment Act; Loi

modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement and has agreed to report the same with the following amendments:

MOTION:

THAT section 2 be amended by renumbering the proposed section 13.1 as subsection 13.1(1) and by adding the following as subsection 13.1(2):

Equivalent assessment

13.1(2) The minister shall not enter into an agreement under subsection (1) unless

(a) the minister is satisfied that the agreement provides for an assessment that it at least equivalent to the assessment that would otherwise be required under this Act; and

(b) the agreement provides for

- (i) notification of the public in Manitoba about the filing of the proposal through the use of the central registry and by way of advertisements in the media;
- (ii) comments and objections from members of the public related, at a minimum, to the proposal, the guidelines for the assessment of the proposal, the assessment and the review of the assessment;
- (iii) public hearings in Manitoba about the proposal by a panel established for the purposes of the assessment process;
- (iv) the appointment jointly by the ministers who are parties to the agreement of the members of the panel when a joint assessment process is established under clause (1)(a);
- (v) a requirement that the minister be satisfied that each proposed member of the panel is unbiased and free of any conflict of interest relative to the proposal and has special knowledge or experience relevant to the anticipated environmental effects of the proposal;
- (vi) a program relating to the provision of financial assistance to members of the public participating in the assessment process when in the opinion of the minister such a program is desirable;
- (vii) opportunity for the minister or the director, as the case may be, to require further information before making a decision regarding licensing if, in the opinion of the minister or the director, the assessment

process has not produced sufficient information on which to base such a decision.

Mr. Relmer: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Report of the Provincial Auditor to the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1990.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of Honourable Members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today three members of the Soviet and Russian Parliaments who are visiting Winnipeg. They are Mr. Mikhail Bocharov, Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council; Mr. Roald Orlov, the Adviser to the Supreme Economic Council; and Mr. Boris Chirkov, the Executive Secretary to the Supreme Economic Council.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Manitoba Nurses' Union
Premier's Involvement**

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

For months we have been warning the Government about the pending crisis in the health care system, Mr. Speaker. We have been warning the Government that a confrontational style was not consistent with the Manitoba tradition of settling and dealing with people and health care professionals, that partnership was the goal in the health care system, not the brinkmanship that we have seen from this Government over the last three weeks.

We have asked the Premier to get personally involved. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the nurses have asked the Premier to get personally involved. They sent a letter to the Premier some two weeks ago calling on the Premier to get personally involved.

Please listen, Mr. Filmon, nurses are leaving the province and the profession. Health care is deteriorating.

My question to the Premier is: Why has he not listened to the nurses in this province, Mr. Speaker? Why did he send back just a perfunctory letter saying that he acknowledges the correspondence, without any reply? Is this the type of concern he has for the nurses in this province and the health care system in this province, just a letter back from his correspondence secretary? Will he now get personally involved in the negotiations and try to show leadership in dealing with the health care crisis in our province?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put. Order, please. I would ask the general public being seated in the gallery here this afternoon that you must not participate in any way in the proceedings of this House.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as I have said publicly on a number of occasions, I am personally involved with every decision that is made and every policy judgment that is taken in this province. I take responsibility for all things that are happening.

Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the discussions, I was briefed on a regular basis. From the time that the public sector fiscal situation was laid out by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) in this Legislature on, I believe, the 14th of December, the Government attempted to share publicly in a way that has never been done before what are the constraints, what are the limitations, what are the prospects for our financial situation in this province.

We attempted to do so to avoid a confrontative situation with the nurses, the layout, the scenario, that we believe is the case that nursing is valued in this province, that nursing is very important to us in this province, that we would treat the nurses, despite the very, very serious fiscal situation that faces us, as a special case, that we would offer to the nurses the maximum amount that we possibly could squeeze out of the entire envelope that we have set up for public sector pay increases.

* (1340)

I have said publicly that what we have offered to the nurses is more than double what we can or will offer to anyone else in the public sector, so that we demonstrate that we consider it to be a special case situation that deserves our support, that deserves

our attention. Ultimately, it is all within the envelope of what we must face as a province, of the challenges that face us, to try and ensure that we keep going the vital public services that we must support in this province, of which health care is No. 1.

Within that, we do not have an unlimited supply of money. We came through the past fiscal year with revenue increases of only 0.6 percent. This year, we are facing virtually flat, no revenue increases. Despite that, we have offered 20 percent over three years to the nurses. We believe that we are attempting to demonstrate as much fairness as we can but, under those circumstances, obviously we still have a confrontation, and I regret that.

Government Offer

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) today has chosen to take the media manipulation line of his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). I have done the calculations. Three thousand people do not get 20 percent in terms of their offer of 9 percent from the provincial Government. Another 3,000 people are under 15 percent. There are some others who may eventually get to 20 percent, depending on the pay equity situation that the Government has chosen to lump into these figures.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier to correct the record and be honest with the people of Manitoba for once, because one of the problems in this strike is the neon sign that the Minister of Health has put out as damage control for the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the remarks as he is making that he is saying the Honourable First Minister is not honest. As we know, all Honourable Members are honest.

Mr. Doer: I would withdraw any imputation of the Premier, and I would ask the Premier today to outline—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. The question has been put.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about honesty and when we talk about commitment to the health care system, I find it a little bit difficult to see the Member for Concordia, the Leader of the Opposition, keep a straight face. We

have the evidence of why nurses are angry, why nurses are underpaid in this province, why nurses are in a situation in which they feel that they must employ a catch-up situation in their bargaining.

We look at the two settlements that occurred under the New Democratic Government, a Government of which he was a part, of which many of his Members were a part, that has caused us to be in this situation. These are the increases that were given to nurses under his administration: 1985, 2 percent; 1986, 3 percent; 1987, 4.3 percent; 1988, 3 percent; 1989, 3 percent; 1990, 4.76 percent, all negotiated by the New Democratic administration of which he was a vital part.

Mr. Speaker, that is the way in which they treated nurses in this province. I will not treat nurses that way. We are attempting to do better, and all we get is rhetoric and dishonesty from the Member for Concordia.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the Honourable First Minister, as I have done with the Leader of the Opposition, to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Filmon: I will withdraw the remark about dishonesty, Mr. Speaker. We know where he stands.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable First Minister.

Premier's Involvement

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the operative word is settlement. Ed Schreyer had a situation of catching up with nurses when they became a profession that was behind other nurses, and he settled. He settled it at the table. Sterling Lyon was able to settle at the table when we had a catch-up situation, to be competitive with other provinces. Howard Pawley was able to settle at the table.

There is only one person who is unable to settle, and it is the Minister and the Premier opposite with his confrontational style with his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), a style of media manipulation and rolling the dice at the last minute. Even the Premier fired him as Deputy Leader three or four years ago, Mr. Speaker, because of his style.

My question to the Premier is: Will he show leadership? Will he show flexibility? Will he look at reassigning a Minister who could have the capacity to find a flexible solution to our problem? Will he get

personally involved? Will he get the Government back to the bargaining table? Will he deal with this issue seriously?

* (1345)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I did not mention that during the time in which these increases of 2 and 3, 3 and 3, 4.3, and so on, were being administered by the New Democratic administration, they were experiencing revenue growth in, for instance, 1987-88 of 19.3 percent in one year, one year revenue growth; 1988-89 of 12.4 percent, one year. That was the kind of revenue growth against which they said to nurses, take 3 percent, take 2 percent. That is the kind of hypocrisy with which we are dealing.

I will commit myself to seek any possible resolution to the dispute in which we currently find ourselves, Mr. Speaker, but I did not choose the strike. The nurses have chosen to go on strike. This is an equal partnership. Ultimately, it is going to be decided when both sides can find some way of dealing with the reality that we have facing us. We are ready, MHO is ready to go back to the table whenever there is an indication that the nurses would like to have further discussions and find a middle ground to this unfortunate disruption of services.

Government Offer

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): A new question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). We are calling for a partnership in the health care field, something that has been developed by Governments over the last 20 years, Mr. Speaker, and something that is lacking now. It took us a protest a year and a half ago and two weeks of a dispute where patients and health care professionals had to take such extreme action even to get an agreement on the health advisory task force. That is the roll-the-dice confrontational style of this Government. Totally unnecessary issues were not resolved six months ago, a year ago, a year and a half ago. It was left to the last minute, roll the dice and brinkmanship, just like the Prime Minister with the country just recently. I am surprised the Premier would allow his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to indulge himself in those kinds of bully-like tactics with our nurses.

My question to the Premier is: He said there is a middle course. The nurses have already reduced their offer. The Government is not at 20 percent for

every nurse. Would the Government, the Premier, now call on his negotiators to put an additional proposal on the table, find a creative way out of this resolution instead of saying, if you do not settle at this price, you get the Alberta solution, as the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) said to the hospital administrators just this week in his letter he tabled in the hospitals of this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): It is the creativity of the New Democratic Party in Government that has put us where we are. It is they who have left all of those disputes on the table between the nurses and the health care system. It is they who caused this serious lag in salaries and incomes for nurses over a space of the last six years, Mr. Speaker, and now he is saying it is our responsibility to resolve, in a very irresponsible way I might say, because they offer no solutions. They offer just criticism and they offer a great deal of hypocrisy, because they are the people who created this situation. It is that Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues opposite who have dug the hole that Manitobans and nurses find themselves in. It is that kind of hypocrisy for which I think there is no place in this province. I think that Manitobans agreed with that when they turfed out the New Democrats very unceremoniously in 1988.

Mr. Speaker, in order to arrive at a resolution to a problem, it takes both sides. It takes both sides to show a willingness; it takes both sides to show movement. MHO went back to the table last Sunday, a week ago Sunday, to try and demonstrate that they would be willing to take measures. MHO will continue to be willing to find a reasonable course of resolution to the problem. I say that in all sincerity for the nurses and the people in this province who want to find a resolution that we continue to be looking for a sign that there is a middle ground, and we are willing to go back to the table.

* (1350)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, it is not MHO this weekend that is taking out the ads, it is the present Conservative Government, the Government of Manitoba. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) in this House says it is a 20 percent offer for all the nurses, which is misleading. It is the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who has been using that number all along, trying to manipulate the media and the public of Manitoba. Instead of spending our creative time and efforts to try to solve this problem, you have been manipulating the problem.

My question to the Premier is: Will he start with honest numbers in terms of the truth of the offer to the bargaining agent? Will he instruct his Minister of Health to immediately move, because it is the Government negotiating and the Government advertising, to a position at the table that will get us closer to a settlement, rather than the intransigence and the brinkmanship that we see from this Government—no other Government, from this Government—dealing with our needed health care professionals who are going to leave the province, Mr. Speaker, if we cannot settle this dispute?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, the information that was put out publicly by MHO in their ad that said a 20.1 percent wage increase over three years for general duty nurses was responded to by the head of the Manitoba Nurses' Union saying, fairly accurate. That is what she said in her response to it. She had to admit it was fairly accurate because the numbers were actual numbers, and they were presented in the form of the ad, based on current wage rates, based on end wage rates offered and the total wage increases. All the numbers were absolutely accurate in that ad. The fact of the matter is -(interjection)- Yes, I noticed that.

The fact of the matter is that when this information has been put forward by the nurses' union, they used, for example, registered nurses' salaries in comparison to the rest of the country. That is the basis of their comparison and that is the basis of numbers that have been put forward, what it means to general duty nurses who are registered nurses. That is why those figures have been used to refute the figures that have been put forth on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, we are not here to have a war of words; we are here to seek solutions. I suggest that to seek a solution that both sides want to find a common middle ground, and we are prepared to return to the table to do that. We did that when it was indicated on the Action Line on CJOB one morning that the head of the nurses' union was willing to seek resolution and laid out four issues that she wanted to be dealt with. MHO returned to the table and dealt with those issues, and we still do not have a resolution. We still look for another answer.

Government Position

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The fact is that many of the nurses we have talked to and

listened to are saying that they cannot stay in the province anymore or cannot stay in the profession anymore if this is the forced down settlement, quite a bit less than the 20 percent on the nurses in this province.

We have underspent our health care system \$60 million over two years. Much of that was done with the sweat and dedication of nurses in our hospitals, who are the key to reforming our health care system, the key to reforming our health care system in partnership.

I would ask the Premier to state in the House and to Manitobans that the position taken by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) that there is not one more cent to settle this strike is not the position of the Government, and the position the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has written in his letter, that the Alberta solution is the alternative to more money, would also be rejected so that we can have some leadership, creativity and flexibility at the table to get this thing settled for the patients and people of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in the budget of last October, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) laid out the financial picture that we face, not facing revenue increases like they did in '87-88 of 19.6 percent, or '88-89 of 12.4 percent, not facing major, major increases in revenue, but facing flat revenues, no increase in revenues. Under those circumstances, the Minister of Finance laid it out in his budget in October. He laid it out again on December 14 when he gave his fiscal projections. -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker, every time we have attempted to be open and honest and as forthright as possible instead of just talking in rhetoric, instead of talking to the audience that he is addressing in such a grandiose manner, why does the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) not go out there and apologize to nurses for putting them in this position? For six straight years, 2 percent, 3 percent, 3 percent, 3 percent—for six straight years—why does he not come forward and have the courage of his convictions to tell the nurses that he is sorry for what he did and that he has put us in a big hole in this province?

* (1355)

Manitoba Nurses' Union Premier's Involvement

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, what we need is a show of good faith, and we have not seen that good faith.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) wrote a letter to MHO and the management of the hospitals congratulating them, and I concur with that, but I would like to see him equally congratulate those nurses who have been doing their part to make sure that the essential agreement is as workable as it has been and has led to the kind of quality care that we have had in the province.

The Premier has indicated that he has been involved since the beginning. Well, my question to the Premier is: Was he also involved in the statement of the Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in reply to a question which I asked in which he said there would be a money offer on the table before the strike vote was taken, and there was no such offer?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it has been several weeks, and there have been a great many things take place, but my recollection is that we gave authorization for an offer to MHO prior to the strike vote being taken and that MHO, in order to structure it and spread it over the many categories, chose to wait until after the strike vote in order to put that offer forward.

Pay Equity

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if this Minister has no more contact with MHO than to be able to know what they can crunch together in a 24-hour period, then he does not deserve to be the Minister of Health.

My question to the Premier is: Why has this Government taken the negotiated position that pay equity, which is the right of the nursing profession because they have been maltreated as have most women's professions without receiving proper payment for the services they deliver, why has pay equity been made a part and parcel of this negotiated settlement instead of the legal right to which nurses in this province are entitled?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Really the Leader of the Liberal Party has not read the legislation, because it does apply to only 23 institutions that are designated in that legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there is no legal or legislative mandate for it, and there is no funding or budgeted funds provided for it. Under those circumstances, it clearly must be added on to the next round of negotiations. We concur with it, so it has been added into the settlement, but it is in the settlement as a separate issue, because it is not required by law, nor was any funding or budgetary amount provided for in the past. Therefore, it is new money on the table and that is very clearly why it is there.

Mrs. Carstairs: Tragically enough, Mr. Speaker, pay equity is not part and parcel of a law with regard to school divisions either. This Government has offered not enough, but at least they have offered 50-cent dollars outside of negotiated settlements with school divisions should they move to a pay equity model. They have given the University of Manitoba alone, in two years, \$5.6 million to settle pay equity.

Why are nurses treated differently and asked to settle this within a negotiated settlement?

Mr. Filmon: They are not, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we are paying 100 percent of the pay equity additional amount, and the difference is shown between those who will be getting pay equity; those in the non-pay equity institutions will be getting over 3 percent more. The difference is 20.1 percent for pay equity institutions who have already received it and 23.4 percent for non-pay equity institutions. It is shown clearly, out front, up front, as honestly and openly as we can. It is 100 percent dollars funded by the provincial Government, and we are happy to do so.

* (1400)

Manitoba Nurses' Union Pay Equity

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Premier.

Rolling pay equity into the overall wage offer to the nurses of Manitoba is an insult to Manitoba nurses, and it is an insult to all women in Manitoba who have fought long and hard for this historical injustice to be redressed.

My question is to the Premier: How does the Premier justify this action when his Government, his colleagues, supported pay equity legislation and its extension into the broader public sector in 1985? How does he reconcile that position with his Minister of Labour's (Mr. Praznik) support for the previous NDP administration's decision to phase in pay

equity into the other health care facilities after the 23 had been fully implemented?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): If there has been an insult accorded, if there has been a wrong done, it was done by the New Democratic administration that drafted The Pay Equity Act and specifically left out 66 institutions and all of the people who work in those institutions. We have made no insult. We have made no exemption. We have included them in the offer, and the offer is structured as it was in the ad so that some who are in the -(interjection)- Mr. Speaker, regrettably, the Members opposite want to make light of this and want to have fun with it. It is not an issue that should be laughed at, and the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should be ashamed of himself for making light of it. The fact of the matter is—

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I most definitely was not laughing and was making a comment from my seat about the duplicity of this Government when it comes to negotiating—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member did not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: We have been clear and up front. We do believe that pay equity ought to be paid to the 66 institutions that the NDP left out of The Pay Equity Act, Mr. Speaker. We believe in it. We are committed to it, and we have added it into those institutions and to the nurses working at those institutions so they will be treated equally instead of the way they were by the New Democratic administration, because we believe that they ought to be treated equally.

Government Offer

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Talking about ads, Mr. Speaker, the ad that appeared by the Government in this weekend's paper is unprecedented. It has been approved by the Premier. It is paid for by taxpayers' dollars. It firmly plants this Government at the bargaining table.

So there is one question that has to be answered today, and that is: When will this Government be presenting a new offer to the nurses of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have said time and time again that we have only limited dollars available to us. We have laid out again today for the Members of this Legislature how serious the fiscal situation is that we face at this time in the province. We have said that we treat the nurses as a special case, that they are being offered more than double what anybody else in the public sector has been or will be offered in this province. We have said that because we want to ensure that the nurses understand that we want to work our way out of the hole and the mess that they were left in by the New Democratic administration.

We want to work those salaries up. We have to be given sufficient opportunity to do that. We have made a start that we think is fair and reasonable. We have attempted to do that, Mr. Speaker, but still it takes two to make an agreement. We have not had a counteroffer to the last offer that was made that included additional money for LPNs, that included the Nursing Advisory Committee, that included other changes to try and achieve an agreement, but did not. So we have to wait and see whether or not there is any middle ground that can be found.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, that is factually not correct. How can the Premier not make a commitment today that he will be presenting a new offer to the nurses of Manitoba when it was his Government that asked for a response from the nurses to their so-called latest offer, a response which came in the numbers of a 94 percent rejection with and 81 percent turnout? The Premier asked for an answer; he got his answer. Now it is his move.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we have not had a counteroffer from the nurses' union and we have not had an indication that they are prepared to give a counteroffer. Under those circumstances, we have no further place to go.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: So much for the give and take that the Premier has been talking about. It has been all giving from the nurses and nothing from the Government.

I want to ask the Premier: Is the Premier saying that after his Government asked for a response from the MNU, got the answer, that his Government does not have a new offer and is only going to continue negotiating with confrontation, intimidation, blackmail and strong-arm tactics?

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the word "blackmail" imputes very strong motives to Members of this House. They said that it means in context that they have used their power or their position in some fashion to force a settlement at against the law. I would ask the Member to either state her case or to withdraw.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister would care to check Beauchesne's, "blackmail" has been ruled parliamentary. It is certainly accurate in describing the tactics of this Government—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Government House Leader did not have a point of order, but I will remind all Honourable Members once again to pick and choose your words very carefully.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we remain ready to have MHO return to the table. If there is an indication that there is a further way to look at the problem, we remain ready to have MHO return to the table.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: It sure seems like blackmail to me when the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) says a fair settlement would mean the Alberta solution, reduced patient care, layoffs and bed closures.

Department of Health Staffing Increases

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, on a new question to the Premier, over the past few weeks and particularly today with what we would call the nurses' briefing of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to MLAs, the Government has been talking tough times and using that as a justification for not providing a fair settlement to the nurses of Manitoba.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) how he can justify that kind of tough talk to the nurses of Manitoba while allowing his Minister of Health to increase his Communications budget in just three years by over 360 percent and allowing a very significant increase in the administration of the running of that department?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member has asked a question, and I am sure she would like an answer.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I very much regret, given the seriousness of the situation that Manitobans face in this current dispute, that my honourable friend would not at least present accurate and honest information in her press releases and in her questions.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Johns indicated that the Communications staff, for instance, increased from one to six whilst I have been Minister.

I will table a January 7, 1988, memo from Doug Shattuck, Director of Health Communications, indicating that there were four individuals, not the one that she alleges. That is factual error No. 1.

Factual error No. 2, Mr. Speaker, is that we took from Admin and Finance our French Language Services co-ordinator and put that individual as a management initiative in Communications, because we believe communications should be in both French and English. That was not the decision of the previous Government. Furthermore, we decided that we would bring a staff position from the commission over to the Department of Health, Communications, to co-ordinate communications between the two.

There was absolutely no growth in the positions in Communications from what we inherited, only bringing in French Language communications, which I believe the New Democratic Party at one time was in favour of, but I do not know whether they have since changed their mind. I table that as No. 1, Mr. Speaker.

No. 2, my honourable friend made an allegation that there was an increase of three staff years since we came in, in Admin and Finance. Mr. Speaker, that was accomplished through Treasury Board Minute, March 21, 1988, prior to the election which defeated my honourable friends—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, what that March 21, 1988, decision of the NDP Treasury Board was to do was to provide three administrative staff to handle the new Home Care, Continuing Care contract. We agreed that those staff were necessary.

Those are the increases, all in place by the NDP. My honourable friend has not been honest with the people of Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my honourable friend. I would like to table that second memo as well.

* (1410)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, if they are talking about honesty, then the Minister of Health should account for the document I referred to that was done by his own departmental staff comparing the growth in the Administration and Communication for his Government compared to the former NDP administration.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Would the Honourable Member kindly put her question now, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Yes, I would like to ask the Minister of Health how he can justify increasing Administration and Communications staff at the expense—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: —by, Mr. Speaker, cutting indirect services throughout the Department of Health, which this document clearly reveals, in the areas of mental health, community health, health promotion and so on.

Mr. Speaker, we want to know how he can do any kind of increase in those areas and talk tough with the nurses when at the very heart of this dispute is a severe shortage of nurses—

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

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, in my first answer, in the document I tabled, was a document from the Director of Communications, Department of Health. The date on that memo was January 7, 1988, when my honourable friend participated in those kinds of Cabinet decisions. Now my honourable friend then says how can I justify that? It was done before the 1988 election by the former Government. Now I suggest she ask herself how she justifies that.

What we have done since that, Mr. Speaker, is bring the French Language Services co-ordinator from Admin and Finance into Communications so

that my honourable friends the Francophone community in Manitoba might communicate with my department in the language of their choice if it happens to be French.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend says, how can we justify that? It is because it did not happen; it is a phantom of her creative imagination.

Manitoba Nurses' Union Contract Length

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if in fact the Minister has had to hire more staff because his staff was overworked or they were performing functions that they should not have had to perform, nobody would understand that better than the nurses.

Mr. Speaker, there are issues on the table for which there seems to be no movement from the Government. Until that movement occurs, we are not going to have a settlement.

Can the Premier (Mr. Filmon) tell the House today why this Government is insisting on a three-year contract?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend has made one incorrect statement in her preamble. There was no new hiring of staff into the Communications Department of the ministry of Health; there simply was not any. Now my honourable friend the Leader of the Second Party in Opposition indicates, why not a two-year settlement? We have made that proposition known through MHO that should the MNU and their leadership wish to have a two-year contract—that was even discussed, I believe, in terms of the CJOB Action Line—we are willing to consider a two-year agreement. Within the financial mandate that was granted to MHO, we will negotiate a two-year agreement.

If that is the kind of flexibility that the MNU believes might stop this strike and help get patient care back, we will go back to the table tomorrow.

Pension Trusteeship

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): So let us move it along. We have now got them agreeable that we can go into a two-year contract. Let us move on to the trusteeship of pensions.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House today,

or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) if he would like, why they have not agreed to co-trusteeship of pensions when the Civil Service have had it since 1939 and the teachers have had a form of co-trusteeship since 1961?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, absolutely no reason why we have not agreed to it other than the fact that it has not been agreed to at the bargaining table. I have said, and I will repeat, this Government does not have any fundamental disagreement with a form of joint trusteeship that the nurses may request in their pension plan, but that is a subject that the negotiators are working on. They have not come to an equitable agreement, but should they, we will have absolutely no objection to joint trusteeship by nurses of their pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, that is in place at St. Boniface General Hospital as one pension plan for nurses. We find nothing wrong with that concept and would accede to any agreement that the MNU and the MHO would come to at the negotiating table. We have no fundamental disagreement.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to proceeding with Routine Proceedings, I would like to draw the attention of Honourable Members to the loge to my left, where we have with us this afternoon Mr. Ben Hanuschak, a former Speaker and a former MLA for Burrows.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon, sir.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I also have a ruling for the House.

On October 26, 1990, during the Budget Debate, I took under advisement a point of order respecting words spoken by the Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). That day was a rather contentious one in this House, with numerous points of order being raised, and this one was inadvertently not ruled upon.

The point of order was raised by the Government House Leader (Mr. Manness) alleging that the Honourable Member for Flin Flon was imputing unworthy motives to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey). The words complained of included, "I

do take the Minister of Northern Affairs' comments yesterday as a threat, not a thinly-veiled threat but an open threat, to the people of northern Manitoba that they better vote according to the dictates of the Minister of Northern Affairs, rather than their own conscience."

As I have ruled many times, this is a place where contentious issues and language are often the order of the day. As I have said many times before this is not a tea party, or any other kind of party, for that matter. What occurred was, in my opinion, a dispute over the facts.

Therefore, I must rule that there was no point of order.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), 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 intransigence of this Government in its handling of the nurses' strike.

Mr. Speaker: Before determining whether the motion meets the requirements of our Rule 27, the Honourable Member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) will have five minutes to state her case for urgency of debate on this matter. A spokesperson for each of the other Parties will also have five minutes to address the position of their Party respecting the urgency of the matter.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, as Members of the House know, there are two reasons and only two reasons for which such a debate can take place. One is that the matter be raised at the earliest possible moment. Although the strike began on the 1st of January, this House has not been in Session. So there has been no earlier time in which to precipitate a debate of this nature among the Members of the House. The second thing which must be fulfilled is that there is no other opportunity in which this kind of debate would take place.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have been called into a one-day Session and a one-day Session only. It is not anticipated that we will meet again until sometime in March. We are now 21 days into a province-wide nurses' strike. We are into a situation in which care is not being given at its

optimum level to many who are in need throughout the province of Manitoba.

This decision of the nurses to go on strike was not taken lightly, Mr. Speaker. No one understands better the need of the patient than the nurse. It is the nurse who provides that care on a day-to-day base. So when they determined that they had no option but to go on strike, they did it with the highest possible motives. That was to ensure the long-term quality of patient care to the citizens of the province of Manitoba.

Since that time, we have seen very little in the way of long negotiations with the Government representative through MHO. In fact, I was absolutely shocked one night on television when I watched our Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) say it had nothing to do with him. He was washing his hands of the whole thing. It reminded me of Pontius Pilate.

* (1420)

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that this strike be settled. It can only be settled in good faith with the relationships of our nurses if we are to guarantee that there is quality patient care in the future in the province of Manitoba. Therefore, Sir, despite the fact that I know it is with great reluctance that we would enter this debate today, I ask for you to understand that this motion is made because of the very serious nature of the events that are occurring in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, indeed most Members of this House would be aware of our rules in regard to matters of urgent and public importance. I want to indicate that we had considered bringing such a resolution.

There had been an agreement to deal with other matters today. We felt it was important to live up to the spirit of that agreement because we believe in process. Indeed what is happening in terms of nurses is very much a process issue. We are saying very clearly with our actions that we believe the process is very important that it be followed.

I want to indicate, however, that there may be a way in which we can deal with this very important issue and deal with The Environment Act. That would be to set aside this afternoon, or a portion of this afternoon for this matter, Mr. Speaker, and also deal with the environment Bill, which certainly is important as well, at our evening sitting, or if we complete debate on this matter earlier that would be

a way of in keeping with the initial agreement and would allow for debate on this important issue.

I think the position of the New Democratic Party on the question of the nurses' strike and the crisis in our health care system is very clear. It was indicated in Question Period. We spent what time we had in Question Period raising those issues.

We have been raising them not just here, Mr. Speaker, in this House but on the picket lines, in the coffee shops, door to door. We have been talking to nurses on the picket lines. We have been talking to members of the general public about their views.

What I find amazing about the circumstance is that members of the general public are seeing behind the facade of the Government and their trickery when it comes to misinformation. They are seeing the crisis in our health care system. They are seeing through the veiled threats, Mr. Speaker. That is why we have no qualms at all about debating the very real crisis in our health care system.

It is not just a question of the current strike. There has been a crisis that has been ongoing that this Government has not recognized. This strike was led into by nursing shortages, by burn-out in the workplace that the Government failed to recognize.

They had their opportunity, Mr. Speaker. They are now not dealing with those issues. That is why we, in the New Democratic Party, would like to indicate that, yes, indeed, regardless of what agreements were in place we see a way of both dealing with The Environment Act, which was an important priority of the business today, but also dealing not just with the nurses' strike but what the real issue is and how it affects not just nurses but patients and the public of Manitoba generally. That is the crisis in this health care system and the fact that increasingly, the people of Manitoba have lost confidence in this Government and its complete inability not just to handle the economy, which they use as an excuse for their actions in the health care system, but their complete inability to deal with the health care crisis in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I concur with the Leader of the Second Opposition Party that this represents the earliest possible moment that we could discuss this major health care issue. Certainly we expect that there will be no other opportunity.

I must indicate that this is however a perfect

example of how hard feelings sometimes begin, as between political Parties in this House. The Liberal House Leader was very much present when certain discussions took place with respect to the order of business that would be conducted today, January 21. At that time, Opposition gave me verbal assurances that there would be no surprise votes or debate and that we would dwell on Bill 24. As the House Leader of the NDP indicated, certainly they were mindful of that, and they have lived up to at least the spirit of those discussions.

Mr. Speaker, the Government certainly is prepared to welcome the debate at this point in time. It is an urgent matter. There is an awful lot that needs, again, to be put onto the record, and we welcome your ruling in support of the debate.

Point of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader (Mr. Manness) and the House Leader of the official Opposition (Mr. Ashton) have made assertions. I believe they should have to withdraw those assertions, implying that I was in violation of an agreement. If they will read the agreement, they will find that I am not in violation of the agreement, and I would ask that they withdraw—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. Order, please. Dealing with the matter before us—order, please; order, please.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: There are two conditions to be satisfied for this matter to proceed.

The Honourable Leader of the Second Opposition Party (Mrs. Carstairs), in accordance with Sub-Rule 27.(1) did provide the required notice of this matter of urgent public importance. I thank the Honourable Members for their comments in offering advice on whether the motion is in order.

The 6th Edition of Beauchesne's, Citation 389, indicates that in order for debate to proceed, the matter raised must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention. Also Beauchesne's Citation 390 states that urgency of debate does not apply to the matter itself, but means that the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough, and that the

public interest demands that discussion takes place immediately.

For the Speaker to be satisfied that the matter should be given priority over the regularly scheduled business of the House and debated immediately, there must be no other reasonable opportunity to address this matter.

As all Honourable Members are aware, the House was called in Session today to deal with one piece of legislation. There are then no ordinary opportunities for debate of this matter, such as a grievance, a Private Member's Resolution, or a second or a third reading debate on a Supply Bill or other Bill. The matter of the ongoing nurses' strike is in my opinion a matter that does warrant the immediate attention of this House; therefore, I am ruling that the Member's motion is in order and of urgent public importance.

Therefore, the question before the House is, shall the debate proceed? All those in favour please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

* * *

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we have in the province of Manitoba, as I indicated earlier, a nurses' strike, a nurses' strike that has up to 10,000 nurses on the picket line. Those nurses do not want to be there. Those nurses want to be at the bedside. They want to be looking after the patients of this province. They want to make sure that they have working conditions which enable them to provide the bedside care which is what their training has equipped them to do.

* (1430)

I spoke with a group of nurses just the other day and one of them who has not nursed since 1988 indicated, with tears in her eyes, that she will never return to the nursing profession. She said: I cannot take it anymore. I cannot experience the pulling of me in five different directions all at the same time. I do not want to be forced with cleaning up the vomit on the floor because I do not want that patient to become more sick because he or she has to look at it, but at the same time, I know if I do that I should be taking a blood pressure of someone in the next

room, or checking on an IV of somebody else down the floor. I do not have time to do all of those things, and I cannot take the stress anymore of not feeling that I am doing the job for which I was trained and for which I was equipped.

I heard one member of the media say that you can give a lot of dignity with a few dollars. Well, I take great exception to that, because I do not believe that dollars are the only issue in this campaign. In fact, I think for many of the nurses it is not even the primary issue of this particular strike, despite what others may say, but they are underpaid. They are underpaid when we compare them with other provinces. They are underpaid when we compare them with people in similar occupations with similar levels of responsibility.

I asked, for example, to get some figures on an RCMP constable and was told that they start at a training salary of about \$28,000, and after three years, they are at \$43,000.00. Well, there are no nurses in this province who finds themselves in that situation, yet the stress of a nurse is every much as important and every much as live and a pressure upon them as the stress upon an RCMP constable.

I do not want constables paid less; I want nurses paid more, because we have to accept a reality. Young women and even fewer young men are choosing not to go into the profession. They are choosing not to go into this profession because they do not believe it is a profession in which they are treated with dignity. All you have to do is talk to a nurse and ask how many of them are recommending that their daughters or sons enter the nursing profession.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Well, my mother was a nurse, and she did not recommend it back in 1958. In fact, although I had thought I had submitted an application to university for a Bachelor of Nursing Science, I found that when the application came back with approval, I had been accepted into premed. What I had not known was that my mother had changed the application before it went into the mailbox, because even then, she felt that it was a profession in which individuals were not treated with the dignity which they deserved.

Thousands and thousands of primarily young women, but more and more often some young men, are choosing to go into the profession, because it is a way in which they can serve humanity, but in that

service to humanity, they want to believe that they are treated fairly.

There are two issues that I raised in Question Period today, which bother me very much. One is the simple issue of trusteeship of pensions. I do not know why that was not knocked off the bargaining table on Day One, because it was concurred to by Government in their negotiating processing.

When I spoke with representatives of The Manitoba Teachers' Society and I asked why, in 1961, they had not been granted some form of trusteeship earlier, they gave me the argument, well, you know, I mean, teachers would not know how to handle their own money so you have to have accountants and those that are intricately knowledgeable in high finance to participate in those kinds of decisions. Surely that is not why we have not agreed to co-trusteeship with nurses.

As the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has pointed out, it has even been agreed to in the St. Boniface Hospital. One hospital has been forward thinking enough to realize that there was no reason why nurses could not participate. So why can this not be extended, just by a sheer agreement today, that is off the bargaining table because it is settled.

We heard today from the Minister, although I must admit there were some intakes of breath in the gallery, that sure his Government was prepared for a two-year contract. Well, if the Government is prepared for a two-year contract, then let us get back to the table late this afternoon and let us start negotiating on that basis.

The Government says they do not have any money left. Well, let us take a look at what that wage offer really is. We do have the MHO ads, but I have been through them over and over again, and I cannot come up with the figures that they give here.

Now, if they are compounding the figures, perhaps that will give a couple extra percentage points. If they are including pay equity, which is a guaranteed right, then of course we can come up with those figures. The reality is that the offer is 14.5 percent, but when you are already 30 percent behind it is not much of an offer over three years.

The Government is quite correct when it blames the NDP for two issues, that one, pay equity when it was passed into law only made reference to 23 institutions and should have made reference to every institution in the province. That was a fault of the previous Government.

The principle was established in the legislation that nurses are entitled to pay equity and the principle of pay equity, not as part of a negotiated settlement. This Government has not insisted on it being part of negotiated settlements with other institutions to which it has either legislated or mandated pay equity. The school divisions negotiate with their employees, pay equity is not a part of that. The own wording of the Government's press release indicates clearly that it is apart and above and in no way part of the negotiated settlement expected of the school divisions.

Well, if it is not part of the school divisions, why is it part of MHO? If the universities can enforce and put into effect pay equity and get \$5.6 million from the Government to do it, and I applaud it, why when it comes to the nurses is it considered part of the negotiated settlement?

Let us get that off the table and negotiate in good faith by speaking a common language, a language that you speak with others with whom you are negotiating. That is not what the Government is doing. They have made a special case scenario for the nurses and that is not equitable and that is not fair.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there have only been two times when the sides have gone back to the bargaining table in 21 days. Would the Government please make the commitment today to go back to the table, to put new items on the table for discussion, so that those negotiations can take place so that nurses can do what they most want to do, which is to be back at the bedside with the patients for whom they care?

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Lels (St. Johns): I want to begin by saluting the nurses of Manitoba, saluting the nurses of Manitoba for their courage, their compassion, their determination, their unity, their solidarity, in the face of great odds, the odds of inclement weather, of horrible freezing conditions and faced with a barrage of intimidation and strong-arm tactics by this Government and the administrators of the hospitals in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear that the people of Manitoba are troubled, worried and afraid. For all of us, 1991 is off to a most troublesome start. When we heard that announcement some four, five days ago now, although it seems like weeks, about the American bombs hitting Baghdad, and the war, and

the news that the war had begun, it struck fear and terror into all of our hearts. We cannot ignore in the face of that international conflict, the trauma and the fear that people are facing here in the province of Manitoba by a situation that could have been averted.

Madam Deputy Speaker, 1991 began on a most troublesome note on the domestic front because of this Conservative Government who decided to begin the new year with a frontal attack on labour and saw Manitoba nurses being forced—and I say forced, because this strike could have been avoided—into that most difficult decision of strike action.

* (1440)

Today is Day 21 of the strike. We are now into the longest strike involving nurses in the history of Canada. As one nurse said to me at the Brandon General Hospital strike headquarters this weekend, that is not the kind of notoriety I was hoping for.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me say that this dubious distinction, this record of achievement, is not a black mark against the nurses of Manitoba. This will long be remembered in the history of Manitoba as a black mark against the Conservative Government of Manitoba.

It is an incredible commentary on a Government for a strike that could have been avoided. It could have been avoided if this Conservative Government had the slightest predilection for co-operation, had any appreciation for the value of nursing and nurses in our society today, had any commitment to quality health in terms of Government behaviour.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it has been 21 days of confrontation, of intimidation, of blackmail, inflexibility and lack of leadership. Let us just go through the facts very quickly. Let us back up to the fact that this Government, despite as the Minister of Finance admitted today, knowing about the difficult economic situation of this province going back six months, initiated no dialogue with the Manitoba nurses about how they were going to approach the wage expectations of nurses.

This Government waited till a minute before midnight before putting a monetary offer on the table. It waited till the last moment before the end of the nurses' contract before sitting down to discuss the most serious overwhelming issue of all facing nurses today and that is that of wages and working conditions.

Then let us look at what happened shortly after. The labour dispute took effect on January 1. This Government has the audacity to put on the table an offer that includes rightful gains made by women and workers in this province—that being pay equity—into the overall wage offer. This Government, who made a commitment in '85, who joined with the NDP Government in '85 to extend pay equity into the broader public sector, has the audacity to be less than dishonest about the way it presents its figures and actually rolls legislative pay equity—something that nurses and other workers have fought long and hard for—into the overall wage offer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that was one divide and conquer tactic of this Government, but let us look at another one. They put on the table an offer, a package that includes zero percent for licensed practical nurses in the province of Manitoba, a deplorable divide and conquer tactic which will hit rural areas particularly hard. That later position of an \$800 bonus does little to address the concerns of LPNs in our province today. It was, in fact, more of an insult than anything else.

Let us look at the next development in this strike, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) tries a little blackmail, tries a little threat, suggests that a fair settlement for nurses, the Alberta solution, as he has clarified today in his correspondence, will mean possible reduction in services to patients, reduced patient care, layoff of other hospital staff, and bed closures.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is nothing short of a threat and an intimidation tactic and pure blackmail, in terms of the nurses of Manitoba. It is in fact unfair bargaining, it is bad bargaining, it is unfair labour practices and this Government should be ashamed of the tactics it has used at the bargaining table.

Let us look at the next development. Nurses remain united and strong in their resolve and rally in large numbers to the steps of the Legislature, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province cannot even open his door, come out of the Legislature and address the nurses.

What does he do in response to the letter that the nurses were then forced to send to the Premier asking him to be personally involved? He sends a one-line letter, signed by his secretary, saying: This

is to acknowledge receipt of your letter. Nothing more, not a comment on the nurses' concerns.

That scenario, Madam Deputy Speaker, was followed by MHO and Ron Birt, saying they are putting a so-called new offer on the table and saying it is only there on the table if the Manitoba Nurses' Union recommends acceptance or stays neutral. We have never seen such interference, such intimidation, in the history of the labour movement in the Province of Manitoba, and if that was not enough it was followed by the Premier of this province, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and Ron Birt, as the chief negotiator for the Government, again attempting to intervene in the collective bargaining process by trying to tell the nurses that their own democratic operations, their long-standing traditions for democracy and the way they run their trade union movement was not good enough, that they had to have a secret ballot.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear, based on everything that we have seen to date, that the Government would be better off if it spent a little less time intervening in the democratic operations of the Manitoba Nurses' Union, and was a little more involved in getting its own house in order.

When I say getting its own house in order, that means doing what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) said this Government was doing, but is not doing in terms of streamlining administration and cutting back in areas that are not directly affecting people and people services in the Province of Manitoba.

Despite what the Minister of Health will do with numbers, and how he will manipulate figures, and how he will distort the true situation, he cannot deny a document provided by his own departmental staff outlining the fact that there has been a 366 percent increase in Communication staff, and a 33 percent increase in Administration Policy and Planning functions, for his department in just three years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we say if this Government has the money for communicators, political advisers and administrators, then it has the money to settle fairly with the nurses of Manitoba.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Madam Deputy Speaker, this is an instance in Manitoba's history that I do not think any of us relish. No one, and particularly nurses who are dedicated to their profession, wants to be on the picket lines today, and we do not want them to be on those

picket lines today. We would prefer to have nurses carrying out their professionally trained roles of caring for the citizens of Manitoba, and I know that is where they would want to be.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is precisely why in building up to this contract negotiation we agreed, without question, without equivocation, that the nurses of Manitoba, particularly RNs of Manitoba, could make a legitimate case that their relative positioning in Canada had fallen behind.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is because they signed an agreement with the previous administration for 3 percent. It was an agreement of three years' duration which provided less salary increase to nurses than a similar agreement negotiated with the doctors of Manitoba by the same Government. I regret that the Leader of the New Democratic Party, prior to December, would boast across the floor to me, well, we settled with 3 percent with the nurses, and what are you going to do? We put an offer on the table that is more than double what he put on in the last three-year agreement for nurses.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is one ingredient that the phone calls in my office from all Manitobans, but particularly from nurses, want to know. They want to know accurate information, and my honourable friend, the official Opposition Health Critic, was very, very inaccurate in some of the statements she put on the record. I proved to her today that her information on our Communications branch was not correct, and she persists in carrying out the false allegation. I cannot help that, but nurses in Manitoba want to know what is on the table for them, what is in their pay packets.

* (1450)

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are a number of issues that we had to come to grips with in terms of attempting to craft a settlement for the nurses of Manitoba on January 1. First and foremost was an attempt to reinstate their relative positioning of fifth across Canada. The offer of 20 percent over three years does that. The other issue that was made is the relative positioning of RNs was eighth; the relative positioning of LPNs in provinces with similarly trained professionals—we were No. 1. That is why MHO, within the financial commitment of Government, decided to do a first-year, zero-percent offer to LPNs to put more money

toward the RNs and those professionally trained nurses—to close the gap quicker for RNs, if you will.

Now, in the counteroffer made just last week, we agreed that if there is one unfair part of that package that was put together, it was the fact that LPNs received only the pay equity increase in the non-pay equity facilities as of January 1, so we put a 3 percent one-time bonus into that offer. We sweetened the offer to try to take away that concern.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there was an issue of length of agreement, and I simply refer to my honourable friends that in the CJOB Action Line show of January 10, 1991, I indicated that we would talk about a two-year agreement if that is your concern. We can bargain again in two years. Clearly and unequivocally we would—that was January 10, no hidden secret there.

You want to talk, Madam Deputy Speaker, about the recruitment issue, because recruitment of nurses to the profession is a very key and important issue. It is one of the reasons, for instance, why last June we undertook and funded with the nursing education schools an advertising program to make nursing an attractive profession. That is why we hosted in Manitoba the National Nursing Symposium, and that is why this offer, which is currently on the table from MHO, will have on January 1, 1993, a starting salary for a registered nurse in the province of Manitoba of \$36,990 per year. That was indicated by Ms. Chernecki, the President of the MNU, quote, well, you have addressed the recruitment. The recruitment issue has been dealt with in terms of the starting salary available to RNs in the province of Manitoba.

In terms of retention, the MHO said, it is unfair that career nurses working more than five years do not have any further increments to their take-home pay, and July 1, part of the financial commitment of the Government was crafted to put an extra increment, a sixth increment, into the pay package of nursing professionals in Manitoba starting July 1. That equates to approximately a 3.3 percent increase in the pay package of nurses in Manitoba who have longer than a five-year career in nursing in this province, that recognize their long service, their outstanding service to the health care system of Manitoba. Again, a partial recognition and addressing of the retention issue in nursing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now pay equity—pay equity has been an issue of

confusion. This offer, Madam Deputy Speaker, does not include—in coming to 20.1 percent over three years, which is the rejected offer—does not include the \$12 million in retroactive pay equity which flowed in mid-December to all those nurses in the 23 included facilities. It does not include that. The 20.1 percent is in addition to that, but what is included is for every single nurse in Manitoba who was left out by that 1985 legislation passed by the former Government, every single nurse excluded by that legislation on January 1 of this year will be included in pay equity and their base pay reflects that of a pay equity nurse as of January 1, 1991. That is why the MHO ad indicates that a Nurse II, in a non-pay equity facility, will have a 23.5 percent increase over the duration of this contract. That means that two years from today, should this offer be accepted, that Nurse II, in a non-pay equity facility, will receive two years from today 23.5 percent more money in their pay packet. That same nurse in a pay equity facility is 20.1 percent.

Now the issue is there, who is telling the truth and who is not. I simply indicate to you that this ad by MHO breaks out the nursing categories and what this contract will mean to nurses during its duration. These pay schedules will be attached to the contract, if signed, so that it is not some incorrect information as Members in the Opposition would say. These become the rates by which nurses in Manitoba are paid, and do you think that the Manitoba Health Organization has the luxury of putting false information in the paper? Absolutely not, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is why I say to you, and I implore my honourable friends in the Opposition, you can try to harness this into a political issue. You can do that, but you have to make your position clear to Manitobans and you have to be honest with Manitobans and nurses when you do that. Do not lead nurses down the garden path saying, we would do more if you were a New Democrat marching on the picket line, because your record was in 1985 a zero percent increase for three months, then followed by a 2 percent increase.

Now the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) did not boast across the floor of that. He just boasts of settling it 3 percent last time with the nurses. So if you are marching on the picket line, be honest with the nurses and tell them what you would accede to. Having done that, Madam Deputy Speaker, what you must do is then be honest with the people of Manitoba and indicate from whence you will get the

monies, because all Manitobans are taxpayers. I simply say that we have made this financial commitment to nursing in Manitoba because we believe in what they do. We respect their professional dedication; we want them to be working on behalf of the patients of Manitoba. We have recognized that by agreeing to the Nursing Advisory Committee. We have taken a wage settlement to bring 20 percent more salaries to RNs over the duration of this agreement in recognition that they fell, in relative terms, behind compared to other provinces. As the President of the MNU has said, we have dealt with the recruitment issue with a starting wage contract negotiation of \$36,990 to help with the recruitment of nursing to that very dedicated and fine profession.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I close by urging all Manitobans to consider accurately their statements, not for political gain, but for information and proper informing of the nurses of Manitoba, who indeed are confused with so many mixed messages. This message is the honest message from MHO.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but comment—or Madam Speaker -(interjection)- Madam Deputy Speaker, that is right. Perhaps we would not have such a problem, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we had more women in Cabinet with the present situation. I apologize to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Maybe it is a coincidence, maybe it is not, that we have the lowest ratio of women in Cabinet in the country with the present Premier (Mr. Filmon) when we have dispute with a group of people who are 85 percent women in the province of Manitoba.

* (1500)

I cannot help but start with the Minister of Health's (Mr. Orchard) words. Honesty—is that not rather ironic from the Minister of Health? I listened to the radio station, the primary methodology of communication between the Minister and the nurses, and I heard the comment that we have offered the union and all the nurses of Manitoba 20 percent over three years. Then I did something that I think all Members of this House are responsible for doing. I broke down the offer.

Three thousand people were offered zero and in fact offered 9 percent over three years, way less than the inflation rate. Another 3,500 had been offered a rate that too was under 15 percent and would probably be below the inflation rate. A third

group, if you were in a certain facility at a certain rate of pay and of a certain amount of compounding, you may get up to that. You may be one of the individuals out of that whole group that may be in fact at that level.

So the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has put a neon sign up there as damage control and political manipulation. That will not settle this crisis, Madam Deputy Speaker. It will not settle the dispute between the nurses and the Government. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) today disappointed me, because I thought that was one thing he would not say in his answer to his question. He gave a *carte blanche* answer, we have offered 20 percent.

If you have over a \$260 million payroll and the MHO numbers are \$42 million over three years, I suggest to you that the nurses have been telling the truth and the Government is on another planet in terms of the facts of this matter. There is absolutely no question about that, because if you put 42 into 260, what does it come up with? I mean, even all these little fancy, you know, permutations and compounding of pay equity here and there, and everything else to confuse the public, are not going to confuse the nurses. It will not confuse the person who has to vote ultimately and has to settle ultimately in this dispute. The Government should understand that. You can get Peter Warren on your side all day long, but it will not settle the contract with 10,000 nurses.

Now the Premier mentions past settlements. That is appropriate, but the operative word is settlement. Sometimes in negotiations the maternity leave clause was the issue, sometimes greater vacations, sometimes part-time flexibility. Sometimes job security clauses were the issue at the table, and sometimes the issues at the table were pay. Yes, about every eight to 10 years, we do fall behind. We cannot retain our nurses in this province, and pay becomes the issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Schreyer had to deal with that in the early '70s and dealt with it at the table. It was tough. Schreyer dealt with it at the table.

Sterling Lyon, 42 percent over three years. There was a problem, because we had fallen behind. Now we are in a similar situation at the table, a similar situation where we are losing nurses. If you look at the incidents at the hospitals across this province, the incidents at the workplace in terms of shortage of staff and shortage of nurses, it has gone up from

700 three years ago to over 2,000 incidents in 1989-90.

The nurses are crying out for a partnership with this Government, and all this Government can do is practise brinkmanship, confrontation and bully-like tactics from the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Madam Deputy Speaker, no one should appreciate that more than the Premier (Mr. Filmon), because he had confrontation in his own caucus when we was Leader of the Opposition from the then Deputy Leader of the Party. He solved the problem. He fired his former Opposition Health Critic and Deputy Leader. He fired him because of the confrontation in his caucus. I wish he would do the same thing for the 10,000 nurses as he did himself when he was Leader of the Opposition.

He is a great fighter, Madam Deputy Speaker. He is a great debater. He can call a round Earth a flat Earth. I have seen him do it. He can say this offer is that offer. He is a great debater, a great fighter. He loves to fight. He loves it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is exactly the problem, because he is rolling the dice and rolling the dice and fighting and bullying the nurses of this province. That will not get a settlement.

I would ask the Premier to reflect on his own experiences with a person who has some skills. I suggest to the Premier in dealing with the doctors, in dealing with pay equity, in dealing with the Health Advisory Committee and dealing with the nurses, these are not the skills.

Tories have had those skills. Bud Sherman settled the contract as Minister of Health. I am not saying this is a partisan issue. Bud Sherman settled the contract when he was faced with it, Madam Deputy Speaker. Larry Desjardins has settled contracts before. Ed Schreyer has settled them. There have been a succession of Governments that have settled this at the table, in partnership, with a handshake, not trying to freeze people out, let them blink or make them break, which is the situation we see today in this province.

I would suggest that the Premier get himself very directly involved. We will not settle this with ads rolling across the public. We will not settle this with media manipulation. We will not settle this with a session, that we said we would attend, on Tuesday morning with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). If we have a joint problem, we are willing to sit down, but do not manipulate the Opposition.

If you want a consensus on the economy, Madam Deputy Speaker, perhaps we could start with a consensus on the time of the meeting, not just trying to put flags up to divert the public attention from the nurses and their legitimate dispute in this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have seen a situation in the public service where the Government has tried to divide and conquer. Within the nurses' offer we have seen a situation where it is divide and conquer, zero for one group for one year in a rate increase, something else for some other group.

It may be hard for the Tories to understand this because they have a philosophy that "I am okay, Jack. If I am okay, Jack, everything is okay." They may find out, if they pay a little attention, the people who usually work together, people who usually bargain together want to settle together, Madam Deputy Speaker. This kind of rugged individualism will not work to settle a group of people who work together on the floors, work together in the hospitals and work together at the bedsides of this province. You have to deal with all of the issues in a consensus way, not pitting one part of a bargaining unit group against another.

I disagree with the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) on one fundamental point. I want to be honest about this. I agree that the duration of the contract should be negotiated, and I believe that the joint pension plan should be there in the negotiations. I also believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it should not have taken a year and a half before the strike and two weeks during the strike for the Health Advisory Task Force to be established. I also know that the part-time situation should not have taken two weeks in a strike situation. We could not waste that time.

I would say that, unlike the Liberal Leader who says the issue is only issues outside of pay, Madam Deputy Speaker, we should be honest enough in this Chamber and outside with the public to say there are pay issues that have to be resolved. The kind of position put forward by the Minister of Health that if they get one more cent, we are going to close beds or we are going to reduce the number of people in our hospitals, is not the alternative that we believe in.

Yes, and health advisory committees are important and joint pensionship issues are important, but I want to go on the record that we

believe that this round there should be more pay in the package, that they resolve this dispute. I want to be honest about that. I want to suggest a couple of ways where the Government can get the money. They talk about alternatives. They talk about solutions. We will just give a couple.

We have a situation, Madam Deputy Speaker, where the Government has underspent health care \$60 million. They have placed that in a Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Much of that money comes from the dedication of the people on the front lines, the nurses of this province. I would suggest, and I would say to the Premier, there is a source of potential income to deal with the nursing situation in our province today.

* (1510)

Secondly, Madam Deputy Speaker, a while ago the Government made a decision to fund private schools which will cost us \$100 million dollars in eight years. Perhaps the Premier, instead of putting \$1 million into Ravenscourt, could put that money into nurses' salaries and nurses' working conditions.

The Government has decided to give tax breaks to corporations. I would recommend the \$50 million that they have given to corporations that have not created any full-time jobs in this province, maybe instead of money going to the corporations and the corporate sector in this province, we could take some of that money and settle the nurses dispute, put that money on the table.

We cannot afford to lose our nurses. We, even more so, cannot afford to have nurses outside of the partnership in our health care system. That is the only way we will reform our health care system. Let us put nurses first. Let the Premier show flexibility and leadership. Let us get this thing resolved at the bargaining table. Thank you very, very much.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Madam Deputy Speaker, we are debating a very serious issue. The issue is not only with one profession, the issue is we are dealing with a major health care crisis and not only in Manitoba, but the rest of the country. If you look at the statistics of how the health care funding has gone for the last 10 years, it has gone up by 178 percent. Our population in Manitoba has grown by only 6 percent.

So any Government in any part of this country will have a difficult time in the future, but to continue to provide the care that we have today, we have to have alternate ways of delivery. To achieve the

alternate ways of delivery, we must have a reform in the health care system. To reform the health care system, Madam Deputy Speaker, we must have all the partners at the table. To ignore the 10,000 working men and women in this profession and alienate them for the last three weeks, is not the right approach to the health care system.

Madam Deputy Speaker, through you I want to just explain that most people would think that this is a very light profession. I have worked with this profession for the last 19 years as of 1971 when I was a medical student. The role of the nurse has changed dramatically. It has changed from a basic role to a clinician role, to a counselor role, and the major role in between that centre focus of the health care system right across this country and the rest of the world.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

We should learn a lesson from Europe where the focus is not only on the physician, but they are focusing more on the nursing profession and the other health care professions, so that any country can provide the health care system that we have today.

I have been to the picket line. I have spoken to the nursing profession and everyone who works out of Seven Oaks Hospital. They are simply asking a simple question, why this Government, when they knew all the issues before the election campaign, there was not a single debate in the election campaign with this profession? They were just passing their time and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was busy with the canoe campaign rather than dealing with the real issue.

The real issue was the 10,000 nurses who are working on the front line providing the best possible health care system. It is really sad when we are in a major crisis, and we have 10,000 people who have shown great responsibility for the last three weeks. They have provided all the essential services, they have done their utmost, but the time has come when the Government must move, the Government must show some responsibility. The responsibility, if they are going to have a media war, the Government has more money, the Government has more power that they can out-manipulate the MNU and that is what they are doing, Mr. Speaker.

It is very sad; and who is suffering with all this mess? Who is suffering? The 10,000 nurses and their families, and the patients of Manitoba. Instead

of taking a rational co-operative approach, this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and the Premier (Mr. Filmon), and the rest of the Cabinet are showing all those figures when they are saying we are in debt. We should not be balancing the mismanagement of the last 10 years only on one profession. -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker, if you could call to order the debate going on between the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), I can finish my argument.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for The Maples does have the floor.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, I gave the courtesy to listen to the Member of the New Democratic Party, I think he should give us a chance to speak and put some words on the record.

It may be a little political issue for a single Party in one way because as the Member has said, but we have shown great credibility in this issue. First we thought let the Government make some move and not go and excite one Party or the other, but now the time has come that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and this administration should move and make some positive changes. The positive changes can only be made if the Government will think how they are going to reform the health care system.

The health care system and the present money can only be reformed if you have alternative ways of delivery of the health care system. One of the ways is to have community-based health care where you can at least divert some money and the nursing profession can be given that money. We know how their work is important because in some of the smaller communities they work as a nurse, or physician, or occupational therapist, as a counsellor, they sweep floors, they do every kind of work. I have seen with my own eyes and if this Government is saying their work is not important I think they are just fooling themselves.

They think there is three years. The next campaign is going to be in 1994 and then they have to bring in a new canoe, but they must not forget that the people of Manitoba will not forgive them. There are a lot of people who are waiting for a lot of important surgery, a lot of procedures, but they are all supporting this profession. The political opinion is not going to change. If they think that by waiting and waiting, hoping it will change, it is going in favour

of the profession, not in favour of the Government. It is really sad, Mr. Speaker, that the Government has not shown a single positive attitude.

In 1984 the Grace Hospital Emergency was closed for only six or eight hours. This Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) then had an emergency debate for six hours, just for one condition. We have a mess, and they have not shown any positive attitude. Instead of saying let us solve the problem, let us not make it into a political issue, they have shown a political bias today. They are saying, well, we cannot give them more money than what they are asking. Giving a different figure—it is very easy to do, and they have done it with physicians, but physicians still won because it was an election campaign. If this profession had the strike during the campaign, they would have won a long time ago; 10,000 working people means 50,000 votes and if the situation was the same in that campaign, there would have been no strike.

Mr. Speaker, is it very hard to ask—for someone to say, I want to participate in this decision-making process? They are simply asking to be part of the management, to make the decision more cost-effective in the long run. What is wrong with that? It does not cost any money. Why is the Government, or the MHO, not negotiating that very important aspect?

Second issue: When we have a shortage—the Thompson Hospital was closed for a number of days last year, and what was it called? A nursing shortage, specialized care nursing shortage, and if we do not provide them adequate funding they would leave and they are not joking, they are very serious. I want to caution the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), it is not an issue which is going to go away in a day or two, it is going to stay there. Unless we start solving it now and come to some agreement and show a positive move from the Government side, this issue will never go away.

Mr. Speaker, let us go through some other statistics because the people of Manitoba must know that right now this profession is the eighth lowest paid in this country, except Quebec and P.E.I. Initially Government ignored the LPNs completely and therefore let us divide and rule them, but this organization is very solid. They are not going to balk, they are not going to back down by threats and by media manipulation by this Government; they are going to stand and we will stand by them because they have a very important role. Their role

cannot, and should not, be replaced by someone else.

A nurse's role, as I said earlier, has changed from a basic role of the 1930s to a role of clinician, role of counselor, role of a sometime parent or guardian. They play extremely important roles. They are the only professional person in the medical profession who has a day-to-day contact with a person and their families, especially if you look at the aging population in Manitoba, and the kind of occupancy of beds we have in the hospital. This is the only profession which is playing a more moral role than anyone else, and they are not adequately paid for that. Somebody said, you know, their training is for three years and they chose their field, but you do not punish somebody who wants to work. The basic rule is please show some compassion, show some positive attitude because it will take one or two persons to have a disaster and that will not be the fault of this profession, but will be the fault of this Government.

The emergency places have been closed several times. They have provided every kind of service, they have gone beyond their agreement, and I think it is about time the Government must show a responsible attitude so that we can at least preserve the health care system for the next five or ten years because, as I said from the beginning, it is going to be extremely impossible to have any reform of the health care system if you fight with 10,000 professionals. Thank you.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation): Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed feelings that I stand to participate in this debate and I do know that it is an issue that none of us in this Legislature, indeed not anyone who works within a health care facility, or any person throughout the Province of Manitoba, is very proud of.

* (1520)

We, as Manitobans, in the past have tended to think highly of our health care system and our ability to deliver that service to those Manitobans so badly in need. I do not think there is anyone in this House today—I know there are some up in the gallery—who can understand where I am coming from when I talk about knowing what has happened in the past. I am not going to get into the politics too much of who has done what over the past or what has happened to nurses. I do know that we in the

province of Manitoba do value the care that nurses give.

If I can just go back to when I graduated in 1968 under the three-year program that existed before, and relate to how difficult the times were back then and how poorly nurses were paid, I want to say—and I know that many can relate to this—that we were used in our third year of nurse's training as absolute service to the hospital, where on a night shift you would have two third-year students on a 40-bed ward, with maybe one nurse's aide, responsible for delivering that care.

Mr. Speaker, we ran our feet off from one end of that ward to the other. We were paid absolutely nothing, and we were being evaluated on our ability as student nurses, one a senior nurse and one a junior nurse, to deliver that service, and being evaluated in the morning at morning report by a head nurse who would question why we had not done this or why we had not taken this temperature, when we did not even take a break for those whole 12 hours. Things have changed, and I do know that the situation in the hospital today is still a very difficult situation.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many nurses over the last 21 days on all sides of this issue. Some nurses are saying there is no way that we will settle for 20 percent. There are other nurses who are saying, I would be happy with the salary if the working conditions within the hospital were improved, if, in fact, I had an extra pair of hands sometimes to help me do the things that I need to do, so that I could deliver the type of patient care I would like to deliver as a registered nurse and as a qualified person.

I have other nurses who have called me and said, look, I want to get back to work. I want to deliver the care to my patients, the job that I enjoy doing as a human being; and I would like this settled today.

There are people who seem to have misinformation out there, and many of the nurses who have called me personally, within the city of Winnipeg, have said to me, why is our pay equity that we received in December included in this offer?

Mr. Speaker, that is misinformation. That \$12 million that was paid out to nurses who were in pay equity facilities, which they received in December, is not a part of the negotiated agreement in the pay equity facilities. I have had to explain that time and time again on the phone. It seems to me that there

are many nurses out there who are saying, but we did not know that. We did not understand that. We thought that the cheque that we received was included in the negotiated agreement or the agreement that you are offering to us. Mr. Speaker, I have clarified that.

I have also heard, Mr. Speaker, whether it be a 20 percent negotiated agreement, whether it be a 30 percent or a 40 percent agreement, that two months down the road if working conditions within the hospital are not changed, we are going to have nurses who are unhappy today just as unhappy two months down the road. They want, especially those nurses who are working at the general duty level—they see on a regular basis waste and mismanagement within the system. I agree that is there, and I agree that it is the nurses who are working at the general duty level who can have the greatest input to us as Government and to the health care system to look at health care reform.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking, and I will say, whenever this is over—I would love to see it happen tomorrow; I think the reality of the situation is that it is not going to be tomorrow. We need to get back to the table. We need to look at ways—and I am torn on this issue, because I know how much money Government has and how much we have to offer. I know the fiscal situation in the province of Manitoba and yet I know how nurses should be valued and appreciated for the work that they do.

Mr. Speaker, it tears me apart, but I do know that the realities are. We have a limited number of dollars to offer. If we can package it in a way—that amount of money that we have—that will be satisfactory to nurses, and if we can put in place an advisory committee with nurses who work and are genuinely interested in wanting to see reform of the health care system and wanting to see some of that waste and mismanagement that is in the system right now reallocated in different ways throughout the health care system, then I welcome that input, and I know that we, as a Government, welcome that input too.

If in fact there are ways—and those nurses will come forward after the strike is settled and finished, and work with us in partnership as a Government I will indicate that we, as a Government, are ready and willing to sit down and listen to the creative solutions to solve some of the problems within our health care system because one-third of our provincial budget goes to health care in the province of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, there is no more than that.

We have to work within that one-third of the provincial budget to deliver a service to the people of Manitoba that is of greater calibre than what we are able to deliver today. The resources are going to remain stable; we have to find the creative ways to deal with finding a better solution to provide health care to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in all of this I have talked about the nurses. I have talked about how we are in a dilemma as a Government. I feel very strongly for those in management who are having to work 12-hour days with no days off to try to deliver a standard of patient care which is not adequate. I know that there is strain on every side, but it is ultimately the patient who is the one that suffers. It is the person in Manitoba who has to wait for surgery that they cannot have, very needed surgery, who maybe cannot get into a hospital bed, who is at home in conditions that are not quite adequate because there is not anywhere for them to be.

* (1530)

Mr. Speaker, it is that person we need to get this issue resolved for in the very near future, and get back to a situation where nurses and hospitals and Governments are all working together and using their collective resources to try to establish a better means within the financial framework that we have to deliver patient care. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into this debate as Labour Critic for the New Democratic Party, as a former Health Critic, as Member of the Legislature for Thompson, as a concerned citizen of this province, because I find it rather ironic as we debate this today that we are really seeing a political watershed in this province in terms of our health care system, in terms of labour relations. It is a watershed which I feel has some very unfortunate consequences ahead.

I use that term, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) this morning talked in his briefing notes, of which I have a copy, about the fiscal watershed facing this province.

I think we are at a health care watershed in this province. We are facing a very serious situation. Unless this Government retreats from its current course of action, there are going to be very dire consequences for the health care institutions, health care workers and the patients of this province.

I want to say that, Mr. Speaker, because we are seeing the agenda of this Government on labour

relations and health care being unveiled almost daily in this province. We have already seen that this Government believes in confrontation with other striking employees. We saw casino workers threatened by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) that the casino might just be closed down if they did not settle and get back to work. What a negotiating style—here is our offer; take it or leave it or we will shut you down.

We are now seeing, Mr. Speaker, in a letter just released on January 18, signed by the Minister of Health, to nurses and hospital management, all chief executive officers, the same approach. Now the Minister and this Government cannot say, we will shut down the hospitals. They know that is unacceptable to the people of the province.

So what are they saying, Mr. Speaker? I will read a paragraph from the letter, and I am quite willing to provide copies of it to Members of this House. Agreeing to their salary demands—that is nurses; this is a direct quote from the Minister—would result in the Alberta solution in which Government would not fund the total increase. This resulted in reduced levels of patient care, layoffs and bed closures. This is not an acceptable solution for the health care system and the people of Manitoba or the Government. -(interjection)-

Well, right, says the Minister, Mr. Speaker. Let us look at what the Minister and this Government are saying to nurses. They are saying not that the money is not justified, that nurses are not underpaid and overworked, they are saying, if we give you what you want, what you are asking for fairly in the collective bargaining process, we are going to bring in cutbacks and bed closures, and you will be responsible for it.

Is that not interesting, Mr. Speaker? Is it the first time we have heard this rhetoric? No, we have heard it time and time again when it has come to negotiations. We see the Government, at first, hide behind some facade as if it had nothing to do with what was happening. Negotiations on the nurses' strike was the responsibility of MHO, not the Government. Well, who funds the health care system? Where does the MHO go? Where do the hospitals, the institutions go for funding? To this Government. Who tells them what the direction is? This Government.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) rose in this House before we adjourned before Christmas and

stated quite clearly that there was a strategy in terms of the Government, in terms of public sector negotiations and the nurses. We have seen it on other types of situations again. We have seen it in the area of Family Services. They say, well, it is the decision of the funded agencies as to what they cut, as if it is not the Government's responsibility, as if they have nothing to do with it. Well, it does not take much for people to figure out where the buck stops. The buck stops with this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and this Government.

They cannot blame it on the hospitals, the institutions or funded agencies. The buck stops with this Minister of Health, this Minister of Finance and this Premier (Mr. Filmon). What they are saying to the nurses of Manitoba is, we are not listening. This Government is saying they are not listening to the cries from the nurses for recognition of what is happening, the abuse in the workplace, the burnout, the fact that people are falling further and further behind relative to other provinces.

They are not listening, Mr. Speaker. We hear this media manipulation going on, on a daily basis. You know, the nurses of this province, the people of this province, are not stupid. They know that there are many other contracts coming up this year. They know, if the Government's offer was accepted, nurses would only momentarily be in the current ranking that the Government is talking about, would soon, within months, fall further and further behind, would in fact fall back to the situation they face today.

I ask you—this Government talks about honesty and information—have they not looked at their press releases? Have they not looked at their advertisements? Have they not listened to some of the things that are being said to Members of the public and to nurses?

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that they have not, because the information they have been giving to the people of this province has been misleading, to say the least.

I could say a lot more, Mr. Speaker, but let me use the term "misleading". Really, put aside all the differences of facts and figures, and look at this bare statement of the Minister. He is saying to the nurses, if you do not accept our offer, we will then proceed to cut back, we will then proceed to close hospital beds, and you will be responsible.

Well, I had a very interesting situation. It

happened within the first couple of days of the nurses' strike. I received a call from a constituent I know very well, who had been diagnosed with cancer. She had been assured, prior to the strike, that her surgery would not be cancelled, but it was. We immediately went to work in trying to get her back in terms of the surgery, and fortunately, she has been able to receive that surgery. You know what was interesting was the first thing she said to me. She said: Do not get me wrong, I am not blaming the nurses, I am blaming the Government. They are not listening. The strike would not have happened if the Government had listened.

You know what I find interesting, Mr. Speaker. I come from a community where we have had strikes—various different types in the past. We are a community that tends to be fairly lively in our differences at times, especially during strikes, and I indeed was involved in two myself.

This is a strike, however, that is different. It is a strike in which everybody I have talked to supports the nurses without exception. I have not received calls at my office with people demanding the nurses get back to work, saying the nurses are being unreasonable. They are saying quite the opposite. They are asking, why is the Government being so obstinate? It is a unique situation.

The nurses are living up to their obligations under the Essential Services Agreement. I know from my own personal experience, Mr. Speaker. I have received care from union nurses still providing those essential services. They are there just as they always are. They are always there when you need them.

The question is, where is this Government? Well, it is clear from these letters that it has been lurking, waiting, perhaps hoping for public opinion to shift against the strike, ready to bring out the big club of threatened cutbacks, which they are then going to try to blame on the nurses, but something has happened.

We are now into, what I understand is, the longest nurses' strike in—one of the longest at least—Canadian history. It is certainly unprecedented in this province, but where is the public sympathy? Are there people demonstrating on the steps on the Legislature for the Government to end this strike and force the nurses back to work, Mr. Speaker? Are the people saying, the nurses are

being unreasonable? No. The people of this province are siding with the nurses.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say especially to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon), please stop the media manipulation. Please stop sending out threats such as this; threats which were properly characterized as blackmail earlier by the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis). If you do not want to listen to Members of the New Democratic Party, or Members of the Opposition generally, talk to your constituents; talk to them because you will find that they support the nurses. They want a fair deal for the nurses. They want this Government to get back to the table, start bargaining in good faith, not threaten and intimidate the nurses of this province.

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, at a time when events around the world swirl about us, it is sobering to debate an issue so close to home that has put people against people. Of course, it is our challenge as legislators, and through any advice that we can give to our Government, to try to come with a settlement to this resolution that is in the best interest of the province as a whole.

Our temptation is always to argue special interest, whether it is the special interest of the fiscal side of management of Government, or the special interest of a profession, or the special interest of any one group. Sometimes it is more difficult to try to rise above a special interest and talk about the interest of the community and of the province.

My first comment would be that we are in a changing time of federal-provincial relations that affects our ability to deliver health care services in the province of Manitoba. As each year passes, the burden of funding for health care is being shifted from the Government of Canada to the Government of Manitoba, making the decisions we have to take at home more and more difficult, making the requirement for us to establish priorities between competing interests more and more difficult.

* (1540)

While we are in the Chamber of the Manitoba Legislature debating an important provincial issue, let us not forget that it is the Government of Canada in part which has turned the screws resulting in this crisis, and that responsibility for the offloading of responsibility fiscally to the province is the fault of the Conservative Government in Ottawa—something for which we are all paying now.

The debate today, Mr. Speaker, is a debate over the style and the substance of an agreement with the province's nurses, and the style of labour relations that has been established already by this Government over the last number of years, and which has continued throughout the duration of this strike, is not comforting because it is the style of confrontation.

The Government has not sought as policy putting the various professionals of our health care system together in common cause; rather it is to isolate from the general community.

We saw that in the negotiations that led up finally to an agreement with the doctors. We saw a very bitter campaign between the doctors of this province and the Government. Ads were taken out. The Premier's name was on billboards. I believe there was even a publication of the Premier's home telephone number, and the whole thing got quite personal and quite bitter.

Now we are in a situation where the Government is spending, presumably, hundreds of thousands of dollars or maybe more on an effort to if not mislead, then at least mold public opinion. My first comment would be if the Government used the same energy that it is on constructing these ads and putting forth a public relations campaign to mold public opinion, if it took that energy and used it to try to come up with a satisfactory settlement with the nurses, we probably would have settled already.

Now how do you ever determine how much an individual in our society is worth? We have had this debate on the floor of the Legislature before. It is exceptionally difficult because we all believe that intrinsically we have worth. To put a dollar sign on that worth is difficult at the best of times. We had that discussion on the floor of this Chamber when it came to resolving a dispute with child care workers. We have had it in discussion with doctors, with foster parents and on it goes. That is a continuing responsibility of Government.

We have to realize that more and more we are operating in a competitive environment. When that nurse graduates from nursing school, from university, the nurse has more options today than ever before. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a chronic shortage of nurses in the United States, that the United States is advertising for nurses continent wide, even worldwide?

One option for Manitobans who become qualified

to practise in the nursing profession is to go to the United States. Another option is for the nurse to go to eight provinces of Canada which recognize their skill through wages better than the Manitoba Government has done. We see that it is only Quebec and Prince Edward Island where nurses are paid more poorly than they are here in the Province of Manitoba.

We cannot be blind to that reality because if we are blind to that reality, we will begin to lose nurses. They will go to the United States. They will go to other provinces in Canada, or even worse, if we think of the global community, they will choose another profession. The nursing profession will not be able to attract men and women of quality, of skill and of commitment with the kind of remuneration that they have been given historically. That I think is another point that has to be made in this debate.

We are not dealing with a situation which arose overnight or which is somehow only relevant today. If we examine the funding for the nursing profession over the last 15 or 20 years, we will see that nurses in this province have been chronically underpaid, not only the offer which is on the table now from this Government, but indeed the actual settlements that took place under previous NDP and Conservative Governments.

While there is a temptation to stand in this Chamber and be as partisan as possible, to point fingers and to make accusations, none of which sheds any light on a difficult situation for our community, we can see that it is a problem that has developed over the years and which has come to a head now. The reason it has come to a head now is because of the nursing profession's lack of tolerance with an ongoing situation which has now burst.

I must say that when I was rereading the comments of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) on December 14, he did not help the situation. Rather, Mr. Speaker, he fanned the flames of an already explosive one. When he put worker against worker in the Province of Manitoba, when he used the dispute with nurses as an excuse to forewarn members of other bargaining units coming up to negotiations in the next number of months that as well as the nurses may do, that is how poorly the other unions will do.

That is absolutely contrary to any sense of public service or any sense of a provincial or a community

interest, but rather to use the moment of crisis in order to pit one working group in the community against another.

What do we do? The first step is for the Government to appreciate that the competitive environment within which we all operate puts pressure on a settlement, a settlement that will give nurses dignity, a sense of self-worth and recognition of the fundamental role they play in the health care system of our province.

As it happens, Mr. Speaker, there are medical professionals in my own family, so while I read the literature and while I have my own experience with the nursing profession, I know from people who were involved with nursing professionals every day that they are the linchpin of our health care system. The quality of nursing, the excitement for the role of nursing, and the recognition of the dignity of that role is fundamental not only to the care of the patient, which is after all the centre of our system, but also the system itself.

The Government has shown that it is more willing, more anxious to take out ads and to confront than it is to come up with a reasonable solution. There is no question that monetary and non-monetary issues will have to be settled before we are going to have normal labour relations between the Government and the nurses. We have not seen evidence yet that the Government is sufficiently seized of the importance for the province that this dispute be settled with the interest of the entire community.

This is not a time for partisan rhetoric. That does not serve the community of Manitoba. It is not time to pit one interest group or one labour union against another. It is the time for the Government to redouble its efforts and to satisfy the interests of all Manitobans to ensure that the essential element of our health care system, the partnership of health care professionals up and down this province is satisfied with dignity, with fairness and with equity.

I am not pleased that this debate is necessary, but it is. The position of our Party has been made clear throughout the crisis, through our Health Critic and through our Leader, and we hope that trying to put the community interest above any particular interest will help us find a way to resolve the issue so that nurses can resume their positions, their critical positions, in the health care system of our province for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join in the debate and speak on behalf of the nurses. The obligation of this Government under The Manitoba Labour Relations Act is to foster harmonious relations between employers and employee. The way they are conducting themselves, the Government I mean, in power, it is not really fostering harmonious relations. It is a confrontational style that hardens the position on both sides. It becomes a contest of economic strength between the nurses and the Government.

The nurses in this country are the backbone of our health care system. In fact, I have talked to some nurses and they told me that even some medical people are asking them, the nurses, how much medication to give. Yet they are treated not the way they should be. They are treated far below the professional status. They are asked—I have been talking to them, I have been walking with them in the pickets—to mop the floor, they have been asked to clean the room, because nobody else would do it. That is not a nursing duty and yet they are willing to do it because they love their profession.

I have been talking to one who is the mother of two little children—girls—and she said to me, I will never encourage my daughters to become nurses like me. This is frustrating, Mr. Speaker, because health care is one of the highest priorities in our society.

If we have to allocate resources in our society, we have to know our priorities. Without life, without health, everything else is nothing. There is a quest for human dignity and self-respect. Why are these nurses being asked to do things that are beyond and below their dignity if they are to be treated with respect? Why are the nurses not being given co-equal right of decision as to how the pension fund should be spent, as to the nurses' pension fund? Why are they being treated the way they are? That is an absence of dignity and that should not be tolerated in our society.

* (1550)

In the United States there are special nurses that I know who specialize in a particular field. They call themselves anesthetists. They are paid a special rate because they are experts in their field. In Canada, only a medical doctor can do anesthesia, and that is a limitation of a natural ability of people to engage in a particular line of their own profession.

They say there is no money. Money is difficult

nowadays, I admit. There is a recession in our economy, but it is always a matter of allocation. If there is just an equitable allocation of money, how come that over eight years, we can allocate \$100 million to the private school system and nothing for the nurses? If there is no money, how come we can allocate some \$50 million to big businesses in their training programs and nothing for nurses? It is not fair; it is not just; it is not equitable. Whenever there is unfairness and there is inequity, it is the duty of every solid citizen to speak on behalf of those who are oppressed.

I think the nurses in this country are being oppressed, and if they are oppressed they will go somewhere else and that will be to the detriment of our health care system. Therefore, they always prided themselves as good managers. They do not know how to manage. The Government do not know how to manage. Good managers, whenever confronted with a problem, seek out alternative means of solution. They finally seek the rationality of choosing which of these courses of action would be beneficial, with the public interest at heart, not confrontational style that seeks to destroy the union. This is not good for our society, not good for this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity of engaging in debate on this very serious matter. I will confine my remarks to several minutes, because I know there are other speakers who wish to speak on this matter and many matters have been touched upon already.

I just want to add to this debate my own observations with respect to the particular situation that we have entered into in terms of the nurses' crisis, I will call it. Firstly, I have been struck by the techniques employed by this particular Government in terms of its handling of the strike. It struck me of labour techniques that were handled by Governments and other individuals in the 1950s and I will illustrate: a last minute offer on the table; a divide-and-conquer tack, divide the LPNs from the RNs; media manipulation to the nth degree; ads; and perhaps most insidious of all to me, using the MHO, when it is in the Government's interest. When it is not in the Government's interest, the Minister comes out on his white charger and makes his own statements. These are labour techniques and labour handling of the worst kind and the worst order.

Mr. Speaker, I have been on the picket line on many occasions. I have had opportunities to talk to nurses. I have been out door knocking in my constituency and had an opportunity to talk to constituents about this problem. I will verify what Members in this House have said, the public is on the side of the nurses. The public is on the side of the nurses because they see through the facade of this Government. You cannot fool the people. It might have worked for Mulroney in Ottawa, but it is not working in Manitoba. It is not working in this situation.

I want to add, too, a couple of observations about my experience with the nurses. One of them is the tremendous sense of responsibility and in fact I will go further, tremendous sense of guilt that the nurses feel on the picket line. They do not want to be out there. They want to be inside the hospitals, inside the nursing homes doing their job, but they have been forced by this insensitive and uncaring Government out on the picket line. I think that is what the Government is trying to rely on. That is what the Government thinks will ultimately force them back to work, their collective sense of responsibility and guilt that they are not doing the job that they have been doing in the past.

Secondly, the thing that very much impresses me, and I think Manitobans know in general, but it happened on more than one occasion when I was visiting on a picket line. I would see a woman come or a man come with a walkie-talkie and say, we need a particular nurse in our institution to carry out a particular function, and instantly that nurse would drop the picket sign, go in, change and go into the hospital to carry out the activity that was very necessary under the Essential Services Agreement. That is responsible action, Mr. Speaker, and that is not something that I have seen done by this Government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about responsibility. That Government was given the job of managing the province responsibly. What do we hear from the Premier (Mr. Filmon)? We hear blame. Blame the nurses; blame the NDP for this strike. There is no one to blame but this Government and the way they have handled it. I have a three-year-old, and I have taught my three-year-old that one of the first things he does is look at himself first when there is a problem. I will tell you something, that lesson could apply to this particular Government.

Thank you.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an announcement to the House respecting the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. It will meet on Tuesday, January 29, 1991, at 10 a.m. and Wednesday, January 30, 1991, at 2 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the Public Accounts Annual Report and Supplement for the year ending March 31, 1989, and the Report of the Provincial Auditor for the fiscal years ending March 31, 1989 and 1990.

Furthermore, I would ask you to petition the House so as to ascertain whether or not it is the disposition of the Members to waive private Member's hour?

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Government House Leader for that information. Is there a will of the House to waive private Member's hour? Agreed? Agreed.

* * *

Mr. Manness: I stand to spend a few minutes on this important issue, which we find ourselves debating in an emergency fashion.

Mr. Speaker, let me say firstly as the Minister of Finance in this Government at this particular point in time that I have experienced kind of a learning curve with respect to the whole area of funding, health issues, in this case the nurses' requirements through Manitoba Health Organizations.

Let me also say I have had the occasion to dialogue with a number of nurses within the province and certainly a large number within my own constituency. I found that exercise very interesting here about two weeks ago when I had occasion to meet with a certain number of nurses from the Red River Valley Health District.

I do not know why there is such a gulf of misunderstanding with respect to particularly the numbers. On one hand I listen to the Leader of the NDP (Mr. Doer), and he says that our Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is deliberately trying to confuse the issue by spinning certain numbers.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from a funding perspective I have tried to grow acquainted with the base of funding, and I have tried to understand the

various factors that we are taking into account. I would like to say to anybody, if you think it is easy, it is not. If you think it is easy to present the picture in a fashion which all of us can understand, it is not.

I was troubled when the Minister of Health was speaking and certain Members, I would think, of the nursing profession in the gallery were sort of rejecting his comments on pay equity. This is troubling, because I obviously think that this represents one of the major aspects of this gulf of confusion, as I call it, between what the Government senses it is offering in fairness and indeed what the nurses through their union feels that we are not.

* (1600)

I do not know, it just hit me, Mr. Speaker, but surely there must be a third party arbiter, not in the sense of trying to work out more or less, but just working around the understanding as to whether or not there is commonality of understanding as to the offer and what it means. I am wondering if there is not a role for some dispassionate chartered accountant, or somebody who has the respect of all purely within the numbers area, who might sit down and make presentations both ways so as to understand whether or not we are talking about commonality of base, whether we are talking about a commonality to understanding of pay equity in or out.

Mr. Speaker, when we make the indication that the \$12 million payment that has gone by way of the legislation for those 23 facilities that was just paid here, I believe, in the end of 1990—a \$12 million bill—and we say that it is not included in this new offer, I sense that there is honest belief by the nurses that that is not an accurate statement. When it is a money issue you would think that somebody would be able to judge whether or not it is an accurate statement because that, obviously, in the minds of some is a major hangup.

Also, when we say that we are prepared to offer 20.1 percent increase over three years to existing pay equity institutions, I would think that there would be somebody who would be able to sit down and say whether that is a factual or an unfactual statement in a monetary sense. I mean, it is not in the realm of subjectivity.

So, Mr. Speaker, in these wage issues, I disagree with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). I know that non-monetary issues were certainly important. To the nurses that I talked to, they were important

issues. I think when you are talking about the higher echelon of the union, I would say that pay and salary is the No. 1 issue, and it is the No. 2 issue, and it is the No. 3 issue.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, if salary is the issue, surely we must find somebody or could find somebody that both sides could accept as an arbiter of the numbers as they have been presented. Let me say that I listened to the Opposition House Leader, and I took from his remarks that he said that we could do a better job of finding more money. I took that to mean that we could borrow more.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the essence of my presentation this morning—and some said it has hidden motives, it is an attempt to head the nurses off at the past—I could have done that presentation two weeks ago, and it would have addressed the nurses' issue just as accurately then as it would have today.

I seem to be hearing from the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) that he does not buy into the argument and the presentation that I made this morning. I do not know if it has been reported to him but, obviously, he does not take it seriously. He seems to be saying that no, Manitoba, its fiscal standing is not to a point yet where we have to worry; we can continue to borrow more money. Well, if he believes that, then we have a problem, because obviously the very foundation of the remarks that we are making and some of the very foundation of the resolve with which we put forward our offer, is based on the finances of the province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, politicians tend to not like to say no. You know, we like to have this warm feeling—fuzzy feeling I should say—where everybody sort of likes us. We know when we say no, people tend not to like us. The conclusion is then maybe the scenario that we are laying before the public where we say we have real problems, No. 1, No. 2 that within that envelope of real problems the highest priority is going to go to nurses. Maybe, just maybe, we are saying the honest thing. Maybe, just maybe, we are reflecting the true story; and maybe, just maybe—(interjection)—well, we did talk about it in the election, for Members who wanted to be honest.

We said the No. 1 plank in the economic development towards economic renewal was gaining control of our own finances. We did say

it—No. 1 plank in the economic development platform.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to correct something for the record. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) said that we underspent \$60 million in Health and it went into this Fiscal Stabilization Fund. That is not true. That was a bottom line saving on the deficit of those two years—not a dollar, not a cent can be transferred into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

He said we are out to finance private schools, and that is therefore where we can find the offset. Mr. Acting Speaker, we are talking, I believe, of an increase of a few million dollars over the course of the next seven years.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what we are talking about where the nurses and ourselves are apart over the basis of two years is close to \$50 million in two years—\$25 million a year.

He says we give tax breaks to the corporations. I take it he is referring to the payroll tax. Then I hear other Members talk about big business. At least the Members did not say, massively increase the provincial corporate tax rate on businesses, because at least they know—hopefully they know—that we have the highest business taxes in the country.

Mr. Acting Speaker, let me also say when the Members start pointing out that corporations are not paying their share—and I am one who supports the minimum tax—that is not going to bring them the windfall that they might expect.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Then I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, or is it—no, I believe it was the Member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr) who says that really all we are trying to do is split the labour union movement.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I fail to see the percentage in that. I fail to understand how that provides for stability in the economy. I fail to see how that provides for the labour-management type of environment that we all would like to see in this province.

Mr. Speaker, all I can say in closing is that the picture that I have presented to the legislators this morning is real. It cannot be denied. I ask the Members for other options other than to tell us simply to always throw more money at the problem, because I can tell them in all sincerity that option no longer exists. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate since the Health Sciences complex is entirely within my constituency of Burrows, which therefore makes it the largest employer in Burrows constituency.

I have talked to many nurses, both on the picket line and on the phone. What are they saying about what is important to them? First of all, they are saying that they do not want to be on strike. Voting to strike was a difficult decision. Many of them said that it took 10 years to get up the courage to go on strike. They do not want to be outside the hospital. They want to be inside doing the jobs that they were trained to do. They want to be inside the hospital carrying on their professional duties. They want the strike to be over as soon as possible so they can get back to work.

Secondly, they are saying that some issues are more important than others to them as individuals. They are very concerned about joint management of pension funds. This is a reasonable request, and it should have been recognized months ago. Also there were allegations that they were only getting a 5 percent return on their pension fund, and this was inadequate, and they could do better than those who were in the past managing their pension funds.

Thirdly, they talk a lot about professional recognition. Nurses believe, and I agree, that they have an important role to play not only in patient care but in the health care system as a whole, because of their experience, because of their expertise, because of their hands-on day-to-day involvement. The advice of nurses should be included in all levels of decision making, including but not limited to health care advisory committees and boards of directors of hospitals.

Fourth, nurses will not allow the Government to divide and conquer. The Manitoba Health Organizations had offered zero percent to LPNs originally, but the nursing profession is united and will stand by their sisters until everyone receives a fair settlement.

In conclusion, the Government should return to the bargaining table. They should negotiate a settlement which brings Manitoba nurses up to at least the other western provinces, keep nurses in Manitoba, improve our health care system and not erode it. Let us improve the offer and improve the health care system in which nurses have a pre-eminent role. Thank you.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I also welcome the opportunity to enter this afternoon's debate.

* (1610)

First of all, let me say that I myself have a chronic health condition, and about once a year I get hospitalized to get treatment from the hospital. Because I get to be hospitalized on a regular basis, I have been able to have a tremendous respect for the nursing profession, because whenever I go in to get care and treatment, I find that I get more than just the nursing treatment and the care that is described in the job description of a nurse. Oftentimes, nurses will go beyond what is described in their job descriptions. I have seen and experienced personally, first hand, the working situation of those nurses.

I believe all of us cannot argue with the fact that many of our nurses are women, women who are dealing with men in the positions of power. I have seen what they have to do, as I said, and also in my schooling years, in my younger days, I used to do work as a general labourer, having no particular expertise in any area, but at least I used to have the excuse that if someone were to tell me to go and do that, at least I had the legitimate excuse of saying no, I am not qualified to do that. I am not qualified to do an electrical engineers work. I am not qualified to do the carpenter's work or the plumber's work. At least I had that excuse, because I could use the excuse that I was not qualified, I was only a general labourer. I could only dig the ditch.

Well, nurses cannot use those excuses. Nurses are professionals. When they are told to mop up the floor, when they are told to do this other work that is not described in their jobs, work that they did not go to school for four or five years to get professional training for, they do not have that excuse.

We have all seen and we know about the position women occupy in the world dominated by men. All one has to do is study the way women have been treated, even in early history, in Biblical times, women have always been treated very poorly. If one reads the business journals, you look at the number of executives who are sitting in board rooms, find out how many are women. Look at the number of men occupying those chairs in those board rooms of our nations. Look at all the professional fields, in law, in medicine, dentistry, and even in universities.

Who occupies the positions of power in those areas?

I often say that women generally find themselves in a similar position as the aboriginal people. When I got into my working life, or even in school, in order to be accepted I used to find that I used to have to work twice as hard, or maybe even three times as hard before I could be accepted, or before the people would believe in me. I think the same is true of women in the workplace.

So what I am saying is women, like aboriginal people, find themselves in an oppressed state and that is what we are dealing with here. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, if you look at this Government, which has a two Member majority, only one woman is in a Cabinet position. It tells the whole story right there. It is no wonder that nurses are getting absolutely nowhere in negotiating, trying to negotiate in good faith, with this Government. They are, I am afraid, talking to people in MHO, in Government, in the ministry of Health, who just do not care about the nurses, who are mostly women.

Now I have talked to nurses as well in the North. I have visited with them in their strike headquarters; I visited with them in their picket lines, and the stories that they tell me is that a lot of nurses, indeed I believe in The Pas five nurses have already resigned from their positions—it is the story that I am told by the nurses—and more are contemplating giving their resignations and moving elsewhere.

Now my question is, to the Government, who will replace these nurses who are leaving in disgust and who have been disillusioned by the fruits of their many years of study in the profession of nursing? I also had the opportunity to work for Canada Employment and Immigration centre for about five years and thereto I experienced firsthand, in dealing with the shortage of nurses, in dealing with the hospital recruitment program, the shortage of nursing professionals, which can especially be critical in the North, because not only do we have to try to convince the nurses to come north, but we also have to tell them the kind of working conditions that they are going to have to work in, and worse, we also have to tell them the kind of wages that they are going to be making.

I want to conclude by saying that when I was chief of my band I spent several years trying to convince both levels of Government that one of ways that we could alleviate, or at least do something about, the

shortage of nursing that is always up there in the North is that we get into the professional training of nurses by way of the Northern Bachelor of Nursing Program. Even with all the statistics, with all the information that we went to Governments with, including the provincial Government, it was not until after three, four years that we were able to finally get commitment, and that program is now going in the North, is operating in the North. It is into its first year. The reason that we did that, Mr. Speaker, was because we recognized that it was difficult to attract nursing professionals, any kind of professional people at that, to come north, live in the North, where the amenities are not there like in Winnipeg. The working conditions are such that they could go to other places in Canada and have better working conditions and make better money.

* (1620)

I want to end by saying that I think the Government is quite hypocritical in the way that it is treating the nursing situation here in Manitoba. I think it should look at it a little bit more. It should go back to the nurses and deal with them in good faith and be honest with them. Thank you very much.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as I rise today to speak to the issue that has been put forth in the form of the motion for urgent public debate by the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs), it strikes me that from the rhetoric and from the kind of political grandstanding that I have seen from Members opposite we have not done the nurses a favour here today. Regrettably, it has taken away from precisely the kind of sincere, honest and straightforward exchange of positions that is going to be needed, and calm and cool heads that are going to be required in order to resolve this issue.

Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite says that we have not done that, but I will refer him to an editorial in today's newspaper, because I think that the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) probably has difficulty reading or understanding it. It says: "The Government and the employers, too, have kept the debate calm and rational. Health Minister Don Orchard and Premier Gary Filmon have echoed public sympathy for the nurses' position while pointing to the advantages of the settlement that was offered and the reasons why the offer could not be improved."

The fact of the matter is, we attempted, have attempted and will continue to attempt at all cost to

keep the debate on what it ought to be concentrating on, and that is, finding a positive solution, not coming here and somehow misleading the nurses into believing that the efforts of this kind of urgent public debate or the rhetoric that is being put forth by the Members of both Opposition Parties is somehow going to do anything but try and ingratiate them with the nurses by urging them and encouraging them to bash the Government rather than look for solutions.

Mr. Speaker, it is the kind of thing that does a discredit to the Members of the Opposition. I regret the fact that is what this kind of debate has to concentrate on. Our approach from Day One has been to say to the nurses that they are a special case, that we recognize they have had years and years of maltreatment at the hands of the New Democratic Party, that has led to the position in which they currently find themselves.

I want to say right at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that we compliment the nurses of Manitoba for their service to the Essential Services Agreement. They are sticking to their principles and providing us with the essential services in each and every hospital that they have an agreement. I want to say to the nurses that we value their efforts and their contributions to our health care system in this province absolutely. We have tried to demonstrate that we consider them to be a special case. I recognize that my words are not being addressed to the majority of nurses who were here at the beginning, in the audience for the grandstanding of the Members opposite, but I still say it nonetheless, very, very sincerely.

We have attempted to show the nurses that we value them, that we treat them as a special case and that we will deal with them differently from other public sector unions. We laid out the strategy, the envelope of money that is available to public sector unions for the bargaining this year. We showed how we gave a disproportionate share of that envelope to the nurses, because we wanted to avoid exactly the situation in which we are today, a situation that is generated by a vote being taken with no offer on the table.

I heard people phoning in to the Action Line last week, nurses saying that a vote was taken on a zero offer by the Government. The Government never put an offer of zero to the nurses. The first offer was the offer that called for a 20 percent average

increase across the board to most categories of registered nurses, Mr. Speaker.

I have heard Members opposite and nurses say that it is not really the money that is at stake, that it is all these other issues. Well, I can say unequivocally, Mr. Speaker, that virtually all the non-monetary issues were resolved before the 1st of January. The three or four other issues that were non-monetary, that had not been resolved, issues and solutions were put on the table the last time the conciliator called them to the table last Sunday, a week ago last Sunday.

They dealt with the issue of the Nursing Advisory Committee. They dealt with the rollback of the part-time positions. They have looked for and said that they are amenable to looking for solutions to the joint trusteeship over pensions and also the length of the contract. We are prepared to look at viable solutions on all of those, but it comes down to money, Mr. Speaker. We have not heard from either Opposition Party just how much more money they would be prepared to put on the table.

My greatest regret is that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), in particular, has chosen to try and politicize this issue by virtue of this debate, that he has played to the crowds that were here initially in the gallery. Without trying to bring a sincere solution based on viable alternatives, he has used all sorts of rhetoric. It is filled with hypocrisy, because this very individual, who is attempting to encourage the nurses in their strike action to say that—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Doer: The Premier is impugning motives of encouraging one side or the other in a dispute. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest the Premier look at the record of settlement versus the record of confrontation. The facts speak for themselves. I would ask the Premier to withdraw that statement; it is unparliamentary.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that I have touched a sensitive cord, because that individual is

the same individual who sat in this House and boasted about the fact that his Government settled with the nurses for 3 percent and said, how much more are you going to have to put on the table? He said, look how we dealt with the nurses. Look how we dealt with the nurses, he said. For years and years and years, he has said amongst the Members of this Legislature that Bud Sherman had to cave in order to give 40 percent over two years to the nurses, but that his NDP Government had been able to keep them down for six straight years with increases of 2 percent, 3 percent, 3 percent, 3 percent, four point something and four point something. Those are the kinds of things that I think are very regrettable, the hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer).

He stood up here just an hour or so ago, and he said in his very sincere tones, is it not regrettable that we are making offers to LPNs over a three-year period that are below the rate of inflation? Both of the last two contracts that were put forth by the NDP were well below the rate of inflation. He was boasting about it here privately, but he does not have the guts to acknowledge publicly that they are the reason that the nurses are in this problem. They are the reason, and it is their hypocrisy. It is their way of saying one thing publicly and then privately putting the nurses down. Putting the screws to the nurses is what the New Democrats did.

Now, of course, he puts up his Deputy Leader, the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), to stand up, wring her hands and try and empathize with the nurses when he is the reason why they are in that problem, when he boasted about how he was able to keep the nurses down over a period of six years, Mr. Speaker. He has his Deputy Leader talk about threats, intimidation, blackmail, talk about all of those things, when at the same time, all we are attempting to do is make up for the inadequacies, for the purposely low increases that the NDP Government gave.

Now he is walking along shoulder to shoulder on the picket line trying to make the strikers believe that his Party would do something different. The fact is, that is the biggest hypocrisy, that is the biggest disservice that has ever been perpetrated on the nurses in this province.

* (1630)

At the same time, he is leading the nurses to believe the reason is that we are giving breaks to

the corporations. We will talk about corporate breaks. During the period of six years in which they were in office, they increased personal income taxes by 140 percent in six years. They increased corporate income taxes by only 49 percent. Three times as much came out of the individual taxpayer—three times as much. That is the kind of deceit, that is the kind of misleading, and that is the kind of hypocrisy that does a disservice to the nurses of this province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, the only way we are going to resolve this is if the nurses are encouraged to come back to the table by a Government that wants to be honest and forthright with them, that looks for a middle ground. That is what this Government is going to do, not the kind of hypocrisy that is being put forth by the New Democratic Party in this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order please; order please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Speaker: There being no more speakers, the Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Manness), what are your intentions, sir?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Would you call Bill 24, Report Stage.

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENT

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I seek leave to make a non-political statement—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the Honourable Member have leave to make a non-political statement?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No.

REPORT STAGE

BILL 24—THE ENVIRONMENT AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. Glen Cummlings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Yes, I have a question for the Speaker, on a point of order. The usual business of the day I thought was that after the emergency debate there would be an opportunity for non-political statements.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Leave was denied.

* * *

Mr. Cummlngs: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), that Bill 24, The Environment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

BILL 24—THE ENVIRONMENT AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), (by leave) that Bill 24, The Environment Amendment Act, (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: I have been notified that the Honourable Member for St. James will be the designated speaker for his Party.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand today to speak to Bill 24. This Bill's history is well-known to many Members of this Legislature, and it is a history which I believe shames this Government like no other in my experience.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill originally came forward very late in this Session after a so-called consultation process had taken place. I feel that right off the mark it is important to point out to Members of this Legislature that the so-called consultation process which took place in October and November of this year was nowhere near what actually came forward in this Bill.

What actually came forward was a surprise to those in the community who had been involved in that discussion process and indeed shocked them and saddened them. They took those concerns to

task. They took the Minister and asked for meetings, which he afforded them, as did the Premier (Mr. Filmon). They secured certain agreements with respect to the efficacy of the Bill and the reasonableness of amendments which had to come forward. Those amendments were agreed to by this Minister. Those agreements sadly were reneged upon just last week when this Bill was in committee.

Mr. Speaker, those committee debates which took place this last week covered some 11 hours of discussions in which not one group or person who came before that committee supported this Bill as it presently stands, even as amended by this Government. I have reviewed the presentations put forward, and the amendments which are put forward by this Minister do not satisfy even one of the presenters who came before that committee.

Mr. Speaker, the history of how this Bill came before this House is clear indeed. As I have indicated, in the short term it was borne of a discussion process which was not even close to what ultimately came forward in legislation, but if we look farther back, if we look to last spring when the Canadian Council of Environment Ministers was meeting, this Minister was intimately involved and in fact drafted the communique which came forward out of those discussions. That communique indicated clearly the direction that the Canadian Ministers of the Environment wanted to take.

Their decision out of that meeting was to in essence avoid the inefficiencies of the court system which had beleaguered the Oldman River development in Alberta, the Rafferty-Alameda project involving Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and the up and coming James Bay II project, which the Government of Quebec was extremely concerned about, and indeed I might add as well the second phase of the Repap discussions, which were coming up in Manitoba.

* (1640)

Therefore, the consensus was that in order, under the guise of efficiency, the Ministers of the Environment were committed to at all cost keeping these issues of the day away from the light of scrutiny not just of the courts, but indeed of the public.

The rhetoric which surrounded this decision was filled with talk about efficiency, cost cutting, highest standards and serving the public good. Mr. Speaker, it was surrounded by those commitments that many

in the environmental community gave their guarded sanction to a unified process; that is, those in the environmental community understood full well that, given the appropriate guarantees and limits upon executive authority, a one-assessment process would be in the public interest and would be acceptable to all involved.

It is important to note that it was only with those guarantees in place that anyone in the environmental community accepted this new theory, because they suspected from the beginning and, indeed, as has been borne out by this Government's actions in the last month, that the real agenda was to cut the back-room deals that had led to such incidents as the Rafferty-Alameda project going back and forth to court over the space of three or four years. They wanted to cut those deals and avoid the scrutiny of the courts and avoid the sanction of individuals who took them to task for skirting the regulations in place. They did that by proposing in fact a higher level of discretion in executive authority.

Mr. Speaker, we know in this province that we have some incredibly serious environmental concerns coming up with respect to major projects in this province. There are four in particular. There is the Conawapa Hydro project. There is the bipole transmission line. There is the north-central transmission line, and there is the second phase of the Repap development.

We know the problems faced in the first phase of Repap in this province. We know through the Public Utilities Board review of the Conawapa project that they themselves had grave reservations about the environmental impacts of the project. They made no effort, because they were not mandated to, nor did they have the expertise to, nor had they heard the presentations on the environmental impact of that project. They did very clearly indicate that there certainly would be environmental impacts which would require serious consideration.

It was with those four major projects on the horizon that this Government sought to cast itself as the leaders in the environmental community in Canada, and indeed they were, Mr. Speaker. As early as last spring they sought to lead other jurisdictions in this country by being the drafters of the communique which came forward with this idea that efficiency was the way to go.

Following that, in the fall of this year we had the

Conawapa deal go before the Public Utilities Board and, as I say, we had already been through the problems with the Repap Phase 1 environmental assessment. Then in October and November of this year, clearly in contemplation of Bill 24, the Government embarked upon the consultation process.

I want to spend some time reviewing that consultation process, because it directly ties into the contradiction when the Bill came forward. The paper which was floated with the draft regulation in October or November for discussion was critically flawed in that the most damaging and damning parts of Bill 24 were not even mentioned, Mr. Speaker. I think we have to be clear about that, and the Minister has to admit that. He has failed to do that, but he has also failed to deny it. I look to him today, when he speaks to this Bill, which I hope he will, to explain how he can put any faith in the consultation process in October or November which floated documents which did not contemplate what he, in fact, is seeking in Bill 24. Specifically, the letter to the citizens of Manitoba speaks about the need for efficiency through joint public reviews. He talks about a co-operative process in the attached document, throughout it. He says: Under the proposed co-operative review process, where projects which involve both federal and provincial jurisdictions, a joint review panel could be established. Members who meet the legal criteria of both Governments would be appointed by the federal and provincial Ministers of Environment and environmental impact assessment would be prepared. Co-operative hearings would be held and a co-operative report would be issued and released to the public that would fulfill the requirements of both the federal and provincial processes.

Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, this Minister has put forward a Bill which says in Sub (b) of the proposed Section 13.2 that this Minister may, by executive authority, the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, through Cabinet, may enter into an agreement with another jurisdiction, any other jurisdiction, to provide for the use of that jurisdiction's assessment process for the purpose of gathering the information necessary to make a decision to issue, or refuse to issue, a licence. That proposal in this Act is fundamentally different than anything that was contemplated prior to this Act actually hitting the Order Paper.

That section, which is proposed by this Minister,

in essence, gives to this Government the right to give over to another jurisdiction, in entirety, the assessment process which will be done for a project which affects Manitobans, and whether it is a 1 percent effect on Manitoba, or a 99 percent effect on Manitoba, that makes no difference.

The point is Manitoba can get out of the environmental assessment process business. Mr. Speaker, that is fundamentally different than anything that was talked about prior to this, but it is consistent with this Minister's stated desire last spring to, in fact, stay away from the courts and cut any deal he liked, and, in the interests of efficiency and cost cutting, simply to get the job done, regardless of the quality or credibility of the job that is done, just get it done and get the right answer.

Once the proposal came forward giving to the executive authority the ability to get out of the process, the Minister was immediately confronted. To his credit, this Minister did consult with members of the environmental community; he consulted with me; I suspect he consulted with my friends in the New Democratic Party. We had meetings, and certainly at the meeting that I was at—and I am not betraying any confidence because the same commitment was given to all of the other parties, as I understand it—the commitment given by this Minister was that Sub (b) was put forward with the best of intentions, simply wanting to ensure that in those special cases, he said, those very rare cases, we would have that ability available. It was put forward harmlessly, and, therefore, if we had such concerns about it, he would yank it—no problem, it is gone. That was the starting point. That was the very starting point for discussions on this Bill in December.

Now, regardless of the political machinations which have taken place since then, Mr. Speaker, that agreement was based on an understanding that this provision simply was not necessary to achieve the things this Minister wanted to achieve. Then we got to last week; we got to the committee hearings; and I put forward an amendment which was in accordance with the discussions we had, amending the Bill by deleting that subsection.

Much to my surprise and disappointment—and that, I believe, of everyone else in that room except the Government Members on the committee—the Minister dug in his heels, and he said no. He said we will not go along with that, and he reverted to the same line that he had been giving time and time

again throughout this process. Trust me, trust my words. I am not going to abuse this authority. Do not worry. It is for a very limited purpose. We have no intention of going anywhere near the dangers that you are raising.

* (1650)

Mr. Speaker, that was an about face for this Minister and for this Government on that critical issue. While I will not impugn the integrity of this particular Minister, I simply say that the authority which he is seeking and the reasons he has given and the fact that he has changed his mind in such a short span on such an integral part of this Bill, tells me that the agenda of this Government is not what they say it is on these issues.

They are providing to themselves executive authority in this area unknown in this country. We are, indeed, leading the jurisdictions in this country. Yes, indeed, we are leading all jurisdictions in this country in providing a better way to get the results that jurisdictions have wanted in the last five years, whatever the environmental cost.

Mr. Speaker, that provision alone in this Act should make it insupportable by the vast majority of Manitobans and, certainly, the majority of Members of this Legislature. The fact that there has been no reason given that stands up for the need for this provision leads anyone who looks at it only to the conclusion that this Government has overt purposes for this provision. They need it for some reason that they are not willing to tell us about.

The fact that six short weeks ago this Minister stood up and agreed that it was an unnecessary provision and perhaps poorly drafted, because it would lead one to conclude that the specter of dangers that we raised may in fact come true, Mr. Speaker, causes one to wonder what has happened in the last six weeks that this Minister and this Government has felt the need to revert?

We know that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) at the time that this was hoisted for six weeks was upset. He did not want the hoist. He wanted to sit right through and simply let everybody stew and just do it, and we want this Bill 24. His own Cabinet prevailed upon him; perhaps his own caucus. I do not know. Anyway, the decision was changed.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker—and I leave this for the Minister to explain because it is an incredible reversal in that short of period of time on an issue of immense magnitude and principle—if the Premier

has decided in the last six weeks that, because he was forced to back down in December, he has got some cause to make a point to the environmental community and to the Opposition that they cannot get their way with the Premier. They cannot push the Premier into a corner and get everything.

(Mr. Eric Stefanson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

He has found a way to dig the knife back, Mr. Acting Speaker, and that is, on a critical issue that he knew was fundamental to the negotiations back in December, he has changed his mind and changed it dramatically. There was no middle ground. He decided it was in. If so—and I do not see any other reason for the reversal which was undertaken—if that supposition is true, it is at the expense of the Manitoba environment, and it is at the expense of Manitoba citizens, Mr. Acting Speaker, because whatever this Government does or does not do in the coming years, even if they do not in any way abuse this provision, this is now the law of the land. Whatever Government may come into power in future years—and I do not know that there has been another Government in the history of this province which was less environmentally friendly than this one. However, this is going to be the law of the land, and it is going to provide executive authority unknown in this country.

The leadership which the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said they wanted to give to Canadians about environmental friendliness and protection is completely undercut by their intransigence on a critical issue which the entire environmental community is up in arms about, Mr. Acting Speaker. Anyone who would take the time to read the legislation and who knew the history of the abuse of executive authority in the last five years on environmental issues would know that this Government has no business putting forward this legislation and maintaining the rhetoric that they have a real concern for the environment. They would be willing to put the guidelines into place and be true to their word.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of the Environment said, and the Premier said repeatedly in the course of the debate on this Bill that they were seeking the highest standards, that they only had the best interests of the province at heart and that they were seeking a more efficient process while maintaining the highest standards. If that is the stated purpose of this legislation, patently it is not

achieved. The process envisages not just the giving over in its entirety of the environmental process to another jurisdiction but a joint assessment process in which the Governments involved can negotiate an agreement which is largely without review on the essential points.

In particular, I want to refer to certain portions of this Bill in which the Minister has claimed to have moved by his amendment, but in fact has not and has given no further comfort to the environmentalists in this province and indeed, I believe, both Opposition Parties, certainly my Party. What is missing? What continues to be missing from this Bill and what was agreed to in principle back in December was that there would be funding guarantees for interveners. That is the first point.

That is the point upon which there was quite a substantial amount of debate at the time, that any project which came under this prerogative should have funding guarantees for interveners. There was no precise stipulation as to what amount of money would be made available because, of course, depending on the size of the project different amounts may be made available.

The Minister put forward—and I want to read his amendment that he put forward saying that he had headed off that concern and dealt with it. He indicated in his amendment, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Minister would put forward funding guarantees if he felt it was desirable. It is that caveat which again undercuts the entire process. The executive authority is maintained to the exclusion of what is sensible and in fact what is in place in other jurisdictions. He has not taken onto himself the essential funding for interveners that the federal Government as well espouses—in fact, the opposite. He has kept unto himself the right to decide of his own accord which agreements will have intervener funding and which will not.

He says that—and this is Sub(f) of his amendment—a program relating to the provision of financial assistance to members of the public participating in the assessment process when, in the opinion of the Minister, such a program is desirable, will be a part of the agreement.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that means that this provision is virtually meaningless as a guarantee of intervener funding, and that was what was being discussed, again back in December. We need guarantees because anybody who has reviewed and watched

the process in the last five years in this country knows that guarantees, not in writing, not in legislation, mean nothing from politicians. That is the fundamental lesson in the last five years in this country, and I say that with no particular disrespect to any politician in this room or in this country. I say that because that is there; the executive authority on environmental issues has been abused again, and again, and again, whether it is Premier Getty, or Premier Devine, or Premier Bourassa, or indeed Premier Filmon, whether or not it is the federal Minister Bouchard, or de Cotret, or McMillan, they have all come up short on the issue of environmental protection in the face of major projects which they themselves had a vested interest in, they themselves were the proponents of.

In order to counter that cynicism, which is natural and understandable and warranted in the public, Mr. Acting Speaker, in order to counter that what is required are guarantees that the inherent conflict of the proponent, also being the assessor of the project, which Governments have generally been and are continuing to be, the way that is dealt with, the only way that it can be dealt with, is by binding ourselves as Governments to certain criteria and certain standards which cannot be broken and, in fact, this Bill takes us in the opposite direction. It is intended to enhance the discretionary authority at the executive level. Anyone with any experience on any of the major projects that have occurred in this country in the last five years would be adamantly opposed to this legislation and the level of discretion that it imparts to executive authority, because that will mean that anybody seeking to challenge this, in the only venue left after the Legislature has made its decision, that is the courts, will have no basis upon which to ask for review. They will be forced to rely upon terms which are discretionary in their nature, which say things like, where the Minister is satisfied; which say, when in the opinion of the Minister. These are intended to neuter these provisions in the eyes of a future court, and indeed they will, and that is absolutely at odds with the statements of this Government, that they are seeking the highest standards, because they have not been willing to commit themselves to those standards in this legislation.

The second thing which is missing, aside from the funding guarantees for interveners, are funding guidelines. It is essential, in our view, that there be eligibility criteria for funders put forward in

legislation, specifically ones based on Section 22 of the EARP guidelines put out by the federal Government. They have been the leaders in this area and they have set out various guidelines which I believe make sense for interveners. They are not unduly restrictive, but they do require that interveners approve themselves to be competent in the area and have a legitimate interest, which is not already represented at a hearing, to put forward their ideas at an early stage. It also requires—I have put forward this amendment and I felt it was necessary also to require an intervener to put forward appropriate financial controls for that money. I also put forward a list of eligible expenses, which again were based on other precedents in this country. Those eligible expenses are by and large restricted to things which would be legitimate to the requirements of any intervener doing a competent, expert job at the environmental process.

* (1700)

Lastly, I put forward what I thought the Minister would appreciate. This again had been discussed with him back in December. I put forward a list of ineligible expenses, because I know that is a concern of this Government. They are caught up in thinking that anybody who gets money from the Government, unless they prove otherwise, is wasting and squandering that money.

I put in guidelines which included that certain expenses would be absolutely ineligible. Make it absolutely clear; you have to have financial controls that you could prove, which will account for every dime that the Government gives you, and give a list not just of eligible expenses, but ineligible expenses, which cannot be used by the intervener to further their own ends or do anything which is not necessarily tied to the assessment process.

Mr. Acting Speaker, again the Government saw fit to reject any funding guidelines. That was not a surprise, because they had previously rejected at the committee stage any funding guarantees for interveners.

I simply say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that this Government has a long way to go and a lot to learn about dealing with the environment. That is clear. They think that by nice documents, nice looking documents pumped out by the round table or whomever, the department, printed on recycled paper—are we not wonderful.

They think by that and by telling Manitobans that

they are seeking the highest standards and by telling everybody that they are environmentally friendly to a fault, Mr. Acting Speaker, they are going to get the kudos for being an environmentally friendly Government.

On the contrary, people who are concerned about the environment have seen through their rhetoric before, and they are going to see through it this time. Indeed they have to date. In time they will see even clearer what this Government is doing in this act. It is giving to itself powers again which are unknown in this country and which are dangerous beyond anybody's wildest imagination back in October and November when they first floated these ideas.

Thirdly, Mr. Acting Speaker, they have refused to give any guidelines, any direction to panelists sitting on a review assessment panel. In particular, they have refused to give the authority to the panelists to set their own terms of reference. They have reserved unto themselves yet again the authority to determine what the panel looks at and how it looks at it, aside from the minimal provisions which the Minister was willing to agree to, which was that they would have hearings in Manitoba—and even that was not complete; I will get to that later—but aside from that they, in their wisdom, saw fit to keep unto themselves the ability to set the terms of reference for the panel.

That failure, Mr. Acting Speaker, again undercuts everything that they have been saying about this Bill. That is giving unto themselves the ability to dictate to a panel how they are to conduct their study. Anybody who has been through a major environmental assessment knows that what are called the scoping hearings, that is, setting the terms of reference, are the critical element for a credible, successful environmental review.

You must get the terms of reference right. If you do not, the entire process will be undercut. You must give to the panelists, if you are confident in their abilities, the right to determine what their terms of reference are and indeed to amend those terms of reference as they continue on the process. You must give them the confidence that they can do the job. They are the people who are going to hear the evidence. They must be able to set their own guidelines in what evidence they will hear and will not hear.

You cannot step in and say as a Government all the way along the road, no, you cannot do that. Yes,

you will look at that; no, you will not look at that, and also say that this is a neutral, credible process. You cannot do that. Either you mean it or you do not. Either the panel is free to do its job and do it in an unbiased, neutral, competent manner or they are not.

I feel compelled to point out to the Minister, Mr. Acting Speaker, that it is not just the actual process, what actually happens in a day-to-day panel assessment. It is the perception that matters as well. I do not say that to demean the necessity to actually get it right in fact, but the fact is that bias, the perception of bias is a critical element in any process. To be fair to panelists, you must give them not only the duty to do a neutral, competent, credible job, but you must give them the power to do that.

By putting into legislation provisions which keep unto yourself as a Minister the right to step in at any time, you undercut that process and you undercut their credibility no matter how good a job they do in fact, Mr. Acting Speaker.

This Government not only failed to give that power to panelists, but it also failed to ensure the panelists themselves that they appointed would have the necessary credibility as neutral onlookers to do the job.

Let me read the Minister's proposal which was passed as an amendment by the majority. He says, with respect to the panelists, that there should be in these agreements, "a requirement that the Minister be satisfied that each proposed member of the panel is unbiased and free of any conflict of interest relative to the proposal and has special knowledge or experience relevant to the anticipated environmental effects of the proposal."

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is all well and good except for three words, "Minister be satisfied." What is the point of putting in guarantees if every time you do, you reserve unto yourself your own discretionary authority to make the decision? The process becomes a sham. If this Minister does not want unbiased panelists who are free of any conflict of interest, he has the ability in effect to secure that. He had it before and he has it now. The provision is essentially meaningless.

He cannot say that he is committed to unbiased panelists free of any conflict of interest, because he has been unwilling to exclude himself as the discretionary arbiter. There is no question that ultimately he will make the decisions as to who is on

the panel. The point is, who at the end of the day is going to be able to challenge his decisions, and the answer is no one. Again, the desire of last spring to keep these things out of court is coming true, and that is what this is all about.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, the fifth provision which this Minister refused to include in this Bill is a guarantee that there will be any of our panelists, that is, Manitoba panelists in a future environmental assessment review panel under a joint agreement.

* (1710)

If you look at Section 1(b) of Section 13(2), the proposed Section 13.1(2), he preserves unto himself the ability to give over to another jurisdiction the entire process. Then if you look at his amendment Sub (d), he says that the Ministers will jointly appoint persons to serve on the joint assessment panel. He goes on to say, where that process is established under Clause 1(a), not 1(b), so the joint panels which he has reserved his ability to be involved in, the joint appointment of panels is true for an agreement where there is truly a co-operative process but not true where the Government gives over to the other jurisdiction the right to do the whole process.

It is conceivable, therefore, that in a major environmental assessment involving lands, waters or air in the province of Manitoba, again whether that be 1 percent involvement or 99 percent involvement, it is conceivable that there would be a joint process which did not involve even one panelist appointed by this Minister. Mr. Speaker, that kind of power reserved to the Government must draw everyone's attention to what this Bill is all about.

Mr. Speaker, finally, this Minister has failed to include in this amendment any guarantee that the assessment of any project will be done before the building starts, and we know well the lesson of Rafferty-Alameda. We know well the lesson of what the Province of Quebec is doing in Quebec and we know well the lesson of Premier Getty on the Oldman River in Alberta.

We know that the seditious back room way that politicians have got their way on these issues is to, under the guise of respecting the process, get the thing built while you are assessing. That is what you do, and then by the time the assessment winds its way down to completion it is already too late to stop.

That is what Premier Devine achieved and is

there any more depressing spectacle, is there any more depressing -(interjection)- the Minister asks if I am talking about Manitoba. I am talking about Rafferty-Alameda. If he does not think that involves Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, he has learned nothing in his entire tenure as Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings). Rafferty-Alameda intimately involved the Province of Manitoba and our role was despicable; it was non-existent. We let three successive federal Cabinet Ministers and the Premier of Saskatchewan cut deals affecting our downstream rights and our downstream water quantity and quality without so much as a whimper. That is the problem.

This Government came through on its word yet again to stay out of trouble, stay out of controversy and the way they did it in Rafferty-Alameda without this legislation was they just said, it is somebody else's problem; we are not involved. Yes, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are involved; yes, the Saskatchewan Government is involved; yes, the federal Government is involved, but we are not. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we were involved, at least as much as the United States, if not as much as the Province of Saskatchewan in the ultimate downstream effects of that dam.

Getting back to the point, that this Minister failed to ensure any guarantee that the assessment would take place in a timely fashion prior to building of a project, I think that again speaks to what is really going on in this Government and in this province. We know that the Conawapa project is a major cornerstone of this Government's agenda. We know that they have locked themselves into a deal whereby they will pay quite sizable financial penalties for not getting the proper answer in a timely fashion from an environmental assessment. They have built in an inducement for themselves to get the right answer out of an environmental assessment, and they are in an inherent and very apparent conflict of interests. They are both the proponent through their arm's length true Crown corporation, but we all know that they are intimately involved in the planning process for this dam project and indeed the Premier of this province signed the contract. They are also the adjudicator. They are going to be the people who decide who the panelists are, what type of panel it is, what they will look at, what terms of reference they will ultimately have, how many people will be funded—if any—on intervener status. They have maintained total

control of the process, so they are in fact the adjudicator.

Thirdly, they have built in for themselves a monetary interest. Is there any question, Mr. Speaker, that they are controlling all aspects of this development? They also say to themselves, say to Manitobans, that they think they are going to get this environmental process done, at one point they have indicated by the fall of '91. That is the latest statement, that they are going to have all this done by the fall of 1991, Mr. Speaker.

In order to do that I think they are going to have to use all of the strings which they have preserved to themselves. They are going to have to cut off and limit intervenor funding. They are going to have to set incredibly narrow terms of reference, and they are going to have to get the right panelists who support their view of this project, Mr. Speaker, because otherwise they do not have a chance of getting this done by the fall of 1991. Perhaps that is why they have reserved to themselves this level of discretion.

Mr. Speaker, again, the overall response to this and all of these questions which are legitimate and based on facts about this Government's conflict as being the adjudicator and the proponent and having built in a monetary interest for themselves, the answer is, universally, trust us, trust us. We will not abuse this authority, they say. We have Manitobans' best interests at heart.

That is not their record, Mr. Speaker, but more than that, even if we were to trust this Government on this project—and there is no factual basis to take that view—but even if we were to believe that, they have reserved unto themselves rights and failed to come through on agreements which can only suggest that there is a hidden agenda. This last six weeks, if nothing else, has proven that, that what we are really doing here is giving as much leeway as was humanly possible to get by this Government for the coming years and the coming projects, and the first of those will be the Conawapa project.

This Bill is made retroactive to November 1 specifically to cover off Conawapa. Mr. Speaker, I wonder, I wonder again, what arrangements have already been made and what discussions have already taken place between this Government and their federal counterparts on that project. I look to the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) to come clean on that because he has an obligation,

given the words he has put on the record, to divulge to every Member of this Legislature exactly what he has been discussing and what arrangements he has entered into to date, that he needs this legislation and the enormous powers that it grants him.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments, we turn to the statement by the Minister in committee that the assessment process was not necessarily tied to the decision-making process. He said in defence of preserving to himself the right to give over to another jurisdiction entirely the process, he said, this is not binding my hands. I am still making the decision. I am just going to take on another jurisdiction's process, but I will ultimately make the decision.

The absurdity of saying that after we have just spent 11 or 12 hours in committee and after we have spent all of this time and effort discussing environmental assessments, the absurdity of saying that the process is not intimately linked to the decision is incredible, Mr. Speaker. To say that his ultimate decision-making authority can be divorced from the environmental assessment process and that he has not given up anything because he still ultimately makes the decision, is to fly in the face of the whole reason for environmental assessments in the first place. You cannot divorce the process from the decision. The credibility, the comprehensiveness and the neutrality of the environmental assessment process will lead to a better decision. That is the whole point.

* (1720)

Only if we are prepared to do that comprehensive job and take the time to do it right, have we any chance of making the right environmental decisions on major projects which face us and preserving our natural habitat and natural environment for our future generations. So that reason for preserving that right unto himself makes no sense at all and persuaded no one because that is the whole point for being there. We understand that the process is linked to the decision and you cannot divorce the two.

Mr. Speaker, again going back to the Government's reason for this legislation, they have indicated time and time again that the point of this is efficiency and to avoid inefficiency. If jurisdictions had done assessments right the first time around this country in the last five years, there would not have been the inefficiencies that the Ministers spoke of last spring. When they said inefficiencies, what

they were talking about is, darn it all, we kept going to court and losing. What they were really saying was we cannot find a court that is going to support us in cutting these back room deals. That is very inefficient, they keep slapping injunctions on our process.

It is very frustrating for politicians who have made commitments, both financial and verbal, on major projects to have the Federal Court walk into town and put an injunction on the thing. It is a real drag and that is what the Ministers were talking about last spring, and when they talk about inefficiency that is what they mean and that alone. They are not talking about saving money fundamentally, they are not talking about that at all.

They have tied themselves in this Conawapa deal into an enormously expensive penalty clause. They have already spent enormous amounts of money running up the project and getting it through the Public Utilities Board and building roads up in northern Manitoba. This is not about money for an environmental assessment process, Mr. Speaker. This is about staying out of court. This is about putting blinders on public scrutiny, Mr. Speaker, and that and that alone is what this agenda is all about. That is the only conclusion that can be drawn from the process that this legislation has been through.

I am sorry to say, but that is the only conclusion which is left to anyone that has tried to match the words spoken to the words in the legislation. They do not fit. Discretion is preserved every way along the line for executive authority to keep away the blinding light of the public who might have the audacity, like the Tetzlaff brothers, to take the Government to court and win. How awful, but that is what this legislation can only lead us to conclude about this Government's agenda.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the Government of the Day does not and has no intention of coming through on its many commitments. I am also concerned that the commenters on this legislation had many points to make which were valid and accepted in December and were not accepted by this Minister. I want to reserve to this Minister the benefit of the doubt. I want to reserve to this Minister the ability to rethink the statements that he has made and come up with better defences for the decisions he made in committee and perhaps come around to the way he was thinking in December of last year. I want to give him that benefit and that opportunity to prove again

to environmentalists through out this province that he does have credibility and that he was negotiating in good faith and that he does have the best interests of the Manitoban environment and our future generations in this province as his guide.

For that reason, I move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "THAT" and by substituting the following: Bill 24, The Environment Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement) be not now read a third time, but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radlsson): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to represent our Party to rise and speak in support of the hoist, the six-month hoist.

There have been a number of problems with this legislation and it is important I think that we provide the time, as our Party has tried to do initially, in forcing the Government to meet with environmental activists to consult and to try to draft the best legislation possible. I think it is important that we not rush and pass this Bill, and we take the time to look at what the number of presentations have recommended as amendments that would improve the legislation, a number of those amendments that we proposed and this Government chose to ignore.

* (1730)

The question must be asked, why are we looking at the environment amendment process in the first place? Why do we need this Bill? One would think that it is in order to improve the process. There are a number of problems with the environmental assessment process. To start off with, it occurs too infrequently and often only when the public asks questions. It is unclear in the minds of a lot of the public, and I would think even a lot of people in this House, what kinds of development should cause either a federal environment assessment process or a provincial one. Even in that, there are often some questions about which process should be used. It is the idea of this legislation to possibly address that confusion and make one process.

Another problem with environment assessments is that too much of the assessment is left up to the Government's discretion and that is in the selection of panel members, who is doing the research for the

assessments, who will decide what will be assessed—all of these things. Another problem with the assessment process is that they do not receive enough money and that causes them to be unfair. What we end up having is industry and Governments, the proponents of development, the people who have a lot of the money, setting the tune, if you will, and making all of the decisions. It is then up to volunteers often, members of the public, who are forced to respond and do not have a lot of money to do that. What we end up having is a very unfair and inadequate procedure to protect the environment.

One of the other problems with environment assessment processes as we see them now, is often they occur either too late, or as I have already said, not at all. There is nothing in the current legislation that requires an assessment to begin before development begins, or to be completed before development begins, or to begin before penalties for not initiating a development come into effect.

Another problem with the assessments is they give the public a false sense of security, particularly because they are so inadequate, but there has been generally a feeling that the public I think wants to trust that things are being taken care of. If they hear that there is some assessment on the environment before a development, they will tend to think, well then, it is taken care of, but because the process is so flawed, this sense of security is false.

Another reason that the public has a false sense of security possibly, or should have—and they are becoming less trusting—is that there have been very few environmental processes which have denied development, or denied a licence for development.

Now our Party, and a number of the public who presented briefs for Bill 24, proposed amendments that would address these problems with the environment assessment process, but these amendments were denied and what we have is legislation that does not address any of these problems. So that is the reason that this legislation must not be passed so hastily until we have a chance, yet again, to amend it.

It makes us question what the real agenda of the Government is. They have come in and said that the process, a joint process, would save money, and when I first started studying and familiarizing myself

with this issue my first reaction was, well, the environment is no longer the place to save money and, particularly, once you read the legislation and realize that it is saving money, but not improving the process. What the legislation, as it stands, actually does is make it even easier for Governments to control the environmental assessment process at a time when we are seeing that most of the development is proposed by Governments and oftentimes, particularly with Conservative Governments, they have a direct interest in seeing that the development goes through.

The other reason they might have for this legislation is that it prevents appeals in court and they have said this quite openly, but this will speed up the development and make the kind of agreements that we saw in Rafferty-Alameda even easier and in fact legal.

So what is going to happen with this piece of legislation, if it is passed the way that it is right now, is that it will become yet another example of how this Government, the Filmon Government as they have called themselves since the last election, the Filmon Team, it will be added to their poor list of disappointing attempts to address environmental problems, or to deal with the environment.

A brief survey of the Conservative Government's current record, and we see whether they have been willing to protect the environment at all and, as they have claimed, this legislation is going to raise that protection to the highest standard. We will see if it has done that at all. In the short time since September we have witnessed many examples of the kind of standard and rigour which this Government wants to protect the environment. This is a Government that could not find enough money from its own Innovations Fund to continue to fund the Resource Recovery Institute. There were problems with the program, but certainly these were outweighed by the overwhelming success of the program. Indeed it was the success of the program that made it so difficult for the institute to meet its obligations. This Government has failed the public on recycling.

Secondly, we see this Government's determination to harm the environment by ignoring the public and even successful court appeals to build a corporate structure on a wildlife management area at Oak Hammock Marsh. It is a clear example of this Government's environmental priorities. The corporate sector comes first, the environment, well,

one might suggest that it may not even rate second in this Government's sense of priorities. The Government has failed the public on protection of wildlife management areas.

Thirdly, this Government has failed to set higher conservation targets to ensure most efficient use of our resources. On one other note, as we have noted earlier, this Government has failed to protect Manitoba's water quality and quantity interests in the fiasco of the Rafferty-Alameda dam project. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) has failed to ensure protection of the environment to the highest standard in its own policies, and now we have before us another one of this Government's policies on the environment.

There are five key areas I would like to address to show where this legislation could have been improved and was not. These five areas include the idea of delegating authority and responsibility for an environment amendment assessment process to another jurisdiction, something that I will call the satisfaction clause, the selection of panel members, funding to interveners participating in public hearings, and the setting of the terms of reference. These have clearly not lived up to the Government's rhetoric on ensuring the highest standard of protection.

To begin with the delegation clause, the failure to delete Clause 13.1(b) is the major weakness of this Bill. As presentation after presentation noted in the hearings, this clause allows for environment amendments of projects affecting Manitoba to be delegated to another jurisdiction. In the words of one presenter, this would be complete folly and would indicate that Manitobans to not accept the full responsibility and welfare of our province.

The problems with this clause should be self-evident to the Government. Can you imagine having Grant Devine being interested in protecting Manitoba's environment? His action on Rafferty clearly gives evidence to the contrary. In effect, this clause would thwart the democratic right of people in this province and this Legislature to protect our own environment.

Surely the Government must reconsider this clause and the consequences that would follow from it. To allow another jurisdiction to determine the process for our environment assessment is not wise and may lead to a situation where we are dependent on another province to protect our environment.

The Minister has justified his keeping this clause

in the Bill by saying that we would not be giving up the authority to make the decision. I would oppose even having another jurisdiction do the assessment, go through the assessment process of collecting information and managing the public hearing process.

We have seen in the Oak Hammock Marsh situation where Ducks Unlimited, the proponent of the development, has been relied upon to do the research and produce the evidence to show if this development should be done or not. There is nothing to suggest that this could not happen with another province doing the assessment process or being responsible for the assessment process, where we would in effect be relying on the research, the information and the setting of the terms for the panel to be done by another province, and then the decision to go forward would be made by individuals from Manitoba or even simply the Minister. This is completely unacceptable.

The satisfaction clause, as I have called it, includes the idea that now the Government would have us believe that our concerns, as stated above, were addressed by the clause that the Government proposed itself during the hearings. The Bill allows for the Minister to enter into an equivalent assessment if the Minister is satisfied that certain requirements are met.

We amended this section to make it a little less subjective; however, it still leaves this part of the Act too much to the discretion of the Minister.

Legislation should describe law, not make it legal for the Minister's subjectivity and opinion. To have legislation, particularly environmental legislation that is going to assess the development of Government projects up to one of the Cabinet Ministers, is not in any way ensuring the public that the environment will be protected.

The critical problem with this amendment is that without removal of the delegation clause, this amendment provides no real criteria for using another jurisdiction's process. The elements in Clause 13.1(2) that the Minister has proposed should stand on their own and only will have the effective force with the removal of the delegation clause. Without removal of this clause the amendments proposed by the Minister are simply a face-saving measure.

One of the main concerns from the groups that presented briefs at the public hearings was that of

political influence. We have seen over and over in this province and in this country that environmental decisions have become made not on the basis of real protection of the environment, but based on how will this development or the decision best serve the interests of the Party in power.

The clause affecting political influence is very important. We attempted through amendments to get the Government to add it to the criteria for appointment of panel members by including a clause where political influence would not be a factor in determining panel members.

Now Members opposite, particularly the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), should now value such a clause. Its inclusion would remove any perception that panel members were chosen because of their political leanings. This has been an imperfection in the Legislature for a long time, and now is the time for the Government to take action to correct it. Their failure to do so is based on their assessment that the word "unbiased" covers for political influence and is a better word.

Time will tell, and the public and the environmental community will be the judge. Unfortunately, all of us will be paying for it. We will be paying for it, because we will be paying for an environmental assessment process that is a charade. Also we will be paying for it because development will continue business as usual, the environment will continue to be destroyed, and eventually we will be paying for more and more clean up.

The failure to adopt a provision to make political influence stated in the legislation to be illegal, is a clear example of how this Government has not accepted the need for a stringent process. The federal EARP guidelines are more stringent in their criteria for panel members. The provincial guidelines are weaker. The Government has chosen the weaker guidelines, not the most stringent.

This is the most clear example of how, even though the Government has claimed that this Bill is going to meet the highest standard, it has not put that anywhere in the legislation. It gives us no confidence or reason to believe that the Government actually intends to use the higher standard in assessing the environmental impact of a development.

There are a number of other areas that were

important to consider because the Government, in its effort to convince the public that this legislation should be passed, allowed members of the public to review the regulations. There is a Technical Advisory Committee that has also been considered to be wrought with political influence, and we would recommend that the Technical Advisory Committee, and the role that it plays, should be open to all of the members of the panel and also to interveners.

The Technical Advisory Committee is being provided with a formal role in the joint assessment process. This formal role does not exist for the domestic environmental assessment process. The TAC will likely in practice always have some role to play in both joint and domestic environmental assessment processes; however, formally including the Technical Advisory Committee in the regulation has given the TAC, as it is called, a status different from other potential participants and this is uncalled for. It shows another way which the Government is controlling the environment assessment process for its own political gains.

Funding for intervener groups is another area. We come now to another important part of the legislation brought forward by this Government, the sections dealing with funding for intervener groups. We were happy to see the Government take some initiative in this regard. The Bill does provide for the Minister to allocate funding to his satisfaction and outlines some of the mechanism for that funding in Subsection 41(1)(aa).

However, the problem with what the Government has brought forward lies in the words they have chosen under Clause 13.1(2)(vi), and I quote: A program relating to the provisions of financial assistance to members of the public participating in assessment process when in the opinion of the Minister such a program is desirable. The key word is clearly "when in opinion of the minister such a program is desirable." Funding is thus dependent on the opinion of the Minister.

* (1750)

I would like to see the Minister clearly delineate under what conditions funding would be provided. Leaving it to the opinion of the Minister leaves the door open wide and leaves the public on the dark side of what basis the Minister will make the decision on, whether funding is appropriate or not. I would question if the Minister could clearly say what that decision would be based on. Why did the

Government not include the criteria clearly in the Bill instead of leaving it to the subjective opinion of the Minister? We hope that it has not given the Minister too much discretion to prevent the public from getting the necessary financial assistance to make its case in the public hearings.

We proposed during the committee hearings that the Government include an amendment that would give the panel power to add or amend the terms of reference in a given assessment process. This is critical if the panel is to do its job effectively. In this way the panel can determine whatever it wants to study, not just to be limited by the Minister in what it proposes to assess. This would give the public the assurance that all angles had been covered, that no stone had been left unturned in the panel's view. Every environmental impact could be assessed impartially.

Instead, this Government has chosen to allow the Minister to set the terms of reference. This is the wrong direction. It shows clearly how on critical issues this Government did not go for the most strident regulation but has gone for the least restrictive. The federal EARP guidelines are simply less restrictive than the ones currently employed by the Clean Environment Commission when setting the terms of reference for an assessment.

Why has the Government chosen the weaker federal standard when we have provincially a better standard to ensure environmental protection? The fact that the Government here has chosen the weaker standard as they did with the appointment of the panel members makes us uneasy about the intent of the whole Bill.

Will this Government always take the path of least resistance or less regulation when it is politically expedient to do so? Will they enter a joint assessment process where another's jurisdiction's assessment process is weaker and where the only criteria for Manitoba's acceptance to the Minister's satisfaction? What began as a streamlining of two or more processes may eventually become the repolarization of The Environment Act, an attempt to weaken, not strengthen and toughen the standard for the environment. Too much of Bill C-78, the federal legislation, is left to the Minister's discretion. Too much of Bill 24 is also left to the Minister's discretion.

These are the reasons in the legislation of why it is unacceptable, but there are also a number of

questions to deal with the process. We have talked about how the timing of this legislation has been not in keeping with The Environment Act, which states out clearly there should be time for consultation with the public when there is going to be an amendment to the Act. To bring in the amendments in the rushed way that they were with only consultation because of Opposition demands, and demands from the community, immediately made the public, the Opposition and members of the environment community suspicious of the true intent of the legislation.

The process that we went through last week in the committee hearings did not reassure the public and the environmental groups that they were going to be taken seriously. Many Members of the committee, the public felt, were not paying attention and were not there to understand what their concerns were. The fact that 22 presentations were made and not one of them supported the legislation will show, I think, that there is a need to reconsider the Bill the way it stands. The fact that the Minister brought in amendments just prior to it being reviewed clause by clause also adds to our suspicion and shows that there was not really a concern for what the members of the public were saying. If the Minister had been truly interested in seeing the Bill improved, then perhaps he would have allowed those of us on the committee to review the amendments which had been prepared beforehand.

One of the final comments I will make is that I have a concern that the public is not aware of how important this legislation is because of a number of other things that are happening right now with the nurses' strike and the war in the Middle East, that there is not the necessary focus on legislation that is going to affect every development that requires a joint assessment.

So I would support a motion that we not pass this Bill until six months and that we have another opportunity to propose amendments and consult with the public. The Government will then have a chance to show that it is truly interested in developing legislation and an environmental assessment process that is going to truly protect the environment.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., in accordance with the rules, I am leaving the Chair and will return at 8 p.m., at which time the Honourable Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) will have nine minutes remaining.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, January 21, 1991

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