

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 6, 1978

Time: 2:30 p.m.

**OPENING PRAYER** by Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER, Hon. Harry E. Graham (Birtle-Russell):** Before we proceed I should like to draw your attention to the gallery, where we have two visiting students from England, Miss Margaret Weedon and Miss Susan Jenkinson of Brentwood, Essex.

We have 45 students of Grade 8 standing from McGregor Elementary School under the direction of Mr. Dale Zimmer. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

We have 80 people from the Arseneault Group, a French Tour from Quebec City, under Mr. Eugene Gagne.

We have 28 students from St. Josephs Separate School in Quebec, under Mr. Hal Vilmering.

On behalf of all the Honourable Members we welcome you here today.

Presenting Petitions . . . The Honourable Member for St. Boniface.

**MR. LAURENT L. DESJARDINS:** (Greetings in French.) (Translation refused).

**MR. SPEAKER:** I hope the honourable member will provide translations for us too.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** I think I'll tempt you to try to go and get some night courses, maybe you'll be able to find out for yourself, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Presenting Petitions . . . Reading and Receiving Petitions . . .

## PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Roblin.

**MR. J. WALLY McKENZIE:** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Honourable Member for Crescentwood, I beg to move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Swan River, that the report of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be tabled.

**MR. CLERK:** The Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources met on Tuesday, May 30, Thursday, June 1, and Tuesday, June 6, 1978, to consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Telephone System.

Your Committee received all information desired by any member of the Committee from the Chairman, Mr. Gordon Holland, and members of the staff with respect to all matters pertaining to the Annual Report and the business of the Manitoba Telephone System. The fullest opportunity was accorded to all members of the Committee to seek any information desired.

Your Committee examined the Annual Report of the Manitoba Telephone System for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1977, and adopted the same as presented.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Roblin.

**MR. J. WALLY McKENZIE:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Swan River, that the report of the Committee be received.

**MOTION presented and carried.**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Ministerial Statements . . . Notices of Motion . . . Introduction of Bills.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. EDWARD SCHREYER (Rossmere):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the First Minister and the Minister of Finance, perhaps I could in the interval ask a question of the Government House Leader, and ask him, in light of the fact that we have completed consideration of the Telephone System and also completed a series of questions of the Chairman of MPIC, can the Government House Leader indicate, with respect to Thursday morning next and Tuesday and Thursday of next week, if Manitoba Hydro will be called, or some other Committee business convened, and if so, which?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Government House Leader.

**HON. WARNER H. JORGENSON (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I am awaiting the return of the Minister of Finance, and I believe he is due back tonight, and following discussion with him, I will be able to determine whether or not Manitoba Hydro will be appearing, but in the event that Manitoba Hydro is not prepared or ready to appear before the Committee, and I believe there is some work to be done in completion of the consideration of Public Accounts, and that can always go forward whether or not Hydro is available and ready on Thursday.

Also, there are some reports to be received by Economic Development Committee, and I am attempting to arrange that they appear. In talking to Mr. Bateman, he has some scheduled meetings within the next few weeks that might interfere with his appearance before the Committee, so in the event that he is unable to be here, we will be calling Economic Development and Public Accounts to complete their reports.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. SCHREYER:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are not insisting or urging that Hydro be called on any particular day or days, but rather merely wishing to ascertain from the Government House Leader that in the event that there is a schedule problem, that Utilities Committee will not be convened for some period and it will be Public Accounts and/or Economic Development. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, my next question is to the Minister reporting for the Civil Service Commission, that is, to ask the Minister if she can advise whether the matter outstanding for some several months now has been resolved, relating to the function and status of the Chairman, a full-time member of the Civil Service Commission, Mr. Doug Duncan?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Would the honourable member care to rephrase his question?

**MR. SCHREYER:** I would be willing to accommodate the honourable lady. I would like to ask the Minister if she can report or indicate to the House whether the matter has been resolved now, the matter which has been outstanding for several months, namely, the present function and role of the former full-time member of the Civil Service Commission, Mr. Doug Duncan?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Labour.

**HON. NORMA L. PRICE (Assiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice.

**MR. SCHREYER:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. . In taking that question as notice would the Minister advise more specifically when she is ready whether Mr. Duncan is still deemed to be a member of the Civil Service Commission or whether he has been in some way terminated from that function contrary to the provisions of the Civil Service Act.

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that he still is a member of that committee but I will come back with that answer also.

**MR. SCHREYER:** Well, that's fine, Sir. I'll leave it at that.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for St. George.

**MR. BILLIE URUSKI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to direct a question to the Minister responsible for the Civil Service. Could the Minister indicate whether it is practice within the Civil Service, when notification of termination of employment is given, that also notification is given that employees should not be present for work even though there is a time frame allowed for the

that the employee should not be present for work the very next day.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Labour.

**MRS. PRICE:** I don't think the rules have been changed as have been done in previous years. However, I will get back to you on it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for St. George.

**MR. URUSKI:** I'd like to now direct a question to the Minister of Consumer Affairs, Mr. Speaker, and ask him whether a notification to the Executive Director of the Rent Review office was given when termination was issued that her services, although there was a month's time before her contract expired, were no longer deemed necessary effective that day and it would not be necessary for her to come to her place of employment the very next day. Is that a fact?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Consumer Affairs.

**HON. EDWARD MCGILL (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, this question was answered, I believe, in several forms during previous question periods and the answer that I gave to the Member for Inkster that the notice of termination was given on May 31st and the opportunity was given to the Executive Director to use that month to the end and termination of her contract so that she would be free of her duties and presumably would investigate and determine what alternative employment opportunities she would be interested in looking at.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for St. George.

**MR. URUSKI:** Mr. Speaker, that may have been the intent but was the specific wording given when the notice was given that she was no longer required to report for work the very next day?

**MR. MCGILL:** Well, Mr. Speaker, she was given that month free of her duties and the member is making a play on words here. This notice contained that information that she would not be required to report for the month ensuing until the end of her contract.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for St. George for the fourth question.

**MR. URUSKI:** Mr. Speaker, my third question to the Minister of Consumer Affairs. Although the Minister alleges there's a play on words, I would like to understand what the Minister meant, whether he did write, did in fact state in writing to the Executive Director, that she no longer was required to report for work the very next day. Is that a fact?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Consumer Affairs.

**MR. MCGILL:** That information was contained in the letter advising her that her contract would not be extended, and the very next day to which the member refers was June 1st, the first day of the final month.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Transcona.

**MR. WILSON PARASIUK:** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour who is responsible for the Redeployment Committee. Could the Minister inform us whether the Redeployment Committee is operating or not?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Labour.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes it is, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. PARASIUK:** A supplementary. Since the committee is operating, and since we have a valued civil servant who the Minister of Consumer Affairs has no use for, did the Minister of Consumer Affairs inform the Minister of Labour that you have a senior director who is available for redeployment within the Civil Service?

**MRS. PRICE:** Any person that has been on the payroll of the Civil Service automatically goes on the redeployment list.

**MR. PARASIUK:** A final supplementary. Could the Minister of Labour inform us whether all employees who are being on the redeployment lists are given 30 days notice to look for alternative employment outside the Civil Service?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Brandon East.

**MR. LEONARD S. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address a question to the Minister of Labour responsible for industrial safety. In view of the recent accident in the Town of Killarney involving a farmer transporting anhydrous ammonia, and considering that hundreds of farmers now in Manitoba are transporting this chemical through towns and cities and other built-up areas, will the Minister undertake to review this aspect of the handling of anhydrous ammonia?

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, we have a unified code in Western Canada that we are abiding by, and we certainly will be keeping an ongoing watch on it but we are following the regulations.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please. Before the honourable member asks a supplementary, may I ask the honourable member to speak into his microphone so we can all hear what. . . The Honourable Member for Brandon East.

**MR. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answer. I understand her answer I believe, but would the Minister agree that it would be helpful and indeed probably necessary now at this stage, to engage in some kind of a safety program involving the training of users of this chemical in handling this material, and I'm thinking particularly of the many many farmers that are now handling this material and before some unfortunate accident occurs, does she not think that it would be imperative at this time for her department to take the initiative and engage in some sort of safety program with farmers, even though she may have some regulations in place.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Labour.

**MRS. PRICE:** I think, Mr. Speaker, that would be quite a job to undertake. It would be like trying to force everybody to take lessons in driving a car. Most farmers in Manitoba are using this particular commodity. They are people that are handling it, from what I understand, very very carefully. With regard to the people that work with it in the plants and such, they have all the opportunity to take the training as I mentioned yesterday. There are extensive training programs put on by Imperial Oil that are available to anybody that would like to or are interested in taking part in them, or borrowing any of their facilities that they have, and we also have some in our departments too that are available to all.

**MR. EVANS:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that many companies do have such training programs. At the moment I am speaking of the users, of the consumers of this particular chemical, the farmers of Manitoba in particular, and I am concerned that there may be some serious accidents occurring and therefore would repeat my request, whether the Minister could undertake some type of safety training program, because I am advised that many accidents have occurred which have not been reported, and that the situation may get worse before it will get better, and that it may be very serious, not only for the farmer but for the people in a town or a small community.

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday to the Honourable Member for Brandon, we are looking into the situation and if we figure it requires further training or further regulations they will be forthcoming.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Selkirk.

**MR. HOWARD PAWLEY:** Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Education. Is the Minister of Education able to confirm that a search was done in the Steinbach Regional Comprehensive School recently in connection with drugs, and that students were stripped and searched in connection with same?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Education.

**HON. KEITH A. COSENS (Gimli):** Mr. Speaker, I can't confirm the full statement as the Member for Selkirk outlines it, but I understand that there was some type of search conducted in that vicinity,

yes.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Would the Minister be prepared to take my question then as one of notice, and also to respond as to under what circumstances a search of that nature could be undertaken in a high school and under whose authorization?

**MR. COSENS:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the particular incident that the Member for Selkirk alludes to was initiated by the local school authorities and took place under their supervision.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Inkster.

**MR. SIDNEY GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Honourable Minister of Labour. Mr. Speaker, do I understand correctly, and it's important for myself and all members in the public to know, that several of the main issues in the construction strike in the Province of Manitoba relate to the Builders Exchange demanding changes in a collective agreement that have been there traditionally for years and years, and which have served this province well in the construction industry in this province?

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any changes in there other than like you have read in the newspaper. Nothing has been brought to my attention in my office.

**MR. GREEN:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that we are in a strike involving construction workers in this province that has continued for some months, does the Minister believe — well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister says "weeks," I'll accept that "months" can also be "weeks" if you multiply by four.

I ask the Minister whether she has tried to determine what the issues are in this strike, which has stopped construction in the Province of Manitoba, and I ask her to look back to the words of the Minister of Health, who said that the Minister of Labour sat on his rear end and did nothing in strikes in which he tried to find out what the issues are. Is the Minister of Labour trying to find out what the issues are in this construction strike?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Labour.

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, at this point, I don't think it's right for me to interfere between the management and the labourer, and they have been working with our Conciliatory Officer and at that point I think it should be left there.

**MR. GREEN:** Well, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Labour consider finding out what the issues are and a concerted attempt by her department of Conciliation Officers, and in particular the right to appoint a Conciliation Board to tell the public what the issues are in this strike with the Builders Exchange trying to undo features of their collective agreement which have been there for years, when many people think that it's as a result of employees demands.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please, order please. The Honourable Minister of Northern Affairs on a point of order.

**HON. KEN MacMASTER (Thompson):** Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the Member for Inkster has the right to stand up in this particular House and talk about the negotiating positions of either the unions or the people that they are negotiating with. Negotiations, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit are the business of the two people that are involved in them, not the particular business of an individual who chooses to make something out of it in this particular House.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please, order please. May I suggest that the Honourable Member did not have a point of order, and may I also point out that the Member for Inkster is purely asking questions. He is not making statements.

**MR. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Labour agree, contrary to the stupidity that we have just heard from her deskmate, that the public —(Interjection)—

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please, order please, order please. May I suggest to the honourable member that he can confine himself purely to the position of asking questions, without any gratuitous statements.

**MR. GREEN:** Then, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Labour agree that one of the main functions, or will she disagree, that one of the main functions of the Department of Labour is to see to it that the public is aware as to why a strike is on?

**MRS. PRICE:** The public is aware at this point what the strike is all about —(Interjection)— I beg your pardon? —(Interjection)— I am as aware as you are aware. I would like to go on record as saying that my colleague, the Minister of Northern Affairs, is certainly probably the most fitted person to be able to describe these, with the experience that he has . . .

**A MEMBER:** Most stupid, most stupid.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Inkster with a fourth question.

**MR. GREEN:** Yes, I would then ask the Minister of Labour, who now says that she is aware of what she said she wasn't aware of a few minutes ago, whether it is in her view in the public interest for her department to not only find out what the issues are, but make it clear to the public as to why these parties are not getting together?!

**MRS. PRICE:** My department is aware, Mr. Speaker, of what the problems are, but at this point it is of a confidential nature and I am not going to stand up here and express any opinions on it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Inkster with a fifth question.

**MR. GREEN:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Does the Minister of Labour then indicate that she intends to keep confidential the fact that the Builders Exchange are trying to undo precious rights that have been gained by the employers over the year, and that is one of the main issues in the strike?

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that those opinions are the opinions of the Member for Inkster, and not necessarily shared by the people of Manitoba.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Inkster with a sixth question.

**MR. GREEN:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker. Then will the Minister of Labour appoint a Conciliation Board, which she has the power to do, which will be able to hear evidence and report to the Minister and to the public as to what is keeping these parties apart? Does she consider that her role?

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to do that at this time.

### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

**MR. A. R. (Pete) ADAM:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege of the House.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose on a point of privilege of the House.

**MR. ADAM:** Yes, on May 12th, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture introduced the second reading on Bill 25, and at that time he referred to letters that he had received and he read excerpts of these letters. He received letters and he quoted from the United Grain Growers, and the Manitoba Farm Bureau, The Diploma Graduates Association, and the Manitoba Beef Growers Association, and The Manitoba Cow-Calf Association. Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is the rules of this House that letters received and signed should be tabled. I brought this to the attention of the Minister on May 29th and at that time the Minister said, and I quote: "I will check on that and possibly be able to do it very shortly." And he was referring in answer to a question that I posed to him in regard to these letters. This is a complete disregard for the rules of this House, Mr. Speaker, and I would request that the Minister table these letters without due delay, because the opposition need these letters in order to debate this bill properly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Government House Leader.

**MR. JORGENSON:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Member is in error if he suggests

that because letters are mentioned in this Chamber that they have to be tabled. They are tabled if they are read. I don't recall my honourable friend reading any excerpts or any portion of those letters into the records, so therefore his point of order or his point of privilege is really not a point of privilege at all.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose with further clarifications on his point of privilege.

**MR. ADAM:** Yes, because of the remarks made by the Government House Leader, I will read directly from Hansard, and I quote: "I have one or two letters which I would like to read." Is that clear enough? "The letter of support from the United Grain Growers, quote: 'the Board of Directors for United Grain Growers is pleased to lend its whole-hearted support to proposals to establish a beef cattle checkoff system in Manitoba.'" On Page 2114, the Minister of Agriculture read those, and I ask that those letters be tabled, Sir.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please. In the absence of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, I'll take this question under advisement.

### ORAL QUESTIONS (Cont'd)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day — The Honourable Member for St. Vital.

**M. D. JAMES WALDING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Acting Minister of Agriculture. Would the Minister inform the House the manner in which changes in retail food prices are publicized to the public?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day — The Honourable Member for St. Vital.

**MR. WALDING:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would address a question then to the Acting First Minister and ask him who the Acting Minister of Agriculture is?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Consumer Affairs.

**MR. MCGILL:** Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the Member for St. Vital, and tell him that the Minister of Health will respond on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture.

**MR. WALDING:** Thank you. Then, Mr. Speaker, I will address my question to the Minister of Health, acting as the Minister of Agriculture, and ask him if he could inform the House how changes in retail food prices are communicated to the public?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please. The Honourable Minister of Health.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Having just seeded my back forty in Fort Garry, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Vital, that I will pass that question on to my colleague, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture. I will undertake to give him that question.

**MR. WALDING:** Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I should say a word of explanation to the Minister of Health, who might not have been expecting it, that I have raised the matter of food prices with the Minister of Consumer Affairs at his Estimates yesterday, expecting him to be the Minister responsible for such actions. He informed me that it was the Minister of Agriculture who performed that function of publicizing price increases, and I now ask the Minister if he would take that under advisement or under notice for his colleague. And, as a supplementary, could he at the same time confirm that the Retail Price Index for food, on an annual basis for the month of April, has increased by 15.2 percent over the same month last year?

**MR. SHERMAN:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Selkirk.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Mr. Speaker, a question to the Attorney-General. Could the Attorney-General advise whether or not the circumstances outlined today pertaining to a high-speed police chase in the vicinity of Riverton in which some 17 shots were fired, whether that type of speed chase is considered acceptable insofar as his department is concerned?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Attorney-General.

**HON. GERALD W.J. MERCIER (Osborne):** Mr. Speaker, that matter is presently before the courts and I will take the question as notice for now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Wellington.

**MR. BRIAN CORRIN:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. My question is addressed to the Honourable Minister of Health and Social Development and it is with respect to a report presented, I believe, on Monday by the city's Chief Health Officer, Dr. Roper Cadham. This report was with respect to the province's request that some four members of the city's Public Health staff be seconded to identification of venereal disease carriers in the City of Winnipeg area. I was wondering whether the Honourable Minister could indicate at this time, in view of the fact that Dr. Cadham does not feel that they have sufficient manpower to provide this assistance to the province, whether or not he will be providing supplementary dollars, either to the city or through his own department to provide additional provincial manpower in this respect?

**MR. SHERMAN:** Mr. Speaker, that procedure or process is not necessary at the moment, although I will assure my honourable friend that I will keep an eye on it. The whole question is still under the consideration of the Environment Committee of the City of Winnipeg and I am hopeful that the city will be participating in the program, co-operating in the program. The position that Dr. Cadham takes is one to which he is entitled, and I don't quarrel with it, but I believe that the city can be counted on to co-operate in this program.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for The Pas.

**MR. RONALD McBRYDE:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. A question to the Minister of Labour. I wonder if the Minister of Labour could tell us whether the Redeployment Committee has been able to find employment within the Civil Service for any of those persons from the Department of Northern Affairs and Renewable Resources that were let go by this government?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Labour.

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Speaker, I know there were a number of jobs available, that they could be placed back into the employment line, but apparently the MGEA said that they had to go through the normal procedures of bulletining it, and according to seniority and etc., and wouldn't let them just automatically redeploy them, so at this point I can't really answer that.

**MR. McBRYDE:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could just get some clarification. If it wasn't for the MGEA, is the Minister saying that some persons would have been found alternate employment within the Civil Service?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. McBRYDE:** Mr. Speaker, while I'm on the subject of unemployment, I would just like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Development if he is able to give us any statistics on the number of unemployed employables for the last month for which he has gathered statistics? I believe he indicated he would when I asked him this question a while ago, and it should be available pretty soon I would think.

**MR. SHERMAN:** I did supply some to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition during the examination of one branch of my Estimates the other evening, Mr. Speaker, but I'll re-examine the information that was conveyed at that time to determine whether it's precisely that requested by the Honourable Member for The Pas.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Consumer Affairs.

**MR. MCGILL:** Mr. Speaker, on Friday last, the Member for Fort Rouge asked certain questions in relation to the Bell Canada-Saudi Arabian project as it bears upon our Manitoba Telephone System. In his absence, I would like to respond to those, and he will be able to obtain the answers from Hansard. One of the questions, Mr. Speaker, which the member put was: Have any MTS employees made application for the Saudi Arabian project? And the answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is that a



large number of MTS employees have exhibited and expressed interest in the project but as yet no formal applications have been made.

The member also asked if I would undertake to gain a reading from either the Federal Human Rights Commission or the Provincial Human Rights Commission in the contracts, what the conditions are and whether they contain any form of discriminatory clauses, so that MTS employees would not be complicit in an act of discrimination. I can advise the Member for Fort Rouge that the contracts which would be signed, which are available for signature by interested employees, which would be signed by any MTS employee and Bell Canada in respect to this Saudi Arabian project, have no terms or clauses which could be regarded as discriminatory.

The final question asked by the Member for Fort Rouge was, could the Government of Manitoba inform employees of MTS of the inquiry from the Federal Human Rights Commission, and that acceptance of employment would make MTS complicit in this action. Mr. Speaker, those MTS employees who wish to participate in the Bell-Saudi Arabian project will be informed of all available information, including the status of any inquiry from the Human Rights Commission.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

**MR. SAUL CHERNIACK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Honourable Minister reporting for Manitoba Telephone System if he can assure us with certainty that there will not be discrimination amongst the applicants of the Telephone System for these various positions, based on sex or religion or ethnic origin?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Minister of Consumer Affairs.

**MR. MCGILL:** Mr. Speaker, since no applications have as yet been signed or submitted, I am unable to make an assurance in advance. However, I am prepared, as the member requested on Monday, to table all documents and information in respect to the whole project that has been received by MTS from Bell Canada, and I hope, Mr. Speaker, to be able to do that tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The supplementary then, in view of the fact that the Manitoba Telephone System is acting as the recruiting agent for Bell Canada within the System, can the Minister inform us as to what investigation has been made to assure people who may wish to apply as applicants that there won't be that form of discrimination.

**MR. MCGILL:** Mr. Speaker, I'm advised that the Manitoba Telephone System is not in any way acting as a recruiting agent. It feels a responsibility to make information available to its employees. It is not, I am advised, promoting the idea amongst its employees that they should make application for this, but they are at the same time providing all of the information which they have to any employee who may, on his own, consider pursuing this matter further.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Honourable Minister will give me his reaction to the following which says, "Thank you for showing an interest in the current Saudi Arabia project", and it goes further on to say, "If you are still seriously interested in pursuing an assignment in Saudi Arabia please send two copies of your resume, including your present annual salary, to Human Resource Inventory, Personnel Department", which I believe is unquestionably a division or department of the Manitoba Telephone System. Would he not agree that this is a form of recruiting in that they are thanking people who make inquiries and ask them to send further copies of resumes and other information to them? Is the Minister suggesting that they are not recruiting, be it passive, active, extensive or otherwise?

**MR. MCGILL:** Mr. Speaker, I repeat that they are not promoting the acceptance of contracts in this project from amongst Manitoba Telephone System's employees. As a member of the Trans-Canada Telephone System and as one of the members along with Bell Canada the MTS feels a responsibility to make this information available. I think the member should not mistake politeness in the response in the letter to an invitation or some kind of incentive or inducement that he reads into this. I believe the salutation that he reads as a response to a request for information is merely one that is commonly used.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Member for Winnipeg Centre.

**MR. J. R. (Bud) BOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, a question to the Attorney-General. Earlier the Minister of

Education took as notice a question from the Member for Selkirk relative to an incident in one of the high schools in which the RCMP apparently was involved in forcing students to strip in semi-public circumstances causing, in my opinion, some undue embarrassment to these people. Would the Attorney-General take as notice the same question and advise the House on whose authority such action was taken.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Honourable Attorney-General.

**MR. MERCIER:** Mr. Speaker, I understand the honourable member's referring to the incident that took place at the Steinbach High School. My information is that that matter was conducted in full cooperation with the school authorities and was only directed towards ten students, although there were certain newspaper reports which left the impression that there were random searches of students throughout the High School, the searches only took place of ten students and in full consultation with the school authorities and no complaints to date have been received by the RCMP.

**MR. BOYCE:** Well, perhaps the Attorney-General could clarify his answer. What authorities is he referring to — "under full cooperation of the authorities" — what authorities?

**MR. MERCIER:** Mr. Speaker, the principal and vice-principal of the school, at least.

**MR. BOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Attorney-General could advise the House that ever since the inception of the public school system under the Public School Act that teachers are in fact and in law and in policy, *in low parentis*, how such action can be taken, and is the Attorney-General satisfied that the obligations and duties of teachers per se in this regard, that they are once again in fact and in law *in low parentis*, has not been transgressed?

**MR. MERCIER:** If the honourable member would care to read Section 10 of the Narcotic Control Act I would believe that the authority under that section supersedes any authority of the teachers, and again I repeat the incident was done in consultation with the principal, at least the principal and vice-principal of the school so they were aware of what was proceeding.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please. The time for questions having expired we will proceed with Orders of the Day. The Honourable Government House Leader.

**MR. JORGENSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

**MOTION presented and carried** and the House resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, with the Honourable Member for Radisson in the Chair for the Department of Health and Social Development and the Honourable Member for Crescentwood in the Chair for the Department of Labour

### CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY

#### SUPPLY — LABOUR

**MR. CHAIRMAN, Mr. Warren Steen:** Lady and gentlemen, we have a quorum now. We have the sleepyheads from the government side in attendance. We are on Page 54, Resolution 78, Labour. General Administration. The Minister has some opening remarks.

The Minister of Labour.

**HON. NORMA L. PRICE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Firstly I must say I feel very flattered, the heavies that I have attracted from the Opposition. I am pleased to introduce the Estimates of the Department of Labour. These Estimates cover programs and services that have for the most part, been provided by the department for many years. While some of the programs, such as those relating to pension regulation and those administered by the Women's Bureau date back only a few years, most programs in such areas as labour standards, labour relations, public safety, fire prevention and apprenticeship training have been the responsibility of the department for a long time.

As with other government departments, the Labour department's estimated requirements have

been determined within the context of the government restraint policy. Most of the department's programs and services are being maintained at current levels although, in some cases, there have been minor cutbacks in terms of estimated expenditures. I might add that these cutbacks have been achieved through attrition and through a reduction in operating expenditures in certain areas such as advertising and travel. The Estimates do not provide for any new programs or services in the coming year. It is our general intention to improve upon our existing programs through a more effective and efficient utilization of our present resources. We will continue, during the coming year, to carefully review our existing programs in terms of their organization, administration and effectiveness to ensure that maximum benefits are derived from them.

At the same time, we will also be reviewing legislation that is the responsibility of the department to determine if changes are necessary. In these efforts, we intend to encourage a policy of consultation and co-operation with interested parties. Concerns expressed and proposals received will be carefully considered with a view to developing laws that are in the best interests of all Manitobans.

Since the Estimates pertaining to the year ahead reflect a continuation of existing services and programs, I would like to very briefly review some of the activities of the Department of Labour. For many years, the Department has been administering and enforcing legislation establishing labour standards in such areas as wages, hours of work and paid holidays. The number and level of these standards has, over the years, expanded to a significant extent and consequently the work of the department in this area has also increased very substantially. We will continue in our efforts to improve the administration and enforcement of our existing legislation in this field.

The department has also major responsibilities in the area of labour relations. The Manitoba Labour Board, in addition to its responsibilities under labour standards legislation, processes and adjudicates unfair labour practice complaints, certification applications and other types of applications under the Labour Relations Act. Furthermore, through its conciliation services, the department endeavours to assist the parties to collective bargaining to resolve their disputes.

I am pleased to report that over the last while there has been a significant reduction in the amount of time lost due to work stoppages. The Anti-inflation Program which is now being phased out and prevailing economic conditions have no doubt contributed to this recent trend. The problem of inflation still remains with us and with it is the potential for increased industrial conflict although reducing the rate of inflation in any significant way requires a concerted effort at the national level. We have attempted to contribute to that reduction through our actions at the provincial level. The Department of Labour will do what it can through its conciliation services and other means to ensure that the recent trend of reduced industrial conflict continues. Ultimately, however, the major responsibility for resolving differences without resorting to work stoppage rests with labour and management.

With regard to labour relations in general, we believe in the collective bargaining process as a means of resolving differences between employers and employees and we believe in minimal interference by the government in the process of collective bargaining. At the same time, however, we recognize that there is a need to protect the public interest where there is a serious breakdown in the collective bargaining process that may adversely affect the health or security of the people of the province or that may seriously affect the economy of the province. Government has a responsibility to protect the public interest and one cannot expect government to ignore that responsibility. We are of the opinion that both labour and management, particularly in the sensitive areas, sincerely desire to work together to resolve their differences without resort to a work stoppage. The department will do whatever it can to assist them in resolving their differences.

The department is also responsible for the development and administration of pension standards legislation. The office of the pension superintendent inspects and registers pension plans to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Pension Benefits Act. In addition, the pension Pension Commission and its staff administer agreements with other provinces providing for the reciprocal registration, inspection and audit of pension plans. A further function is to actively promote the establishment and improvement of pension plans in the province.

Another function of the department relates to the work of the Women's Bureau. The staff of the Bureau is responsible for providing information and advice to women who are entering or who are active in the work force. In doing so, it handles inquiries from individuals and organizations, develops relevant information and participates in meeting with interested groups.

The department is responsible for the province's apprenticeship program and is also responsible for certifying qualified tradesmen who have not gone through the apprenticeship program. These programs are expanded and improved upon on a continuing basis. Indications are that there may be room for further improvement and pending review of the program, necessary changes may be made.

I would like to close my remarks, Mr. Chairman, with a few comments about safety. The department has responsibilities in certain areas of public safety and in the area of Workplace Safety

and Health. For example, the department is responsible for establishing and, in certain cases, enforcing building safety standards, mechanical and other equipment safety standards, as well as fire safety standards. We hope to improve our work in these safety areas by rationalizing and making more effective use of our staff and resources.

One of our major new responsibilities which has received considerable attention recently and which has been the subject of considerable speculation is in the area of safety and health in the workplace. A number of government departments and agencies have in the past been responsible for occupational health and safety. Under the new Workplace Safety and Health Act, these responsibilities have been, or are in the process of being, co-ordinated and unified under a single authority within the Department of Labour. It is expected that centralizing activities relating to Workplace Safety and Health will result in improved safety standards and in improved enforcement of those standards. We are very concerned with safety and intend to have an effective safety program. An effective safety program is one of our fundamental concerns. We intend to monitor the program on a continuing basis to ensure that we are making the most efficient use of our existing resources. The rationalization and centralization of the division will also contribute to the effectiveness of the program.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, the Department of Labour will continue to provide the same services and administer the same programs as it has in the past. In addition, the programs and services will be assessed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are efficient and effective and that we are deriving maximum benefits from our resources.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the department's services and legislation are essentially supportive and regulatory. Real progress in areas such as working conditions, collective bargaining and safety can best be achieved through the resourcefulness and efforts of the employers, employees and the general public.

Thank you.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Just before we proceed with questioning and a detailed study, the Minister has a organizational breakdown or charts here. With the Clerk absent, perhaps the members can just take one and pass them along.

Item 1.(b) Administration, Salaries — \$313,800—pass — the Member for Kildonan and then the Member for Logan.

**MR. PETER FOX:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all I would like to commend the Minister for the well written statement she read. I enjoyed it and I certainly hope that what was in it will prove to be so when we get down to the details and discuss the various items in respect to her Estimates.

As a start, I would like to ask what the SMYs are for this particular area, where the difference now apparently is some \$30,000 less. Would the Minister while she's looking also provide the comparison to last year so we'd have something to go by? Not having been in labour last year, I wouldn't know.

**MRS. PRICE:** The \$30,000 less, we have a reduction of two people in that particular area.

**MR. FOX:** How many did we have last year?

**MRS. PRICE:** We have now 22 staff man years; there were two others.

**A MEMBER:** Twenty four last year?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. FOX:** I was under the impression that there were 26 last year.

**MRS. PRICE:** No, there are just two that are . . .

**MR. FOX:** Just two have been replaced?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, in the administration.

**MR. FOX:** Does that mean there were two unfilled vacancies last year?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, there is an administrative secretary in Thompson and the Assistant Deputy Minister.

**MR. FOX:** Can the Minister indicate which two positions were eliminated?

**MRS. PRICE:** That's the ones I just said — the administrative secretary in Thompson, there was a reduction in the workload there so that one hasn't been replaced and then we didn't replace the Assistant Deputy Minister.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Logan.

**MR. WILLIAM JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First I would like to say that I do agree with the Minister when she states that the affairs of the industrial relations world are best left to the people who deal with it and that the less government interferes in that process, I think the better that that process operates. I think that the Minister has stated that very well. I hope that subsequent years will prove that she says what she means. We have seen the tendency in the past by governments, Progressive Conservative and Liberal governments of this province and of this country, who always seem to want to interfere in the processes of collective bargaining and industrial disputes and quite true, as the Minister says, there are times that the public interest does come to the fore but I think that the less that government interferes, the better off things are for the harmony and harmonious relationship that exists between management and labour in this field.

She states that there are 22 SMYs in the appropriation this year. Are there any vacancies or is that . . . ?

**MRS. PRICE:** The two that I just mentioned.

**MR. JENKINS:** So you're budgeting here for 22 staff man years?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. JENKINS:** And are all positions at the present time filled?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, except those two.

**MR. JENKINS:** Well then you're budgeting for 24?

**MRS. PRICE:** No.

**MR. JENKINS:** Or 22.

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, we are not going to be replacing the ADM.

**MR. JENKINS:** So then, in other words, the \$313,800 that we see before us here is a budgetary estimate for 22 staff man years in the department in the administration.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. JENKINS:** There are no vacancies.

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, we didn't replace . . .

**MR. JENKINS:** There's no money put in here for vacant positions at this time.

**MRS. PRICE:** Not at this time. I'm informed 24, because one is a Minister and one is a term.

**MR. JENKINS:** So then we are budgeting for 24 staff man years and 22 are at the present time being filled.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. JENKINS:** Thank you.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Transcona, then Churchill.

**MR. WILSON PARASIUKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've heard the opening statement of the

Minister of Labour in putting forward her Estimates and frankly this is one area that I think we, and I think a large number of Manitobans, have been waiting for the Minister to say something about in that this is her opportunity to say something positive and constructive about her attitude regarding the entire department. While there is agreement with her position which is, I think, a commonly accepted position regarding industrial relations and that is that they are largely best left to the employer and the employee, the department itself deals with a large number of issues and we have not, frankly, received a positive statement from the Minister of Labour regarding this. In fact, we can ask the question: What does she stand for as the Minister of Labour, what is her stamp, what is she bringing to this department as a Minister who has been in place now for seven months? What did the Premier see in her to appoint her to this position? Did she have anything that she wanted to do? Did she say to the Premier, "Yes, I will take this task on because I in fact have a commitment to a number of things involved under the Department of Labour's aegis and I want to pursue them and promote them?" Or was this given sort of as a last-chance opportunity for her to get put in Cabinet and she said, "Well, I'm not really sure; I don't know what's involved and I'll take it but I really can't commit myself to anything but possibly over seven months I might be able to develop some type of approach to this whole area."

Well, we've waited for seven months and she's come to us saying that these are largely the Estimates of past administrations. She is saying then that these indeed are Russ Paulley's Estimates or they're Jim Goodison's Estimates but in a sense she has nothing really to add to them. I find that really quite surprising because when all is said and done, she hasn't said anything positive.

Of course, these aren't Russ Paulley's Estimates, that's right, and they're not Jim Goodison's Estimates either; they're her Estimates and I think that although she will not say anything positive regarding the departmental Estimates and what she sees as the role for the Department of Labour, I think we will find out in examining these Estimates in depth that there is indeed a stamp and that is a negative stamp, that's a negative stamp because there are negative aspects to these Estimates.

The Workplace Safety and Health Program has been slashed. It has been slashed by 50 percent. Last year's Estimates were for half a year . . .

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Can I bring it to the attention of the Member for Transcona that we are on Administration and we haven't gotten to the Workplace Safety and Health Section yet.

**MR. PARASIUK:** I believe the Minister raised a question of Workplace Safety and Health in her introductory comments . . .

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** In her opening statement . . . and on the Minister's salary which is the concluding item, you can touch base on every aspect of the department. I ask all members if they would try and follow the Estimates.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Mr. Chairman, I believe that you in fact set the rule when you were chairing this committee that members could follow the lead of the Minister and the Minister in fact went off and raised these points and I'm just responding to some of the points that she raised. All I'm pointing out is that there are indeed negative aspects to the Estimates; they aren't the same as last year even though she indicated that largely they are the same as last year. They have been slashed, as I said, and we have done so supposedly in - this context of restraint and yet the Minister is trying to say a few positive things about Workplace Safety and Health but when all is said and done the program is indeed slashed and, as I said, when we come to the specifics, we'll find out how it's been slashed.

The Women's Bureau which is an area that conceivably she could have had something positive to say about in her introductory statement, has been curiously omitted as has been the fact that the position of director of the Women's Bureau has not been filled for about six months now.

**MRS. PRICE:** Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. The Women's Bureau certainly is included. The Women's Bureau is on Page 55.

**MR. PARASIUK:** I said in your introductory statement, Mr. Chairman.

**MRS. PRICE:** I had the Women's Bureau in my introductory statement.

**MR. PARASIUK:** What did you say about it then, I've forgotten.

**MRS. PRICE:** I had quite a . . .

**MR. PARASIUK:** Okay, I don't recall your saying anything about it and maybe in fact it was said in such a low-key manner that it didn't register on me when you in fact raised this particular point. The point is that that is an area that has been very largely neglected by the Minister and we have had a situation there where the director hasn't been replaced and it would strike me that after six months, surely the Minister should be in a position to make some positive statements regarding the departmental estimates and not just come forward and say, "Here they are; these are the ones from last year."

She has said nothing whatsoever about the whole question of Accident and Sickness Insurance and the interesting thing about that is that I possibly didn't expect her to say anything about it but it came to my attention that the present Minister of Health, when he was Opposition Labour critic last year, made a commitment to the Injured Workers Association that he in fact would raise this issue with caucus and that he would put it forward and he couldn't make any commitment to them about it but he did recognize that it was a very serious issue and therefore he made the commitment that he would put it forward. I would have expected the Minister, if only in passing, to say that, you know, we have considered the request of the present Minister of Health that we considered this and we decided not to proceed with it and we are going on without that program. But she has not made those statements and she tries to pass the Department of Labour Estimates off as being largely concerned with regulation. I think the Department of Labour, in fact, has a very positive role to play in our society, not only dealing with industrial relations but dealing with things like apprenticeship. I would hope that the Minister will take a much more positive position with respect to these specific programs when we deal with them specifically and individually.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Churchill.

**MR. JAY COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again I appreciate the comments that were put into the record by the Minister of Labour and look forward to discussing them in some detail throughout the Estimates process.

The budget she has mentioned, the Estimates for Labour, have been brought forth, have been developed as she had mentioned in those comments within the context of the government restraint program, Mr. Chairman, and I would suggest to you that that government restraint program has become known throughout the country as a penny-pinching exercise on the part of this present Conservative government that will act to the detriment of not only this department but of most departments. It is a restraining budget. Mr. Chairman, monetary restraint also means policy restraint. It goes hand in hand. It also means program restraint. It also means philosophical restraint. These Estimates, as we will detail throughout, are actually a reduction regardless of what the bottom lines say, the total for Labour reads as an increase. As we go through the Estimates we will see where in reality these figures for this year are a reduction from the moneys spent last year, a restraining budget that not only does not allow for inflationary trends but does not allow for any increase whatsoever and, Sir, that has to be to the detriment of this Minister's department. I sympathize with her because she has a hard task ahead of her. She has to maintain this department and I would hope that she would have some feeling towards labour that she would want to not only maintain this department but to develop a better department and she has to do so within the context of less money this year than was spent last year.

I'd like to clarify just a few matters that she mentioned in response to the Member for Kildonan's questions. She mentioned that there was an administrative secretary in Thompson position vacant. Has that position been frozen or has that position been cut out of the budget all together?

**MRS. PRICE:** No, it hasn't been frozen. It's just at this point the workload has been reduced and at this particular point there isn't the necessity for one there.

**MR. COWAN:** I would ask the Minister then, Mr. Chairman, to what does she attribute this reduction in the workload for that secretary in the community of Thompson?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, I think we have been doing a little turn-around in some of our programs and our re-staffing of people and putting them into more effective use. That way, we can get more work accomplished without as many people.

**MR. COWAN:** Excuse me, I'm confused a bit on this, Mr. Chairman, because the Minister tells me first that this administrative secretary in Thompson has been reduced, or is not being presently employed, because of a reduction in work load, and now she's telling me that the administrative secretary is not being employed, because they have decided to do a turnabout in their work force and make more efficient use of this administrative secretary. Has this administrative secretary been

transferred to another area?

**MRS. PRICE:** The Fire Commissioner that was at Thompson is not there now, he retired, and we have one that goes out on a regular basis from Winnipeg. It's working quite well, and therefore we do not require a secretary there at this time.

**MR. COWAN:** Is the Minister telling me then, that this administrative secretary was secretary to the Fire Commissioner, who was based in Thompson?

**MRS. PRICE:** Pardon me?

**MR. COWAN:** Is the Minister telling me that the administrative secretary position here, was administrative secretary to the Fire Commissioner that was based in Thompson?

**MRS. PRICE:** Partly.

**MR. COWAN:** What other duties, I would ask, Mr. Chairman, what other duties did the administrative secretary in Thompson have?

**MRS. PRICE:** It was routine in the office there in general.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Minister if she could be more specific as to what routine would be?

**MRS. PRICE:** Same as the secretary would in your office. They would do a variety of work.

**MR. COWAN:** Then I would assume, from the comments of the Minister, was an administrative secretary that did what would be called routine secretarial work, and also was secretary to the Fire Commissioner who was based in Thompson, who is no longer based in Thompson?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. COWAN:** Does the Minister then intend to replace the Fire Commissioner, who has been withdrawn from the Community of Thompson, with a Fire Commissioner that would live and work in that community?

**MRS. PRICE:** Not at this point. We have one going up, as I said, on a regular basis from Winnipeg; it's proving very satisfactory and at this point there isn't any need to alter that course.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Chairman, I would seek some direction from you. Should we pursue at this juncture, because it's been brought up by the Minister, the Fire Commissioner, or should we pursue that under another section of the Estimates, and if so, what section?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I would say to you and other members, the Minister, like most Ministers, makes an opening statement which embraces all aspects of their particular department, and then what we usually do is we go to the critic for the opposition, and that person sort of responds to that opening statement. What we have been doing in a number of other department Estimates, is sort of going to everybody on the opposition who wishes to respond to that opening statement, and then from that point on, we try to follow the items in the booklet, item by item. We don't always succeed in following them item by item, but that is our wish.

**MR. COWAN:** The reason I ask, is this was brought up in the perusal of the section (b), I believe.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Yes, I know where it is, but. . .

**MR. COWAN:** So, are we in general policy statements in reply to the Minister?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** If you are replying to the Minister's opening statement, fine and dandy, but once we get through with everybody replying to the Minister's opening statement, it is my wish that we could go item by item.

**MR. COWAN:** Okay, I will yield to any other member that would wish to reply to the Minister's



opening statement.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Kildonan.

**MR. FOX:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have an organizational chart, and I don't see Workers' Compensation on here. I just wonder where it would fit in, and also in respect to the organizational chart, there are a number of boards, the Labour Board, the Building Standards Boards. . .

**MRS. PRICE:** They're all in there.

**MR. FOX:** That's right.

**MRS. PRICE:** There's all the boards.

**MR. FOX:** All right, where's the Workers' Compensation Board?

**A MEMBER:** It's not part of the Department of Labour.

**MR. FOX:** But it does come under the Minister.

**MRS. PRICE:** It comes under me, but it's not under this particular board.

**MR. FOX:** Under what particular area will we be discussing it, since it doesn't appear in the Estimates either?

**MRS. PRICE:** Workman's Compensation is, I think. . . is it not with the Civil Service part; I think it's in that part. It's in here anyway.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** To the Member for Kildonan, I believe. . .

**MR. FOX:** Mr. Chairman, I would just like to get some direction. . .

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, it's on Page 17; it'll be coming up at the Civil Service.

**MR. FOX:** So therefore, we'll discuss Workers Compensation under the Civil Service.

Well, in respect to Administration, do we discuss all the various boards that are mentioned under the Minister, as I said, the Minimum Wage Board, the Labour Board, or do we discuss these under different items?

**MRS. PRICE:** I think we should take each one in the appropriate division that they're in.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** To the Member for Kildonan, I have been discussing the Workers Compensation with the Clerk and he informs me that in the past, the Workers Compensation Board has been discussed under the Minister's Salary, that it is not shown as an individual item. The Workers Compensation under the Civil Service is the Workers Compensation pertaining to civil servants only, and I believe the Member for Kildonan was talking about the regular Workers Compensation. Is that correct?

**MR. FOX:** That's right.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** So, under the Minister's Salary as in past years, is where that item has been discussed.

**MR. FOX:** Well, what about the Labour Management Review Committee? Would that come under Administration in policy? If that is the case, the first question I would like to ask is, whether there has been a replacement for Professor Woods who has resigned, and if that Committee is going to function? I believe it has done some very useful work in the past and its recommendations, many of them, were implemented in legislation which worked out very well. And I would say as the person who had some commerce with Professor Woods, I thought he was a very eminent person, and I regret that his services are no longer being utilized. I think if the Minister would have made a little attempt at having the professor carry on, the usefulness of that Committee could have been of benefit to Manitoba. As it is, I think that now we may have some difficulty in getting a person of the stature of Professor Woods to chair a very difficult portfolio.

**MRS. PRICE:** There is a second meeting held under the direction of the vice-chairman, Professor Atwell. We have some names brought forth, but I would like to assure the Member for Kildonan that out of a population of a million people, I am sure that we can get a very suitable replacement. We do have some names that I am not prepared to say at this point until we discuss it with them.

**MR. FOX:** Well, I'm delighted to hear that the Minister is trying to do something because at the present time with the labour conditions that we have in Manitoba, I'm sure that we could use all the intelligence that is available in order to try to alleviate some of the industrial strife that is going to take place, and also that is taking place.

In respect to minimum wage, can the Minister give me an indication when they're going to get off their butt. They do have a number of Cabinet meetings a month. Is it not possible to discuss this particular area?

**MRS. PRICE:** It is discussed on a regular basis, Mr. Chairman, but at this point there hasn't been any decisions made regarding it.

**MR. FOX:** Well, I regret that very much if there's no decision made. Those people on minimum wage have been without a raise now for 21 months. As the Minister well knows, there has to be some lead time as well, and the cost of living has not stopped rising, and those people have no other means or recourse of getting an increase. And as long as the Minister sits and does nothing, those people are going to get farther and farther behind in their standard of living.

**MRS. PRICE:** I don't like you thinking I am sitting down doing nothing. There's a lot of pros and cons regarding the raising of the minimum wage. Firstly, I believe that there's something just under 10 percent of in actuality of people getting the minimum wage; others are above that. But as I've mentioned in the House, when you raise the minimum wage, you raise every step above that, and I know from the many many years I was in the private sector, the people that were the ones that were actually receiving the minimum wage were the first to be laid off, so in essence it didn't improve their lot in life at all, they were in the long run unemployed. So there are pros and cons. Raising the minimum wage is not just the answer to a better economy and a better life for all, I don't think. We have to look at it very carefully before there are any decisions made on it in that regard.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Kildonan.

**MR. FOX:** Well, . . . it's a natural Domino theory that everything else goes up, because I'm sure she's well aware that many of the people that are in the labour force negotiate their agreements and are tied in for 12 months, 24 months, and sometimes even longer, and it doesn't necessarily mean that people who are without negotiating services will immediately get an increase just because the minimum wage went up. Those that are above will not necessarily get it immediately, possibly later on. But the other thing on the other side of the coin is that people at minimum wage level immediately spend that which buoys up the economy and goes right back in to creating more jobs and demand for more services, and so on, so that's the other side of the coin.

The other thing is this, that everyone of those people at minimum wage are probably wage earners who have families, and there should be some compassion on the Minister's part in order to help them out, because after all, at that level they have probably very few skills with which to be able to go out and find other kinds of employment.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Before the Minister replies, can I find out from Mmembers present regarding Private Members' Hour. Are their any members attending this committee who have intention of participating today in the Private Members' Hour? If there are none, we would carry through until 5:30, if there are some, then we will break off at 4:30 in the normal fashion.

**MR. JORGENSON:** —(Interjection)— That's Private Members' today. Bill No. 17, An Act to amend An Act to incorporate the Brandon General Hospital standing in the name of Mr. Evans; Bill No. 5, The Liquor Control Act; Bill No. 6, The Freedom of Information Act; Bill No. 12, An Act respecting the City of Brandon; and Bill 32, An Act to amend The Human Rights Act.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Well, to the Government House Leader, seeing no one indicating or hearing nobody indicating an interest, that is the answer from this committee. The Honourable Member for Kildonan, I'm sorry for interrupting you.

**Tuesday, June 6, 1978**

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**MR. FOX:** I just made my comments in respect to minimum wage.

The other area I wish to get some information on is the Power Engineers Advisory Board. Is it functioning, and who are the members on it?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, when I came into office it wasn't functioning. We've sent out letters to the different parts of the community that are interested and relevant to the functioning of that particular board, and the names are just coming in now so it will be in operation very shortly.

**MR. FOX:** And the Buildings Standard Board?

**MRS. PRICE:** The Buildings Standard Board is in operation.

**MR. FOX:** Who are the members?

**MRS. PRICE:** I'll have to get the names for you and I'll give them to you as soon as they are given them to me.

**MR. FOX:** In fact I should ask in respect to all of these Boards; the Construction Industry Wages Board, is it functioning, has it been making recommendations?

**MRS. PRICE:** Nearly all the Boards are functioning. There were many of the Boards that were not, when I came into this portfolio, but we have been sending out letters to all the different types of organizations and companies that are related to it, and we are getting all the Boards in operation.

**MR. FOX:** All except the Minimum Wage Board? I recall the Minister said that the committee could serve no useful purpose. I would like to get her understanding as to how she arrived at that conclusion.

**MRS. PRICE:** They arrived at it themselves. They are the ones that made the statement because it is a policy of government when the minimum wage is raised. What they have done is that last November I guess it was they brought in a recommendation what they thought it should be raised to, although I must tell you that I believe my predecessor had not at that time seen the need for increasing the minimum wage.

**MR. FOX:** I do believe that the Minimum Wage Board did make a recommendation in respect to a schedule or a procedure in respect to minimum wages, and if that formula was accepted, then after monitoring that particular aspect of the formula for a period of time, then it would become defunct. Is the Minister taking that particular phrase out of context and saying that is why they are no longer . . .

**MRS. PRICE:** That percentage formula that they were suggesting that we take, had we used that we would have been the highest minimum wage in Canada.

**MR. FOX:** Well aside from that, the Minister was prepared to accept the formula, the Minister could always make an amendment to the formula, nevertheless accept that. Now I realize that I believe the formula indicated something like 60 percent of the industrial composite, but that was the recommendation. It wasn't necessary for the Minister to accept the recommendation totally, but she could have at least accepted part of it, but that doesn't mean to say that the Minimum Wage Board has no useful function because they made that particular kind of a recommendation. So I would suggest to the Minister that she at least reconsider her position, and I realize that it is a policy decision of government whether minimum wages go up or down, but at least there was a recommendation and she should consider that and make a statement in respect to whether she's prepared to consider that and to what degree she's prepared to consider it.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, I'm prepared to consider it, and I'm also prepared to have the Minimum Wage Board meet and listen to their views.

**MR. FOX:** How soon?

**MRS. PRICE:** When we get through our Estimates, I'll talk to them.

**MR. FOX:** Well, if that would be a promise, I'd say we hang up. If the Minister makes that as a

promise, I am prepared to say, "Let's go."

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Just let me bring it to all meers' attention that the comments are being transcribed on tape, and it's very very difficult if we have more than one person speaking at any one time, and so if when a questioner finishes their question if they would just pause for half a moment, then I can recognize the Minister, and vice versa. They find it very difficult, the people that do the typing for Hansard, from this committee, much more so than in the House.

**MR. FOX:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, your direction is very well put. I'll ask the Minister, "Will she make that as a promise?"

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, we're not above considering a new formula. The 60 percent formula is not acceptable because it would have raised the minimum wage to something like \$3.35 an hour, which would be prohibitive at this time, but I am willing to reconsider and we will have the board meet again, reconvene, and I will listen and take their advice to the Cabinet with sincerity.

**MR. FOX:** Does the Minister believe that about \$125 a week is prohibitive for a person who is trying to maintain a family?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would imagine that it could be prohibitive depending upon the size of the family and the type of living that they have. I would also like to remind the meer that there's something under 10 percent of the population that actually receive the minimum wage. We are not talking that many, and as I say, in my experience in the private sector, every time the minimum wage was raised there were people that were let out, so that would even put it lower than that.

**MR. FOX:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I have a list of speakers that wish to speak: the Member for Churchill, then Selkirk, and then Inkster. The Member for Churchill then Logan.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Following on the comments made from the Minister, I would ask the Minister to clarify at this point what is exactly wrong, in her opinion, with having the highest minimum wage in Canada?

**MRS. PRICE:** We are trying to encourage businesses to come into the province. We are trying to encourage existing businesses to expand. If we put the minimum wage up so that it's higher than any other province or higher than our counterparts across the line, which it is right now, they will have no interest in settling in Manitoba and if we don't have any employers to employ the people, our unemployment situation will worsen.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister says that the reason for not increasing the minimum wage is to encourage business to come into the province and also to encourage existing business to expand within the province. Can the Minister indicate to us what other factors would encourage or discourage, in her opinion, businesses from entering and expanding in the province?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, high taxes, and we have done something about that in that respect, as you know. We must remember that I think there's something like 80 percent of the people are in the small business category and we have to keep them in mind. We can't just look at raising the wages so that they are absolutely out of sight or even slightly higher or the people will open up their plants in other provinces.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister inform us as to how many people approximately, or statistically, are on minimum wage in the Province of Manitoba?

**MRS. PRICE:** I understand that there is something less than 10 percent, between 6 and 10 percent.

**MR. COWAN:** The Minister says, between 6 and 10 percent of the work force are on minimum wage. Could she indicate in numbers how many workers that would be?

**MRS. PRICE:** Between 30,000 and 40,000.

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**MR. COWAN:** Can the Minister indicate when the last time the minimum wage was increased?

**MRS. PRICE:** It was 1976, some time, I believe.

**MR. COWAN:** In what month?

**MRS. PRICE:** September 1st, 1976.

**MR. COWAN:** Can the Minister indicate at that time how our minimum wage compared in relationship to other provinces?

**MRS. PRICE:** I'm informed that it's in about the same position it was then as it is now.

**MR. COWAN:** Which is?

**MRS. PRICE:** You mean, how much was it before it went to \$2.95?

**MR. COWAN:** No, I'm asking the Minister to tell us what relative position the minimum wage of Manitoba is in relationship to the other provinces.

**MRS. PRICE:** The fourth highest.

**MR. COWAN:** It was the fourth highest on September 1st, 1976 and it is now currently the fourth highest?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. COWAN:** Can the Minister tell us approximately what the consumer price index increase has been since September 1st, 1976?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would have to find that out for you, I haven't got that data.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Minister will get that answer from her department people.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, would the Minister then be willing to assume that it has been substantial?

**MRS. PRICE:** I will get the figures for you and I will give it to you then. Until then, I won't make any statement on it.

**MR. COWAN:** Would the Minister then please be willing to assume that the consumer price index has increased faster than the minimum wage on a monthly basis since September 1st, 1976 seeing as how there have been no increases in the minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** When I get the figures, I'll be able to evaluate the difference.

**MR. COWAN:** I would not want to pressure the Minister into making a specific statement of exactly how much. I would just ask the Minister if she would be willing to agree that the consumer price index on a monthly basis, seeing as how it has been increasing on a monthly basis, has increased faster than the minimum wage has increased since September 1st, 1976?

**MRS. PRICE:** As I said, when I get the figures, I'll be able to give you the answer.

For the Member for Kildonan, I have the members on the Building Standards Board here. There is Mr. J. S. Hicks, representing . . .

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Can I interrupt the Minister, the Member for Kildonan is out of the room at the moment.

**MRS. PRICE:** Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't notice he had disappeared.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Perhaps we can hold that information for a few moments.

**MRS. PRICE:** All right.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Churchill.

**MR. COWAN:** Yes, I would like to continue on this. Of the 30,000 to 40,000 people — 6 to 10 percent of the work force — that are currently subsisting on minimum wage, does the Minister have any indication of how many of those people are employed in other jobs or how many of those people, to rephrase it, how many of those people rely entirely upon the minimum wage for their full salary?

**MRS. PRICE:** I couldn't tell you that.

**MR. COWAN:** Does the Minister have any sympathy for those persons, those 30,000 to 40,000 people existing on minimum wage, in regard to the fact that while the wage has been frozen since September 1st, 1976, the consumer price index has been increasing and those people's relative standard of living has had to be decreasing? Does the Minister take that into consideration when she stands up and says that no, the government will not increase the minimum wage due to the fact that it would — and she is assuming that it would — discourage business coming into the province and discourage business from expanding in the province.

**MRS. PRICE:** I don't think I'm assuming. I think that is a well known matter of deduction. Firstly, I presume that some of these people don't have any dependents and I imagine that many of them are new entries into the work force also so I don't think there are figures available to say how many have secondary jobs or what size families they have. I think that would be a pretty difficult question to answer.

**MR. COWAN:** We would have to assume, Mr. Chairman, then that a certain proportion of those are subsisting alone on the benefits of minimum wage.

**MRS. PRICE:** It could be.

**MR. COWAN:** It could be or is?

**MRS. PRICE:** I say it could be. You don't have a positive answer for that either, I'm sure. Nobody does around this table.

**MR. COWAN:** The Minister says that when the minimum wage is increased that in fact it naturally follows that businesses are discouraged from coming into this province and businesses are discouraged from expanding in this province. I would like from the Minister, Mr. Chairman, some statistics to prove that and I would like, in particular, some statistics as to how many businesses left the province on September 1st, 1976 in response to an increase in the minimum wage, how many businesses indicated that they would not expand in the province because of an increase in the minimum wage and how many businesses from outside the province indicated that they would not come into this province because of our minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would like to suggest to the Member for Churchill that if a business that's contemplating opening has the choice of opening in Ontario where the minimum wage is lower or opening in Manitoba where it is higher, I am sure — or North Dakota or Minnesota — I am sure that when they would take all these expenses into account, that it would be much more attractive to open in any of those places other than Manitoba, if our minimum wage is much higher.

**MR. COWAN:** Then I would ask the Minister, Mr. Chairman, why she is not reducing the minimum wage so that it is the lowest within the country and thereby creating an influx of new businesses and expansion in this province unheralded in many decades?

**MRS. PRICE:** What is unheralded in decades, I didn't get . . . ?

**MR. COWAN:** Why the Minister is not reducing the minimum wage, which is within her power, as to create an economic climate that would bring forth an influx of business expansion and an influx of outside business into this province?

**MRS. PRICE:** We're not trying to make steps backwards; we're trying to go forward and in our opinion the only way to get the economy back on a sound track is to get business stimulated in Manitoba again and that's precisely what we're doing.

**MR. COWAN:** Is the Minister saying then that by not increasing the minimum wage which has not been increased since September 1st, 1976, that they are in fact stimulating business in this province?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would say that this will be the result.

**MR. COWAN:** What proof could the Minister offer to us that by not increasing the minimum wage, she will in fact be stimulating business?

**MRS. PRICE:** Ask me in my Estimates next year.

**MR. COWAN:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I would be perfectly willing to sit here, or to wait until next year's Estimates to ask that question of the Minister if I was not somewhat concerned about the people who are living on minimum wage falling farther and farther behind. The Minister says that she does not want to take a step backwards, they do not want to take steps backwards but by the fact that they do not increase the minimum wage, they have not increased the minimum wage to keep up with the somewhat remarkable increases in the consumer price index over the past period since September 1st, 1976, that she is indeed forcing the people, the 30,000 to 40,000 families or 30,000 to 40,000 workers that are subsisting on minimum wage backwards in their standard of living. Would the Minister not agree?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would like to show the Member for Churchill many letters that I get. They certainly aren't letters that are condemning me — there is the odd one — for the minimum wage not being raised, but there certainly are many that have the other opinion. So I think, as I said before, there are pros and cons on it and, as I mentioned earlier, for the Member for Kildonan, I am prepared to have the Minimum Wage Board meet and I will listen to what they have decided at their board meeting.

**MR. COWAN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be interested in seeing some of those letters or, to deal with the matter right at the moment, I would be interested in hearing from the Minister some of the comments that are contained within those letters and who they are from, in particular, the ones that are anti-increase in the minimum wage.

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, they come from different walks. There are people that are in the business, people that I don't know incidentally, and they are from private citizens that I have been receiving a number of letters from.

**MR. COWAN:** Did those private citizens indicate what their professions were or what their economic status was?

**MRS. PRICE:** No they didn't; no they didn't.

**MR. COWAN:** The Minister has mentioned that there are pros and cons — those are her words — to increasing the minimum wage. I've heard a number of the arguments against increasing the minimum wage and the Minister tells us that there are arguments for increasing the minimum wage. I would like to hear those from the Minister.

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, you're the one that is saying to increase the minimum wage; yours are the arguments in favour of it.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Chairman, I would dearly love to hear the Minister's words as to what she considers to be the advantages, the pros, of increasing the minimum wage.

**MRS. PRICE:** At this particular time, I don't see any advantages to raising the minimum wage until we get our economy back on a sound track again.

**MR. COWAN:** I would ask the Minister then, philosophically to explain to this committee her own opinions, in her own words, as to the advantages of raising the minimum wage.

**MRS. PRICE:** I have told you the advantages and disadvantages and I've also told you that I am prepared to have the Minimum Wage Board meet and I think that that should suffice you for now.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Chairman, I commend the Minister for being prepared to have the Minimum Wage Board meet at long last but I would still like to hear from her, not from the Minimum Wage Board, but from herself, not from myself but from herself, what she considers philosophically to be the advantages of raising the minimum wage or does she consider there to be any advantages to raising the minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, I just made the statement for the Member for Churchill, that at this particular moment with the economy as it is in Manitoba, I can't see the advantages of raising the minimum wage. I've repeated that to you. I don't know what else you want me to say.

**MR. COWAN:** I would like to clarify the matter, Mr. Chairman, for the Minister and for her colleagues, I am not asking the Minister to relate to us why she is opposed to an increase in the minimum wage at this particular juncture in the economic history of Manitoba, but I am asking her to relate to us her own philosophical ideas, her own philosophical opinions on why the minimum wage should be increased ever.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I might point out to the member, if the Minister chooses not to expound upon the theories you wish her to it's her prerogative not to.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just trying to clarify the situation. The Minister keeps pointing out that at this particular moment. I think the Minister believes that I am asking her why she does not want to raise the minimum wage at this particular moment. I am not asking that at all of the Minister; I am asking the Minister — if I can clarify it — philosophically, I'm asking her for her philosophical opinions on the minimum wage. And we can carry it a bit further. Does the Minister believe there should be a minimum wage? Does the Minister believe that our minimum wage should ever be the highest in the country or does she believe that it should always be the lowest or in the middle? Does she believe that the minimum wage should be increased or not increased? These are questions that I would like to ask the Minister and I don't believe that I'm repeating the same questions. I think that there has been a misunderstanding and I'm trying to clarify it.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Has the Minister any further comment?

**MRS. PRICE:** I do not think our minimum wage should be the highest in the country, nor do I think it should be the lowest in the country. I think it should be in a competitive field so that we can have businesses be able to keep their doors open and hire the people and the better economy we get, the higher the wages and standard of living will be.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I might also bring to the attention of all members that the Member for Logan does have a resolution relating to minimum wage before the House.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, that is all the more reason for us to discuss the minimum wage at this point to acquaint ourselves with some of the ideas of the Minister and her colleagues and my colleagues also in regard to minimum wage.

The Minister mentions that the minimum wage should be — in her words — in a competitive field. Would the Minister explain what a competitive field is?

**MRS. PRICE:** I think the word "competitive" means that we can deal with people on both sides, that it isn't too high and it isn't too low. That is my idea of competitive, that we can be enticing enough so that businesses will open and develop in Manitoba. I think we're going around in circles with the minimum wage, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I don't think we're going around in circles. Can the Minister then explain to us where she feels our minimum wage should sit in relation to the other provinces? Is there a policy on minimum wage? Is she saying that the minimum wage should be sandwiched somewhere in between our neighbouring provinces, the minimum wages of those neighbouring provinces, or should it be the lowest in the west or should our minimum wage be the highest in the west but lowest in comparison to Quebec? Just what is the policy in determining what is a competitive field upon which our minimum wage is embraced?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would like to remind the Member for Churchill that Quebec has the highest minimum wage and they also have the highest unemployment so that should tell him something.



**MR. COWAN:** Would the Minister then state that the reason for Quebec having the highest unemployment is that they also have the highest minimum wage — and those are her conjectures, not my own.

**MRS. PRICE:** I would think there is a very strong connection.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Selkirk. Sorry, the Member for Churchill not finished his questioning?

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to pursue this a bit further because I don't believe that we've gotten a policy. What we've had is some negative statements on the minimum wage.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I might remind the Member for Churchill that we are under (b)(1) Administration. My original comment to the members of the committee was that we would go through all members wishing to respond to the Minister's opening statement and then we would try and get back to the Estimates on a point-by-point form. Where minimum wage comes up within the Estimates, I'm not sure.

**MRS. PRICE:** In Employment Standards.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Maybe under Employment Standards which is well into the next page. So, you know, you will have another opportunity to carry on your conversation regarding minimum wage.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Chairman, I realize that I will have another opportunity; we will have far more opportunities to carry on the discussion on the minimum wage both in committee and in the House. But at this time I would like to carry on the consideration of minimum wage that we've been speaking about for the last few moments and I would suggest that — and I would seek your direction, of course — but I would suggest that I can do so because under Administration, we are discussing some of the policy of the department as Administration is responsible for that and the Minimum Wage Board does come on the first line on the organization chart presented to us by the Minister herself. So I would suggest that perhaps we can continue on with this a bit.

I would ask the Minister, I would repeat my previous question, where does the Minister feel our minimum wage should sit in relationship to the other provinces exactly. She's mentioned the competitive field, she's mentioned that it should sit in a position where it is competitive and can entice other businesses into the province. She seems to be quite concerned about the businesses and I don't begrudge her her concern about the businesses but I suggest that she should also be quite concerned about the people who must subsist on a minimum wage that has not been changed since September 1st, 1976. I think that she has an obligation not only to this committee but that she has an obligation to the people of this province, she has an obligation to the business people of this province indeed, and she has an obligation to those people, in specific, who are living on minimum wage, to clarify her own philosophical and her own pragmatic opinions as to what a minimum wage is for, what is a necessity for a minimum wage? Perhaps the Minister does not believe that there should be a minimum wage. I would ask the Minister that question right now. Does the Minister believe that there should be a minimum wage in the Province of Manitoba?

**MRS. PRICE:** I think that there's merit without having one too that it could be looked into so I'm not ruling that out. I would like to respond to a statement that you have made saying that I am unduly concerned about the business. If there were no business, who is going to hire the people at any wage?

**MR. COWAN:** Is the Minister saying, Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that she is reviewing the possibility of not having a minimum wage in the Province of Manitoba?

**MRS. PRICE:** No, I am not considering that at all. You just asked me if it was a possibility that I would think that there could be a time that there wouldn't be a minimum wage. Don't put words in my mouth. I'm not entertaining that thought at all.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not intending and I apologize that the Minister perceives

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that I have put any words in her mouth. I'm not intending to do that. What I'm trying to do is entice some words from her mouth in respect to the minimum wage and those words that I'm trying to entice, Mr. Minister, are her own opinion of the minimum wage, philosophically and pragmatically. Now, she has opened up a whole new area when she said there are certain circumstances — and please correct me if I'm misquoting you — that there are certain circumstances under which a minimum wage might not be a benefit.

**MRS. PRICE:** There have been people in the States — I've read articles on it and such — but as I told you, the government is not entertaining any thought of doing away with a minimum wage, but we are going to keep it competitive.

**MR. COWAN:** I thank the Minister for that. I would like to ask her a little bit further on her comments as to there would be occasions under which a minimum wage would not be advisable, to outline what circumstances or what situations would exist whereby she would feel, as she has mentioned, whereby she would feel that a minimum wage would not be appropriate.

**MRS. PRICE:** I didn't say that a minimum wage would not be appropriate. I said that I have read articles on it in some parts of the States where people have discussed it but it has not been discussed in our government nor are we entertaining the thought.

**MR. COWAN:** So the Minister is saying, Mr. Chairman, then that there is no circumstance, there is no situation, under which she would suggest that the minimum wage is not acceptable.

**MRS. PRICE:** I am saying that at this point, I believe that we do need a minimum wage but we do need a minimum wage that's realistic.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Minister then, she says at this point we do need a minimum wage. I would ask the Minister at which point could she conceive that we would not need a minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** I have no idea at this point where there would not be a minimum wage needed. I just told you that I had read about it, it is not a thought of mine, and I have said that I believe in a minimum wage, but I believe in a minimum wage that is realistic and competitive.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for finally clarifying the fact that she does believe in a minimum wage and I would ask her if she would always believe in a minimum wage.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. COWAN:** Yes, thank you. Mr. Chairman, I'm assured now and I'm sure the people on minimum wage and the people in the lower wage scales within industry and businesses that we need so dearly in this province are assured that there will continue to be a minimum wage. I was somewhat concerned at one moment.

Now I would ask the Minister, what point in relationship to the other provinces — let me clarify — how does she feel our minimum wage should coare to the other provinces?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, I think it should be equated largely with the position Manitoba occupies relative to our Canadian economy. That brings us back to being competitive.

**MR. COWAN:** I would ask the Minister, Mr. Chairman, then to clarify that statement somewhat. It would be relative to our status in the Canadian economy. Exactly what does she mean by that?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, we have to be competitive and it's relative to the economy in Canada where our position is with the minimum wages.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I realize that we have to be competitive in the Minister's mind. I would suggest that perhaps her idea of competitiveness and my idea differ somewhat but that is exactly the reason why we are here and exactly the reason why I am continuing this conversation. What is specifically her idea of competitive? Should we be the highest minimum wage in Western Canada?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I think for the benefit of the Member for Churchill, I think the Minister has tried to answer your question a number of times and I believe — without putting words into the Minister's mouth — that she said somewhere down the middle.

**MR. COWAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I think you're going over the same questions and trying to ask them slightly different every time, but they really are the same question. The Honourable Member for Churchill.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Minister, I would ask a series of questions in very quick step, then, hoping that I would get a series of answers in very quick step, and then we could move on to the next item.

Does the Minister believe that we should have the highest minimum wage in western Canada?

**MRS. PRICE:** I have answered the Member for Churchill numerous times that I do not think we should have the highest minimum wage nor should we have the lowest, we should have one that is competitive.

**MR. COWAN:** Does that mean, Mr. Chairman, that we should have a minimum wage that is somewhere sandwiched in between Ontario and Saskatchewan's minimum wage.

**MRS. PRICE:** And other parts of Canada, and other parts across the line.

**MR. COWAN:** At one time the Minister tied the minimum wage in respect to Quebec in with the unemployment rate. Should we tie our minimum wage in relationship to the other provinces into the relationship of our unemployment rate in other provinces, in other words, the provinces with the highest unemployment rate should have the highest minimum wage, and the provinces with the lowest unemployment rate should have the lowest minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would say that there is a direct bearing when you look at Quebec with the highest unemployment and you look at the situation in Prince Edward Island, they follow next. There must be some relevance to it.

**MR. COWAN:** Mr. Chairman, does the Minister have any statistics or any facts or any studies that compare the minimum wage with the unemployment rate in a province?

**MRS. PRICE:** I believe I could get some for you.

**MR. COWAN:** I would ask the Minister then if she would present to this committee, those studies that would prove out her theory that the higher the minimum wage a province has, the higher the unemployment that that province would have. Does she have those studies in hand, and is she prepared to present them to the committee?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I think that the Member for Churchill was firstly asking the Minister if she had any statistics relating to minimum wage and unemployment, and on the other hand you said, "Could she get statistics to prove her case?" I think that she could, as Minister, get you statistics, but whether they will prove your case or the Minister's case is up to your judgement and her judgement.

**MR. COWAN:** I suggest that it would prove a case, and I'm interested and anxious to see which case they would prove, and I look forward to having those statistics before us so that during the review of her Estimates we can return to this subject. I would in closing just say that I intend to return to this subject upon that presentation of statistics so that we can further — I'm not satisfied that the Minister has a policy, a definitive policy, the Minister has not satisfied me or assured me that she does, and I'm not satisfied that she has clarified her government's intentions in respect to minimum wage. So I would leave it at this juncture, but would like to not leave the impression that I am satisfied with either the answers or the policy of the government.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Member for Selkirk.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to also deal with the question of minimum wage. First

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I would like to ask the Minister if it is her view that the minimum wage in Manitoba is presently too high?

**MRS. PRICE:** No, it isn't, in my opinion.

**MR. PAWLEY:** For how long has the Minister of Labour felt that the existing minimum wage in Manitoba has not been too high?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, I guess since I have taken office. I feel that it's high enough at this present moment, as I've been trying to explain to the Member for Churchill. I don't think it's too high but I don't think it's too low at this point.

**MR. PAWLEY:** But you obviously felt at some point that the minimum wage was too high?

**MRS. PRICE:** When did I say that?

**MR. PAWLEY:** I'd like you to attach a date or time to it.

**MRS. PRICE:** I never made that statement.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, we understood you to say earlier that you felt that the minimum wage in Manitoba was causing the province to be non-competitive.

**MRS. PRICE:** I said that if we raise the minimum wage, we will get in an uncompetitive area. I didn't say it was now, I said that we can't raise it anymore or we won't be in a competitive state.

**MR. PAWLEY:** So you then would be in agreement that at no time since 1976 has Manitoba been in an incompetent position due to the minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** I think that's part of the reason, I think part of the reason is that unemployment is prevalent through Canada. I don't think that we are the only ones that have it, but that's all the more reason why we have to try and keep in a competitive position in order to stay alive.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, are you suggesting that at some point since 1976 Manitoba has been incompetent due to the minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** No, I haven't made that statement, but I say if we raise the minimum wage, if we're going to raise it — we are the fourth highest now — if we raise it, then we will certainly be in an uncompetitive state.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, my difficulty, and possibly you can assist me, if you are unable to point to a particular time period from 1976 to the present, in which Manitoba has been incompetent due to the minimum wage and due to the fact that the minimum wage has been increasing in every other province since that date and the consumer price index has been increasing, then surely we're not in a status quo position with the position in 1976 when the minimum wage was last adjusted?

**MRS. PRICE:** We keep referring back that we haven't raised the minimum wage since September 1, 1976. Most of the other provinces, including the federal government, have had a number of months like that. The federal government has been 25 months since they have changed their minimum wage, B.C. 23 months, Manitoba is 20 months, Ontario is 25 ½ months, New Brunswick is 18 months and Nova Scotia is 16 months and Newfoundland 28 months, so we're not the only ones that haven't raised our minimum wage.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, could I ask the Minister of Labour then if she is indicating to the committee that the increase in minimum wage in Manitoba will relate to increases in other provinces.

**MRS. PRICE:** To a degree. It would relate to it if . . . I'm saying that we have to keep in a competitive position with the other provinces.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, when the Minister speaks of competitive, could she advise me as to what industries in Manitoba presently would she say that the minimum wage pertains to mainly?

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could she list the type of industries that she feels the minimum wage change would have an impact upon, the particular industries?

**MRS. PRICE:** Not offhand. I guess some of the surplus industries, but I . . . the garment industry, the restaurants, etc., they are the ones that are in the . . .

**MR. PAWLEY:** Is the Minister suggesting that our restaurants would become incompetitive with the rest of Canada with an adjustment in minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** I think they are one of them that are out of whack with the other provinces. Our meals are more expensive here than they are in a lot of parts, and certainly from across the line. When you cross the line you can go into any restaurant there and have a meal much cheaper than you can here, and their unemployment isn't as bad as ours, nor is their minimum wage as high as ours.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, is that due to minimum wage differential between here and the United States?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would say it has a bearing on it.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Is the Minister suggesting there's a differential in the cost of meals between here and Ontario, Saskatchewan?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, well I don't know about Saskatchewan, but I know about Ontario and across the line.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, is the answer yes or no? Are our meals more expensive here, and does she relate that to the minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, the minimum wage, the higher it is the more costly it is for the companies that are operating their particular companies and the more they have to charge in order to make a profit.

**MR. PAWLEY:** But the Minister has indicated that particular industries have become incompetitive in Manitoba due to the minimum wage. One industry that she has identified in her belief has been the restaurant industry, and is it a fair statement to say that the Minister is then indicating to the committee that the restaurant industry in Manitoba has been made incompetitive because of its minimum wage with the restaurant industry in either Ontario or Saskatchewan?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, I say that it could have a bearing on it.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, many things have bearings, but the Minister has made this statement of incompetitiveness. Is the Minister then indicating that she is not certain as to whether the minimum wage has affected the restaurant industry in Manitoba, its competitive position with other provinces?

**MRS. PRICE:** I guess I was reading a letter and I wasn't listening to you. Sorry.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Is the Minister then indicating that she is not certain whether or not the restaurant industry has been made incompetitive with the restaurant industry in other provinces, due to minimum wage?

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, as I say, it can have a bearing on it. I can't say specifically, but the fact remains that the higher the cost of operating a company is concerned, the higher the employer has to charge for his commodities, so it stands to reason that the higher their minimum wages are, that they have to pay out and any other expenses, the higher they are going to have to put the charges on to the consumer.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Would the Minister indicate to me how many government employees would be on the minimum wage at the present time?

**MRS. PRICE:** I wouldn't imagine there are any government employees on the minimum wage. I would like to read you one letter that they've just given me, but this didn't even come from

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my office, I have numerous others. This is one that came from my office, but not one that I had in mind. It says, "I notice in last night's paper that the NDP members were asking when the minimum wage would be raised. I have no quarrel with the present minimum wage of \$2.95 per hour. Industries should be able to pay this rate, but I would not like to see it go over \$3.00. My reasoning for this is that many of our industries, including our own, are subject to competition from the USA where the minimum wage is as low as \$1.90 and as high as \$2.30." That's just a part of it and there's more to it than that.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, I would ask the Minister, since she's read from that letter to table the letter.

**MRS. PRICE:** I can do that.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Could the Minister indicate to the committee what would be the level of assistance that a family of seven would receive on welfare in Manitoba at the present time, with five under the age of 16 years?

**MRS. PRICE:** I have no idea. —(Interjection)—

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, thank you for your assistance, Mr. Minister without Portfolio, because I think that this is a matter of relevancy. I would like to give to the Minister because I would like to discontinue the questioning, to indicate to the Minister some of the problems that I do think are caused at the human level insofar as this present refusal to adjust minimum wage for low income families . . .

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I might point out again, and I think that it's for about the third time, that minimum wage does have a spot or a place within these Estimates. It's under Employment Standards.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, Mr. Chairman, to the point of order I gather the Minister opened this field.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** It's not a point of order, I . . .

**MRS. PRICE:** No, I didn't open this field.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I read about a five-page report dealing with all aspects of the department, then I went through each and every member who chose to speak on this. Outside of the Member for St. Vital, you are the last person present from the opposition side who hasn't had an opportunity to respond to the Minister's opening statement. I had said that I would like to get back to the Estimates on a point by point form, but you were present, to the Member for Selkirk, when the Member for Churchill spent some time and some length on minimum wage. Do you not feel that we could deal with this under Employment Standards?

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, Mr. Chairman, the problem is that I don't feel that we have really obtained the Minister's thinking and rationale for her refusal and the government's refusal to adjust minimum wage, and it's not just enough to have back and forth discussion. I don't feel that we're obtaining sufficient rationale to satisfy us as to the government's position in connection with minimum wage in Manitoba today.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Well, as I said earlier to the Member for Churchill, the Minister doesn't have to give her rationale for various aspects of the government. She is here to answer questions relating to her department, and she can only answer the questions to the best of her ability, as does any other Minister.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, Mr. Chairman, are you suggesting that members on this side are out of order in discussing the question of minimum wage at this point?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** No, I'm just saying that there is a place within the Estimates other than on the item we are on, which is the opening item, which is 1.(b)(1) Salaries under Administration. I know the term "Administration" is a very broad one, but there is a specific spot within these Estimates over on the second page, 3.(a) Employment Standards, which is where minimum wage really is.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I do have to say to you, it seems to me that historically under

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Administration, we've always dealt with the general ambit of the department, various items within the department, and I'm really at loss as to your concerns about us discussing a matter under General Administration, which is of deep concern to every member, I would hope, in the entire Assembly, certainly to the members of the opposition.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** My reasoning, to the Member for Selkirk, for raising is that I personally have no objection if we continue on now with the minimum wage. Perhaps we can deal with Item 3.(a) and pass it right away, then. But I know for sure that the same topics will be brought up all over again when we arrive at Employment Standards.

**MR. PARASIUK:** On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, where on 3. does it mention that this deals with The Minimum Wage Act? I don't think it's stated anywhere in there.

**MRS. PRICE:** It comes in the Employment Standards.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Employment Standards.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Whereabouts specifically?

**MRS. PRICE:** I think you'll find it in the explanation under Employment Relations.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Where is that, I've been looking for it.

**MRS. PRICE:** Page 55.

**MR. PARASIUK:** I've looked at that and I see . . . 'provides enforcement of established standards relating to terms and conditions of employment through investigation, inspections and prosecutions.' I don't think that that deals with The Minimum Wage Act. The only area where I can see it — now maybe if she wants to deal with it there, fair enough — but on the organizational charts we see that the Minimum Wage Board reports to the Minister. The Minister has said that she is not going to deal with the Minimum Wage Board any more, that she will be taking advice from the department on this matter. Now I assume that she will be taking advice from the administration on this matter.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I might point out to the Member for Transcona, it's not the Minister that's raising the question about methods used by certain members of the committee in questioning the Estimates, it's me, as Chairman. I thought that I was more than fair to the Member for Churchill and permitted him to really cover the waterfront on minimum wage. Then I went on to the Member for Selkirk who I thought would be responding to the Minister's opening remarks but he chooses to dwell on one specific aspect, that's minimum wage. And I say that —(Interjection)— There's no point of order. I'm raising a question with the members of the committee.

**MR. FOX:** Let me raise a point of procedure then.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** All right. The Member for Kildonan on a point of procedure.

**MR. FOX:** Right. I think we are under Administration and under Administration we're discussing policy. When we get into the various items, I believe we'll be discussing the specifics of the administration, how it's enforced, how it's handled and so on. I'm sure the Chairman is aware that under 3., minimum wages will come up again but at that time we'll be asking how many violations have taken place, who the violators were, etc., etc., we will not be discussing policy. So I believe at the present time we are discussing it in the right context in respect to policy of the government on minimum wages. Unfortunately we're not getting satisfactory answers and that's why the questions are being asked. Now, I think that if we can get some definite answer from the Minister in respect to the policy of the government, when, how and how much, then possibly we can move on to other areas of policy under administration.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Well, I would just ask the Member for Selkirk who is the recognized speaker if he would try not to ask questions that were the same posed by the Member for Churchill. Could the Member for Selkirk carry on.

**MR. USKIW:** Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. There is no rule in the consideration of Estimates that a member cannot ask a similar question to that of another member. There is no such rule

as far as I know.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** There is a rule of repetitiveness.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I would challenge you to list for the committee the questions which I posed to the Minister which were a repetition, specific repetition of questions from the Member for Churchill.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Well, you asked the Minister . . .

**MR. PAWLEY:** I would challenge you to so list.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** . . . you asked the Minister for her definition of competitiveness. She gave it to the Member for Churchill.

**MR. PAWLEY:** Mr. Chairman, I asked the Minister to list specific industries in which there was a non-competitive position. That question was not posed earlier in the entire question of competitiveness.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Well, I was of the understanding that you were asking one that was the same as the Member for Churchill. Do you want to carry on?

**MR. PAWLEY:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak then to the general policy of minimum wage and it's my impression that many of those that are subject to minimum wage are those that are on the border between productive employment and falling onto the welfare rolls in the province. It's also my impression that it doesn't take very much to introduce one from productive employment to welfare, and the concern which I believe is shared by members on this side is that the direction that the Minister is taking, obviously under government policy, is one which is geared towards increasing the welfare rolls in the Province of Manitoba. She has indicated that she is trying to protect business but let me suggest that what her policy is due to do will be to increase welfare. I see very little incentives, when the minimum wage has not been adjusted since September of 1976, for a person to maintain productive employment.

The other night I spoke to a labourer that is on minimum wage, lives in a low rental housing unit, five children all under the age of six. Ten years ago he lost his license due to the Unsatisfied Judgment Fund and has had to commute 25 miles to and from work each day by bus. He gets up in the morning at approximately 6, 6:30 o'clock in the morning, travels to and from, and that particular individual finally, through the co-operation of the Attorney-General's Department was able to obtain arrangements to make \$15.00 a month payments into the Unsatisfied Judgment Fund so that he could travel back and forth 25 miles to and from work. His work is repairing vacuum cleaners in the City of Winnipeg. Five dependents, and I say to the Minister that that particular individual is one that must be — and his net is between \$450 and \$500 a month. I can say to the Minister there is no way that I feel I could live with five dependents on between \$450 and \$500 a month. I would be fearful, Mr. Chairman, that if the minimum wage is not adjusted that that particular gentleman, and many like him, will say, "What is the use?" In fact, that chap was reaching a point of saying, "What is the use? I might as well be on welfare."

And I believe that what we are doing under the slogan of a Conservative government in the Province of Manitoba, that is worshipping at the shrine of business first and foremost, is really to generate the circumstances that will create greater welfare in the Province of Manitoba and if the Minister wishes to continue for the next year in a policy of not adjusting minimum wage, then I say to the Minister all that will be generated in the Province of Manitoba is additional members to the welfare rolls in this province.

Also, I find that so many of those that are on minimum wage in Manitoba at the present time are single parents, often mothers who, due to separations or divorces or being widowed, find themselves having to work as nurses' aides, to work as waitresses in restaurants, have to raise family and have to raise families under very very difficult circumstances, economic and social and all the rest. I say to you, Mr. Chairman, there is just no way that I can see that people working under these difficult circumstances, with continued rise in the cost of living, can continue to keep body and soul together, can manage to avoid falling onto the welfare rolls in the Province of Manitoba. So that I want to simply indicate to the Minister, and I don't want appear to be preaching to her, but I want to say, there's another side to the side of worshipping at the shrine of greater business activity. There's a human side and what happens to low-income families, often those with large numbers of dependents, that find themselves under circumstances that lack of training, unskilled nature of their job, large families, can they continue to go on much longer under the present position



of freezing the minimum wage in the Province of Manitoba.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Minister of Labour.

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Chairman, the honourable member suggests that the Conservative government is worshipping at the shrine of business. I would like to remind the member that if there wasn't business there wouldn't be jobs and I don't share his sentiments that we would be increasing the welfare rolls. On the contrary, by increasing production in businesses, we will lessen the welfare rolls. When it all boils down business is people and vice-versa.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The next person on my list is the Member for Logan.

**MR. JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If we're going to have the discussion on the minimum wage I might as well put my two cents worth in right now. I will ask a couple of questions of the Minister first. Would the Minister feel that having the lowest minimum wage in Canada would attract industry to settle in Manitoba, since I'm not aware that it has worked anywhere else that the minimum wage at the lowest scale has been a great attractor of industry especially if you look in the Maritimes which I think traditionally have had some of the lowest minimum wages in the whole country.

The Minister has also stated that Quebec has the highest unemployment rate in Canada, also has the highest minimum wage. But I think if she would check her figures she would find that perhaps the Province of Newfoundland would have a higher unemployment rate than the Province of Quebec. It's not my understanding that they are anywhere amongst the first five or six, in fact I believe they are the lowest.

**MRS. PRICE:** Who is that?

**MR. JENKINS:** Newfoundland. And this is a good bastion of Tory stronghold, a minimum wage, I believe, of \$2.50 per hour. The Maritimes, yes, the Maritimes, New Brunswick, \$2.75; Nova Scotia \$2.70; P.E.I. \$2.65; Newfoundland, \$2.50. Now, with that rationale, then how does the Minister feel that having a competitive — and I would say that was the most competitive minimum wage in Canada, \$2.50. I believe that's lower even than the federal one; a federal is . . .

**MRS. PRICE:** The federal is \$2.90.

**MR. JENKINS:** \$2.90. And yet we read in the papers, we see the statistics of Newfoundland, high unemployment rates, 30, 35, 40 percent unemployed in various sections of the province, and I don't see any great influx of industry to rush there at \$2.50 an hour. Now where does the Minister get this rationale?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Just before the Minister replies to the Member for Logan, the letter that the Minister read off from some moments ago that was asked to be tabled is the identical letter that was tabled by the Member for Rhineland on May 16th in relation to Resolution 2. It has been tabled.

The Minister.

**MRS. PRICE:** I think when the Member for Logan is making comparisons and he selects Newfoundland, first of all where they are situated in Canada is not conducive to a business opening up with regard to rail rates, different freight rates or whatever and so I don't think that's a fair comparison. Naturally they are lower but then they don't have any industry there and that's why there unemployment is so great.

**MR. JENKINS:** Well, given the rationale that the Minister has given us, the climate, the economic climate is dandy. It's \$2.50 an hour. I would think that the business community of Canada would be flocking by the thousands to Newfoundland. I mean, that is the rationale that the Minister has given us. She gives us places in North Dakota. And I'll tell the Minister something. When we were government here and we would mention anywhere else, they said, "Don't talk about any place else; talk about Manitoba." And let's talk about Manitoba, that's what we're talking about, we're talking about the people in Manitoba, not the people in North Dakota, not the people down in Georgia or Alabama; we're talking about the people here in Manitoba and how they are going to have to live and it's our responsibility to look after those people not the people in North Dakota, not the people in Minnesota or anywhere else. So, when the Minister comes up with that kind of malarkey and she expects members of the opposition to buy that, well then I can assure her she's going to be here for a long, long time because we want some answers. We're not getting them from the

Minister. And I'm still waiting for the Minister to give me a rationale, why the Maritimes? The four Maritime provinces, always the lowest minimum wage in Canada, and why there isn't a mass exodus of industry from the Golden Triangle in Ontario down to the Maritimes; surely this would be the place to go. They have access to the American markets; they are quite close to the American markets. They have access to water transportation which is the cheapest transportation of all — air, land or sea — water transportation is by far the cheapest. So to say that because Newfoundland is stuck off to one place all by itself — we can say the same thing for British Columbia; it's stuck off at the other end of the country — nobody should be going there either, but I see that their minimum wage is, believe it or not, higher than Manitoba. Quebec is \$3.27, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and then comes Manitoba. So, we're not fourth; we're way down the list, not at fourth place as the Minister tells us.

**MRS. PRICE:** Based on the industrial composite, for the Member for Logan, we are third highest.

**MR. JENKINS:** Well, I just have the Department of Labour, Ottawa, which lists them all, the basic minimum wage. This is dated April, 1978: Rates Quebec at \$3.27 per hour; Saskatchewan at \$3.15 per hour; Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon, \$3.00 an hour; , Manitoba \$2.95 an hour; Federal \$2.90 an hour; New Brunswick \$2.80 an hour; Nova Scotia \$2.75 an hour; Prince Edward Island \$2.70 an hour; Ontario, and may I add, another good Tory bastion stronghold, \$2.65 an hour; and Newfoundland, the prize of them all, at \$2.50.

Now, certainly, if the Minister's rationale was to hold up, then we would have a mass exodus of industry from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, all down to the Maritimes, to this paradise, a place for industry to settle, at a beautiful rate of \$2.50 an hour. I certainly cannot buy the Minister's rationale in no way, shape or form. And to state that it's been 28 months, I think it was the extreme scale, that was Newfoundland since they had raised their minimum wage, I think that the recommendation that the Minimum Wage Board made to the former Minister of Labour and they were to go in effect on the 1st of September, 1977, but they were withdrawn and the tentative date set for the 1st of January because of the provincial election that was held. The Minister has had now seven months in office; she's had plenty of questions in the House, and I really don't believe that she's even made any representations to the Cabinet or to her caucus that this minimum wage should be raised. And to state that we're uncompetitive with the other parts of Canada because we have a minimum wage of \$2.95 an hour, is absolute nonsense, and if she thinks that the meals in the Province of Ontario, which I visit quite often, are cheaper than they are in Manitoba, that's nonsense too. Because you go into cities of comparable size, cities like Ottawa, Hamilton, which are cities of about comparable size to the City of Winnipeg, and I can assure you that their food prices in the retail stores, food prices in the restaurants, are equal or more than they are here in the Province of Manitoba.

So to come up with that kind of malarkey that we are uncompetitive, because we have a minimum wage rate of \$2.95 an hour, is absolute rubbish, absolute rubbish! There's no other word for it but absolute rubbish. The Minister's got to come up with some better answers than what she's coming up with, and first and foremost, I might point out to the Minister, she is not the Minister of Industry and Commerce, she is the Minister of Labour, and it is her responsibility to look after the welfare of the people who work with their hands, their head, whatever, in this Province. She is the Minister of Labour. True, e jobs are required, but that is the job of the Minister of Industry of Commerce. He is the Minister that is responsible for business in this province and in industry. The Minister's responsibility is to see that especially these people who have no representation whatsoever except through their members in this Assembly — that is the only people who are able to speak for the people who are on the minimum wage, because they are not members of unions. Unfortunately, they are employed in many small industries where it is practically impossible to organize. But where it is possible to organize, certainly, the minimum wage is not required.

But to say that we are going to be uncompetitive; who are we going to be uncompetitive with? Newfoundland? No, Mr. Chairman, I think the Minister's got to come up with a lot better answers than what she's come up with so far in this Committee before we're prepared to move any further on this item.

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Chairman, firstly, I'd like to assure the Member for Logan that I do not think I am the Minister of Industry and Commerce, but I would like to let him know that as Cabinet, we sit and discuss in spite of what he might think. We have sat and discussed minimum wage many times. He tells me I should use my rationale. I would like to say that he is not using his rationale that great when he is making comparisons between Prince Edward Island and Winnipeg, especially as a man that I believe has worked on the railroad for many years. He knows that the railroad is needed to transport commodities for businesses. You can't get a boat from Prince Edward Island

to Winnipeg very easily, for instance, so I don't think his comparisons are very satisfactory.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Is the Member for Logan finished? The Member for Transcona, then Churchill, then St. Vital, and Lac du Bonnet.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really can't help but enter the discussion on the minimum wage, in that I think the Minister has been showing a closed mind on this whole issue and frankly, her presentation of facts hasn't been that thorough and hasn't been that complete. I'd like her to consider the following, and I think that the research staff and I think the Minimum Wage Board has probably done analyses in this area. I know that they used to, when they had a free hand; I assume that they still have a free hand and are still doing these types of analyses. The most productive and competitive industries are those with high wages, and I think that the Minister would be hard pressed to find industries which aren't productive, and which aren't highly competitive in the world arena: the area of advanced technology, computer industries, some of our resource processing industries, and in those areas the wages are high; the wages are high in those areas. They've done well. If the wages are high, there is a push by management to improve productivity. They don't necessarily rely on an abundance of cheap labour; they don't try and exploit labour in order to be competitive. They try and perform their management function to the best degree possible and they do a better job. So I think that the Minister's logic is wrong and I think she can find substantiation to prove that low wages really don't take away from a firm's competitiveness.

I think the Minister's documentation of her assertions really haven't been analytical. What she's done, she's relied on a letter to the editor, as her documentation, and I think again that reflects upon the possibility of her not really taking seriously the hard work of the Minimum Wage Board. I wonder if she's met with them; I wonder if she's discussed the issue with them; I wonder if she's had an opportunity to review their position, review their findings, and at least discuss her rationale with them, because they are a board that reports directly to her and I would hope that the Minister would try and use the expertise of this board to the best degree possible.

I'd like to follow up on one point that the Minister raised in response to a question from the Member for Selkirk when he asked her to list uncompetitive industries, and she indicated the restaurant industry as one; she indicated the garment industry as the other. Now, the garment industry is a peculiar industry in that some parts of it aren't that competitive, some parts are having some grave difficulties in trying to deal with Hong Kong and South Korea, but in those jurisdictions there are no employment standards whatsoever. We have the employment standards of the 1880s and I would hope that if the Minister is saying that somehow we have to be competitive with South Korea and Taiwan, and with Hong Kong, and that if her standard then is to bring back the labour standards, now this just doesn't apply to minimum wage. It applies to hours of work; it applies to child labour; it applies to pensions; it applies to a whole set of areas, and that's a tremendous difficulty and I think we're putting ourselves in a very precarious position if in fact the Minister is saying that that's the type of system that she wants to turn us back to. And that's the problem I think I think a lot of people to be concerned that that is the direction that the Minister is taking us.

But if you look at the garment industry, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to point out to the Minister, the examples of Tan-Jay, and of Monarch Wear. In one instance, she had one firm that did incredibly well over the last eight years while there were very high minimum wages, as the Minister likes to point out. We had good minimum wages in Manitoba and yet Tan-Jay did incredibly well. They grew, they prospered, they branched out, and they are now in the process I think of seeking a whole set of tax shelters, they're going to Hong Kong and setting up offices there. But the birth of Tan-Jay was in Manitoba; the growth of Tan-Jay which was phenomenal over the last eight years, was in Manitoba. Now, I credit that in large part to the manager. I think that he did a very good job and also I would have to credit that growth and development to the efforts of the workers in producing the goods that were sold, and they did well.

Now in parallel you had Monarch Wear which for a period of time did fairly well and then it ran into very bad management problems, and the bank imposed a new set of managers and I've never heard minimum wage as being the cause of that firm's problems even though, say six years ago, five years ago, those two firms were the big garment industry firms in Winnipeg: Tan-Jay and Monarch Wear. One ran into difficulty because of management problems, and the other didn't; it did very well, because the management and workers produced. Now, minimum wage was not a factor in either of these two.

Now there are some very weak firms, very very weak firms that would like to rely on a low minimum wage to possibly stay alive. Now that, I think, is very bad. If the Minister in fact wants to use a low minimum wage as a crutch to keep firms which aren't that strong, which haven't organized their means of production that well, and as such aren't doing very well; if she wants to prop them up

with a very low minimum wage so that the owners of those firms get some return on their capital investment, then I think that's wrong for Manitoba in the longer run, because she will be supporting and trying to nurture a very weak set of firms, and what she will be doing by that, is weakening the entire garment industry.

I think that the garment industry in Canaa and in Manitoba will only do well if it tries to tackle the competition head on and meet it and beat it by being more productive; by organizing itself better; by marketing better; and not trying to hide completely behind a very low minimum wage or secondly, not trying to hide completely behind very high tariffs, and these are tricky questions and I hope that the Minister will keep an open mind on them, and try and look at the analysis in this respect rather than listing off some prejudices and then leaving it at that, because I don't think she's been able to substantiate what uncompetitive means in the Canadian context, and what uncompetitive means in the North American context, and what uncompetitive means in the world context. I don't know whether she wants us to compete with Quebec, which doesn't have the highest unemployment rate in Canada.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes, they do.

**MR. PARASIUK:** No, they don't. That's a factual mistake by the Minister. I think the highest unemployment rate is Newfoundland's unemployment rate, or Nova Scotia's unemployment rate; it certainly isn't Quebec's, and I think that if the Minister wants us to compete with Quebec in the Canadian context, at least that would give us some definition. Does she want us to compete with Puerto Rico in the North American context? Does she want us to compete with Hong Kong and South Korea, and Turkey in the world context? Because I'd rather have us competing with the strong countries, and the countries that have been in fact doing very well industrially, have been those countries that have been able to organize their resources and their means of production in a very productive manner, in part this is the United States, and in part you have European countries that have been doing incredibly well.

So I think the Minister has to provide much more definition to her statements when she says, that as a matter of policy, the government is not going to change the minimum wages because they don't want us to be uncompetitive with other provinces, or with the rest of the world.

So I think, Mr. Chairman, that's one of the reasons why we raised this as an issue, and I think it will continue to be an issue as long as the Minister isn't providing a clear set of answers to the concerns that are being raised, not only by us but by a number of other people as well. I wonder if the Minister has anything more to add on the issue of minimum wage at this particular time regarding her definition of uncompetitiveness regarding the situation in the garment industry which is one area which she cited as a specific example of Manitoba being uncompetitive. If she has knowledge of the garment industry that I don't have, I'd be willing to have her indicate to us what that knowledge is.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Minister.

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, I have figures here, Mr. Chairman, that show that most of the garment industry in their collective agreements have references that after four weeks of becoming a union member, they must be paid — Tan Jay's one of them too — at least 10 cents an hour above the adult minimum wage as a guaranteed hourly wage, and most of them are on that.

I'd like to remind the Member from Transcona that when the Minimum Wage Board met last July, I think it was June or July, and incidentally the terms are that they meet once a year, they had given a recommendation to my predecessor and working on the 60 percent of the industrial composite, suggested that as a raise and my predecessor was not in favour of it at that time and I think some of your colleagues who were in the Cabinet can admit that that is the truth. **8MR. PARASIUK:** Mr. Chairman, I wasn't a member of the government at that time. I gather that the recommendation was to bring it forward fairly soon, some time in December. But is the Minister saying that she has not then met with the Minimum Wage Board because it meets every year, and she's a new Minister coming on to the scene and she hasn't met with them; is that what you're saying to us?

**MRS. PRICE:** No, I haven't met with them.

**MR. PARASIUK:** You have not met with them.

**MRS. PRICE:** No, I have not.

**MR. PARASIUUK:** You are a new Minister coming on to a department; you have these responsibilities. One of the issues is minimum wage, you have been asked that question, people have asked you for your opinion and you've indicated, you've given your opinion occasionally on this matter, and it's obviously been a contentious issue over the last seven months, it was raised last fall when the session was held then, and you mean to say that in that period of time you have not deemed it wise or rational on your part to sit down with the Minimum Wage Board; go over what they did; why they did it; what they recommended; what their line of thinking was in this respect? I don't know, I think that as a new Minister of Labour, a new Minister undertaking any portfolio, that you should sit down with the various groups and go over what they are doing. So you are saying that you have not met with the Minimum Wage Board to date. Is that correct?

**MRS. PRICE:** The terms state that the Minimum Wage Board meet at least once a year. They have met within the past year; they will meet some time in June or July, whenever it was. They just recommend anyway. The opinions that I am giving you are not necessarily my opinions alone, my colleagues share them.

**MR. PARASIUUK:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister indicates that the Minimum Wage Board will meet at least once a year. The Minister can surely ask it to meet again, she can surely ask it to sit down and review these points with them. Is the Minister saying that she will try and run the Department of Labour by doing the minimum job required by statutes and not by trying to do that bit of extra that may be required from time to time? Are you going to follow the path of least restraint in trying to carry out your responsibilities as Minister of Labour, because if that's what the Minister is saying, I don't think that's enough. I think that the Minister should have called the Minimum Wage Board together; I think that she has an opportunity now if they met last June or July. I think that's been a long wait. Can the Minister indicate whether she will be meeting with the Minimum Wage Board within the next two weeks?

**MRS. PRICE:** I believe in the past, and with the previous government, they met once a year. I don't think I have changed anything; I don't sit down with them, they meet and they give their recommendations. However, about an hour and a half ago, I recall making a statement to the Member for Kildonan, and saying that I was prepared to have them meet and listen to their recommendations, and I think you were in the room at the time.

**MR. PARASIUUK:** Fine. I didn't realize when that was stated that you had not deemed it advisable to meet with them since you became Minister of Labour. I'm really quite astonished that you didn't take it upon yourself to meet with the Minimum Wage Board.

**MRS. PRICE:** If I might interject, my predecessor didn't meet with the Minimum Wage Board either. They meet on their own and then they give you their recommendations.

**MR. PARASIUUK:** Well, if you're trying to model yourself entirely on the previous Minister of Labour, fine, I can tell you a number of other things that the Minister of Labour in the previous administration did, and if you're going to follow his lead with respect to everything, I hope that you would do that too with respect to workplace, safety, and health, and with respect to the Advisory Council on workplace safety and health. I think there are a number of things that you can do that I think would improve labour relations in Manitoba if you in fact followed the example of your predecessor. But you were saying that you are a grown up person who is going to take on the responsibility of the Minister of Labour in a new way, and in a dynamic way, and I think in that respect meeting with the groups and the bodies that advise you, is a very important thing, especially for a newly elected, newly appointed Minister. Just almost as an orientation, I think that's what new Ministers do. Now I don't know whether in fact the previous Minister of Labour upon taking on that particular responsibility, met with the Minimum Wage Board or not, but I know that the previous Minister had been involved in the Legislature for quite awhile and had I think developed some acquaintance with the various programs.

But you are a newly elected member to the Legislature, you are a newly appointed Minister, so I think it's important for you to do that, and I would hope that you do follow up your tentative commitment to the Member for Kildonan and call the Minimum Wage Board together as quickly as possible and get an updating of the situation regarding minimum wage from them.

Now the other question, of course, is that, have you in fact met with the other boards and commissions that report to you? Have you met with any of those? Because I think we're on that item. This is the item that's covered by Administration, I believe, in the Labour Department's Estimates, and we have a number of boards and commissions that are called Advisory Councils;

I assume that they're advising the Minister. The point is, has the Minister met with them?

**MRS. PRICE:** When I took over the Portfolio in October, there were a number of boards. In fact, the bulk of the boards were not in working condition. They were not in existence. We have now been in contact with people who are pertinent to all the different types of industry that have the boards and we have most of them about ready to be in operation. Some of them are and most of them that aren't will be very shortly. But there was two-thirds of them that weren't even functioning when I took over.

**MR. PARASIUK:** The Pension Commission wasn't functioning? I think it was functioning.

**MRS. PRICE:** The Pension Commission was and still is.

**MR. PARASIUK:** The Advisory Council on Workplace, Safety and Health was functioning. I think that you are terminating its functions, or reducing those functions tremendously.

The Fire Services Advisory Committee, was it functioning then?

**MRS. PRICE:** I would like to suggest to the member that, and maybe he doesn't know this, there are 36 boards and committees.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Well, I've only got these that I've got in front of me, Mr. Chairman.

**MRS. PRICE:** Well, there's 36 there.

**MR. PARASIUK:** If there are 36 there, fine, I will ask which ones weren't functioning and which ones the Minister is getting to function now; because the only thing that I've heard the Minister do is reduce the function and reduce the activity of these bodies.

The Workplace, Safety and Health Advisory Council was meeting quite frequently, this is a new piece of legislation. People are concerned about how it would be implemented. They were meeting quite frequently. I gather that the Minister has said that they should only meet once a year.

Again, going back to the minimum, the minimum requirements in the statute — and not something beyond that — even though this is a newly proclaimed piece of legislation; even though I would think that the Advisory Council would have to meet more frequently than the minimum of once a year; and again I wonder if the Minister is following the path of least restraint in these respects, or whether in fact she intends to do something more than that.

If I could get a list from her at some time during the course of the Estimates as to which boards and commissions were not operating last year and which ones are now operating, I would be . . . I'm wondering if I could get a list of the changes of membership of these boards.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Can the Minister reply to your question? The Minister of Labour.

**MRS. PRICE:** Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to table a report of the different boards that are in existence, and weren't, and the people who are on them.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Thank you. Can she also take as notice one other question? Can she give me the date of the last meeting of every committee, or every board and agency? I don't think that's an unfair question in the light of the replies that we had had.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Thank you. I would now like to ask a question pertaining to the boards and commissions. I gather from this organization chart, that a number of the boards and commissions — or committees, I guess they're committees, boards and commissions report directly to the Minister and, therefore, that accounts for the fairly high administration cost in (1)(b). The total there is fairly large and it's a fairly large percentage of the total department's Estimate; and I assume that that is because the staff for these boards and commissions are funded by this appropriation. Is that correct or am I incorrect?

**MRS. PRICE:** Each one of the boards are paid under the division that they are related to. For instance, the Minimum Wage Board is paid for by the Employment Standards Division; the Manitoba Labour Board is paid for under the Labour Relations Division, etc.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Are there any that are paid for through this appropriation?

**MRS. PRICE:** The Labour Management Review Committee has been in the past.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Is this the Woods Committee, what used to be called the Woods Committee?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. PARASIUK:** That is the only one then that has been paid for out of this appropriation?

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Is there a new chairman for that? That was probably asked before, and I'm just sorry if I'm being repetitive there.

**MRS. PRICE:** There's a second meeting about to take place now under the Vice-Chairman, Professor Atwell, and we have some names that we are considering that I am not prepared to give at this time until we just have an okay from them, as to the new chairman.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Okay. And the Elevator Board, does the Elevator Board report under the Employment . . . no, it wouldn't report under the Employment Standards.

**MRS. PRICE:** Under the Mechanical and Engineering.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Under the Mechanical and Engineering. I think it's will 'at function thai robably make the Minister's signature the most famous signature in Manitoba. I think that that is either the boon or the nemesis of every Minister of Labour. I can recall seeing Obie Baizley's signature and Russ Paulley's signature and I guess I'll be seeing yours. I haven't noticed any of your signatures yet, on elevators, I guess I haven't gone into new elevators. They have been there? —(Interjection)— Delighted.

**MR. PARASIUK:** I'd like to ask some questions about the policy relating to the Manitoba Labour Board. You indicate that that is actually paid for under the Employment Relations appropriation.

**MRS. PRICE:** It's under the Labour Relations.

**MR. PARASIUK:** Which one would that be? I just want to get that . . .

**MRS. PRICE:** It's on the chart that I . . .

**MR. PARASIUK:** That would be 3. (b) then, is that correct? Yes, Labour Relations.

**MRS. PRICE:** Yes.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The hour being 5:30, the Committee will rise until 8:00 o'clock tonight. .

#### SUPPLY — HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**MR. CHAIRMAN, Mr. Abe Kovnats:** I would direct the honourable members to Page 43, Department of Health and Social Development. We are on Resolution 64, Clause 8, Manitoba Health Services, Item (1) Administration—pass — the Honourable Member for St. Johns.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to get clarification from the Honourable Minister to know whether the administration of the Manitoba Health Services Commission reports to him or to the Board.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Minister.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Mr. Chairman, a number of members of the House, of the Committee, on both sides of the House, have participated in the debate on this particular item and I am very glad to have seen that and to welcome their participation and thank them for their contributions. Those who have raised particular questions of concern can be assured that I am concerned about any

suggestions, any hints, any implications of reduction in quality of patient care or effects on quality of patient care, or standards of care in our hospitals and our health facilities, and if they would take the trouble to give me the names of the hospitals or health facilities that they refer to in connection with some of these allegations, then I assure them that I will check into each case individually and satisfy those members and myself and all members of the House, that patient care is not being compromised. If it is, steps will be taken to ensure that that doesn't continue.

I want to say for the record, just to start, that I do appreciate the contributions that have been made by all members on both sides. I thank them for their suggestions. I think that the Honourable Member for St. Boniface is leading a generally constructive campaign of criticism in these Estimates, and I appreciate his responsibilities. I'm attempting to certainly answer his questions as I can, and seek out the information as quickly as possible for those questions that I'm not able to answer with the help of my officials on an immediate basis.

For the record also, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to say that with respect to the subject of Ethelbert that was raised last night by my honourable colleague, the Member for Roblin, and responded to by the Leader of the Opposition, among others, that there is, as my colleague suggested, no hospital or nursing home in Ethelbert. I think that should be clearly understood and on the record because the suggestion was made that there was a medical and health facility there when my colleague, the Honourable Member for Roblin, had attempted to make the case that there wasn't any. There is an elderly persons housing unit in Ethelbert that was opened two or three years ago, but as the Honourable Member for Roblin said, there is no hospital or nursing home or medical service or health delivery service to speak of whatsoever in Ethelbert. I just want to reinforce the comments that he placed on the record and reject those attempts from the other side of the Committee to repudiate his position.

Also for the record, I'd like to say that we acknowledge on this side that a hospital or a medical nursing unit for Snow Lake was approved by the previous government. It was approved by the previous government, but let there be no mistake, Mr. Chairman, that so were scores of other projects approved, and there's a long, long way between approval and the turning of the key in the lock of the front door to open a facility. And it doesn't cut a particular wide expanse of ice with us to have the opposition argue that they gave approval in principle to this project and that project. We could sit back and give approval in principle to 45 projects too, but if the taxpayers can't afford them, if the taxpayers can't pay for them, and if we don't do anything about implementing them, and then we're defeated in an election and we're succeeded by a successive government, another government, does the outgoing government have the right to insist to the incoming government, that all these things were in place and going ahead and were graven in stone? Absolutely not! They were concepts; they were proposals, that's all they were.

There is in fact, no evidence in front of me, Mr. Chairman, and I stand to be corrected on this, but I've asked my officials about it, there is no evidence in front of me that an architect was ever commissioned to get the Snow Lake hospital under way. There was some in-house work done in the Health Services Commission. There is no evidence that an architect was ever commissioned to get the project underway.

I think that, to a certain degree, the Committee may be expending unnecessary energy and I no doubt am contributing to it by these comments on disputes over specific points such as this, but I listened very diligently and conscientiously to a great many things that a great many members on the other side had to say last night, and I simply make these rebuttals for the record, because some of those comments were simply not correct, and they should not be permitted to stand on the record unchallenged. That goes for the Ethelbert situation; that goes for the Snow Lake situation, and it goes for a number of other arguments and allegations that were put forward.

There was a great deal of reference, particularly by the Member for Inkster, to succession duties and gift taxes and the directions that the government was taking and the emphasis the government was placing on such fiscal matters as those. Well, we're not here to discuss the removal of succession duties or removal of gift taxes, Mr. Chairman, at least I'm not here to discuss them. We pledged to take those steps in our election campaign; we kept our promise. We took those steps because we pledged to take them and we kept our promise, and already, already, much to the chagrin of many members opposite, there has been considerable response, gratification, and satisfaction back from people in all levels, all spectrums of Manitoba life, because of the relief in the taxation field.

In any event, we're not here to debate succession duties and gift taxes. We're talking about the administration of the Manitoba Health Services Commission and in fact we haven't really been talking very much about it, Mr. Chairman, although that's the line we're supposed to be on. I am assuming that you are conceding more or less, that we're dealing with the whole resolution here, rather than just one line of it, because most of the discussion, most of the debate thus far has had to do with the hospital program, and not the administration item of the Commission at all.

Now, Mr. Chairman, there are so many different scatter shots delivered last night that I am going



to have to sort of try to deal with them piecemeal and maybe in a somewhat disjointed fashion, but I want to try to respond to the various salvoes, unrelated salvoes that were delivered last evening.

The Member for Inkster and others, including the Honourable Member for St. Boniface, had some strong things to say about the settlement with the doctors, with the MMA on the fee schedule, in comparison to the position that workers and employees in hospitals generally are in, and I want to reject those insinuations out of hand. In the first place, the settlement with the doctors was 5.16 percent, based on the calendar year. Everyone on the other side conveniently forgets that the contract was shifted over on to a fiscal year basis with no provision for the three-month hiatus whatsoever. The increase in the fee schedule was 5.16 percent in 12-month terms, and that's what everybody else is talking about; when we're talking about wage settlements, contracts and agreements for workers and employees generally, we're talking about 12-month contracts, so that's the only fair figure to take.

In the second place, approximately 3 percent of that 5.16 percent, very close to 3 percent was on overhead costs, operating costs for doctors, so that their net income improvement was something in the neighbourhood of 2-plus percent; 2 and a fraction — perhaps 2.2, 2.3 percent — not an unreasonable improvement. Whether or not you're working on an average, median gross of \$60,000 a year, it's still not a very substantial increase. I think that given the practice and the program of restraint generally, that we can assure members of this House and Manitobans generally that we achieved a settlement with the MMA on the fee schedule that is in the best interests of the kinds of economies, the kinds of restraints that we're trying to pursue on behalf of the taxpayers. A net income improvement of something between 2 and 2-½ percent is a pretty narrow margin, and I don't think my honourable friends opposite can challenge that. That's what the medical profession, through the MMA, practising within Medicare, the opted-in physicians, wound up with on the new contract terms.

The rest of it went for overhead costs and goes justifiably for overhead costs. The Honourable Member for St. Boniface has asked me to justify that overhead position, that overhead figure; I'll come to that in responding to a wide range of questions that he raised. But I can only say this to him: that we put the same question to the MMA, to the negotiators for the MMA, and asked them to justify their overhead claim, and it was the subject of intensive scrutiny and examination; it was not something that was accepted carte blanche simply because the negotiators for the MMA said this was it. It was based on audited figures and an audited statement prepared by a firm of chartered accountants, and finally, after considerable argument and considerable scrutiny by the government, by the Cabinet, we accepted the overhead figure and the overhead level that would account for about 3 percent of that 5.16 percent increase. The profession may be well paid; I'm not here to argue whether it's well paid or poorly paid. It also consists of persons who spend a great many years achieving their professional excellence and expertise, and persons who spend a great many hours of the day in the main, a great many hours of the day and the night, on an on-call basis seven days a week, serving Manitobans in their professional capacities, and one can sit opposite, as a member of the New Democratic Party, and argue all they want that doctors and professionals of similar calibre should not be paid anything more than the average working person, man or woman, is paid, but —(Interjection)— I don't care who said it, I'm put in a position . . .

**MR. DESJARDINS:** All right, don't make accusations then.

**MR. SHERMAN:** I'm putting a position, I listened to you . . .

**MR. DESJARDINS:** You say the NDP are saying it.

**MR. SHERMAN:** I listened to you, I'm putting the position . . .

**MR. DESJARDINS:** But you're lying, that's what you're doing.

**MR. SHERMAN:** I said, members of the NDP can argue all they want . . .

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Oh. You're misleading again, like you usually do. You never heard anybody say it.

**MR. SHERMAN:** . . . can argue all they want, that doctors are overpaid, shouldn't be paid any more than average working people, or shouldn't be paid any more than persons at the average tradesman or tradeswoman's level . . .

**MR. DESJARDINS:** But nobody said that.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Would you let me finish what I'm saying? We don't . . .

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Not when you mislead me.

**MR. SHERMAN:** We don't accept or subscribe to that philosophy,

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Well, who said we did?

**MR. SHERMAN:** We believe that the commitment, the years of learning, the willingness to work long hours, the professional expertise in society, deserves its level of reward, and comprises the ingredients that we need for initiative and energy and advance in our society, and we intend to see that hard work and dedication and commitment of that kind is rewarded, properly rewarded, not irresponsibly rewarded but properly rewarded. So we have no quarrel with the average, the median wage, whether members opposite are scandalized by the fact that it's \$60,000, and that point was raised by the Member for Inkster. We don't find that such a scandalous situation; they earn it; most of them earn it. Most of them work a great deal harder than the majority of people do. Most of them are prepared to work 14 hours a day, and the majority of people are not prepared to work 14 hours a day. —(Interjection)— I would say the same thing for hard-working farmers, and hard-working farmers earn every cent they make and deserve every cent they make.

The point of the argument, Mr. Chairman, is that members opposite have been highly critical of the fact that the settlement with the MMA on the fee schedule this year was 5.16 percent, and the argument has been raised by members opposite, and my honourable friend from St. Boniface can get his dander up all he wants, the argument has been raised by members opposite, not only by him, but by his colleague from Inkster, that we were . . .

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Order please. On a point of order, the Honourable Member for St. Boniface.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Now he's going a little too far; he's including me; he's saying that I said that the doctors are being too well paid at \$60,000, and I've never said that, I ask him to retract, because I've never said that at all. At no time have I ever said that doctors shouldn't get that pay, or shouldn't be well paid for the work they were doing, or tried to ridicule the profession. At no time, and my honourable friend knows that, and he is trying to mislead again, by the statement that he's making in this House now.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Mr. Chairman, there were many subjects, many points, many allegations raised by the Honourable Member for St. Boniface last night, which were not precisely, honestly, truly reflective of what I had said, but I recognized that in the heat of debate, that he was making a point, I did not interrupt him. If he would listen to what I was saying, he would recognize that he doesn't have a point of order.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Mr. Chairman, on the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, on the same point of order. . .

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Member for St. Boniface on a point of order.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** . . . he has quoted me directly as saying that I felt that the doctors were overpaid, and they shouldn't be getting this money, he said the Member for St. Boniface, and I asked him to withdraw that, and he can read what I said last night, and I did not make any allegations such as he has right now.

**MR. SHERMAN:** I did not, Mr. Chairman. If the Honourable Member for St. Boniface would listen to what I was saying, which he won't do, he would recognize he doesn't have a point of order. I said the Honourable Member for St. Boniface has been critical of the fact that we settled with the MMA on a fee schedule of 5.16 percent, and the Member for Inkster raised it as a major debating point, that we were doing that while asking workers and employees in other hospitals to take cuts. That's what I said, and the Honourable Member for St. Boniface did criticize that settlement.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I did not talk about. . .

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Member for St. Boniface on a point of order.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** . . . I talked about the hospitals, the increase I did not talk. But the only thing that was stated, is that the comparison was made by my honourable friend, not criticizing what the doctors were getting at all. In fact, earlier I'd stated that we probably would have paid the doctors more money, but what was said, is a comparison of worrying about a certain group in society, and saying you're going to give them 5.16 — I'll take the Minister's figure — when they are encouraging the hospitals to ask people at the bottom of the ladder to take a reduction. The criticism was not what was paid to the doctors, but what they were trying to do to the maintenance people that were getting in the very low category, and they are asked to take a reduction. And that's not the same thing at all, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Boniface has just precisely reinforced exactly what I said; that's just precisely reinforced my point, that they have expressed criticism of the settlement with the doctors because they say we are going to a certain level with the doctors and we're asking employees and workers in hospitals to take cuts, and I ask my honourable friend to read the remarks of his colleague, the Member for Inkster, on that precise point. In fact, I've copied down his remarks, that we were asking other people to take cuts — workers and employees to take cuts — while going to that kind of a settlement with the doctors. And what I'm trying to point out, and the Honourable Member for St. Boniface is not prepared to listen — and that's fine, I listened to him — is that the settlement with the doctors in terms of income improvement is not exorbitant, is not unreasonable, it's very minimal on an income improvement.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** That's right.

**MR. SHERMAN:** We believe for their investment in terms of education, and their commitment in their professional expertise, it can be justified, and it doesn't need to be strenuously defended. It's justifiable, in fact, probably a bigger increase would have been justifiable, but we asked them, we asked them to help us hold the line this year in this particular challenge of fiscal responsibility.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Boniface made a number of references to difficulties that were being experienced by hospital staff workers, other employees at various hospitals, linked I suppose largely to the reports carried in Saturday's and Monday's editions of the Winnipeg Tribune, and perhaps reports that he's had made to himself personally. But I am aware of those reports in Saturday's and Monday's Tribune, but that's where they were, they were in that particular newspaper, and I say to my honourable friend and his friends opposite, that if they've got particular instances where they think that patient care, quality care, and treatment in hospitals and medical facilities is suffering, my door is open, the door of my department is open on that point. I have said to them, I have pledged to them, that I will not permit patient care and the quality of patient care to suffer. I don't turn a deaf ear, or strike an unapproachable position with respect to the responsibilities in this field, but for the honourable member or any other members opposite to expect that we are necessarily going to be stampeded at a certain point in time by a particular media report, and the media has every right to interview people and to carry those reports — I don't question that — but I say that that is a particular perspective. Individual people have particular perspectives and pressures and influences that they want to bring to bear. This is a complicated, serious, and highly difficult challenge, not only for the hospital boards and administrations, but also for the government itself in trying to achieve what we're trying to achieve, and naturally there are particular pressures and influences at play and people have particular interests they want to put forward. And the media is not immune to picking up those arguments, those positions, and giving them particularly extensive coverage; we have to live with that. That doesn't say that's the way it is generally, because I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that that's the way it isn't, generally. Most hospitals, most health facility boards and administrations have responded, and I've said this before and I say it again, have responded extremely co-operatively and extremely positively to the particular challenges, and the particular budget restraints placed on them.

The Honourable Member for St. Boniface raised the question of the special care unit at Thompson. He asked me, for example, in that range of questions he left with me: one question was what do I describe as frills? Well, I can come to that in detail, but for the moment, let's look at the special care unit at Thompson. We looked at that very carefully. I discussed that, not at arm's length, not at a distance, but with personnel, administrative personnel, in the Thompson Hospital — both in Thompson and here in Winnipeg. The special care unit at Thompson tied up eight nurses, full-time,

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around the clock, eight nurses that were not available for any other duties. It was empty, idle, by the hospital's own admission, four and five days at a time between cases. I believe it had eight beds in it — is that correct? — either six or eight beds, somewhere in the neighbourhood of six beds in it, and even at peak periods, it used to be occupied to the extent of no more of two or three beds, and for stretches of four and five days at a time in various points during any given month, I was told by the administration, it was unused. The nurses, meantime, were tied up on that particular unit; they could have been used somewhere else in the hospital. The decision was made to close that special care unit, and transfer those nurses laterally into other nursing duties in the hospital, not out of the hospital, but other nursing duties in the hospital.

Now that means that there may be the occasional case, the occasional situation in which a special care patient would have to be flown down to Winnipeg. But even that is not a certainty, Mr. Chairman, because some of that special care equipment is mobile equipment which can be transported in to other rooms in the hospital and hooked up there so that special care patients could be put on that equipment in existing rooms or facilities in the hospital without tying up the equipment, the space and the nurses in a unit that was nowhere near being utilized to the full. It was under-utilized — it was under-utilized to an extremely costly degree.

Now, if the Honourable Member for St. Boniface is asking me what do I call a frill, I hesitate about becoming too declamatory about some of these things because I know there can be repercussions from them, but I suggest that it's not unreasonable to suggest that maybe the special care unit at Thompson was a frill. We can get along and they can get along and they admit they can get along, and certainly do so at a much more cost effective way and be able to provide other services to patients through those nurses who were transferred over, without that frill of the special care unit. If it turns out that Thompson General Hospital can't survive without a special care unit our doors aren't locked, we'll look at it again, but the Board and the hospital have said, "Look, we can probably do it this way and no one will be hurt to the slightest degree. There'll be no difficulty, we can do it this way." So all this government is saying is, why not do it, and I'm sure that my Honourable friend for St. Boniface would have done the same thing. He was coming to the same eleventh hour. He was coming to the same crunch in the health field that we came to. He was not a wild, crazy spendthrift. He was trying to run the department in an efficient way. He was trying to keep a rein on hospital spending. I know that. I've given him credit for that. I've not criticized the Honourable Member for St. Boniface for his stewardship of the department but good heavens, Mr. Chairman, let's be fair about it. No matter how well a business is run, even if it's my honourable friend's own business, there are always opportunities for people to come in and work with him, work with the administrator, the manager of that business, assess the economics of the situation, and make suggestions for better efficiencies, for better cost effectiveness, with no sacrifice of control. My honourable friend was a businessman long enough to know that and I would expect that he would agree with that.

That is what we've done here. We're not criticizing the Boards or the administrations of hospitals, but the fact of the matter is that they have not, notwithstanding the remarks of the Honourable Member for St. Boniface, they have not been challenged to do this to the extent that they've been challenged to do it in the past seven months. Now, the honourable member was up on his feet accusing me of distortion a few minutes ago and I want to give him an example of what I sat through and accepted from him last night without challenging it, because I know that those things happen in the heat of debate. He said several times last night that I had said that the hospitals and the health facilities had not been challenged before to meet this kind of budget restraint, to achieve this kind of cost effectiveness, in effect that he hadn't done it when he was Minister.

I made the point that some of them had said to me that this was long overdue and he said to me that he rejected that out of hand, that that was unfair of the Minister to say that because he had tried to do that very thing. Well, the point is, Mr. Chairman, if my honourable friend wants to check my remarks, I never said that he hadn't done it. What I said to him was that several hospital Boards and administrators had said to me that this kind of challenge was long overdue, that the health field in this province needed it. I didn't say that my honourable friend never tried it but I have been told by Boards and administrators and representatives from health facilities in the province that they can meet these challenges — some have told me they can't, I agree — but I'm talking about the ones who told me they can, and that they feel that this restraint challenge and exercise is necessary and vital and that it is long overdue.

Now, the honourable member took extreme umbrage at that and misquoted me as saying that I said that he'd never tried to practice restraint. I didn't leap to my feet on a point of order because I understand the point he was trying to make, and those things happen in this kind of an exchange. I know that he tried to run a good department, but we're trying to run a tighter one, a better one, and there are savings that can be made, and perhaps the administrators and the Boards of hospitals didn't come to my honourable friend and say, "Look, here are frills that can be cut out. Here are savings that can be effected." Maybe they didn't come to him and say that. I'll take his word for

it, it. What I'm telling him is that they are coming to me and saying that, all I'm asking him is to take my word for that. They have come to me, doctors and nurses, and individuals related to administrations have come to me and said, "Look, look at that expense, look at this expense, look at these things that are unnecessary, these things can all be cut out and it won't affect patient care one whit, one iota.

Now, a government who is a steward for the peoples' money and was elected particularly on the fiscal challenge base that we were elected on can't be deaf and insensitive and unresponsive to that kind of initiative. Certainly there are some administrations and some Boards and some facilities out there who are unhappy. That always happens. Lots of people like restraint as long as it happens to the next person but not to themselves, but there are many Boards and administrators who have responded extremely positively and there are many doctors who have responded the same way. I can give the Honourable Member for St. Boniface a long list of what not I, but what medical people call frills, can be cut out of some of these hospital operations, and I intend to because he asked me to. The Honourable Member for St. Johns has got a question?

**MR. CHERNIACK:** I just wanted to ask the Chairman how long you've been speaking.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Well, you can have the floor.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** No, go ahead.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Member for St. Johns on a question?!

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Well, I had a question as to how long the Honourable Minister has been speaking. It seems to me it's over a half hour, and I've just been waiting patiently for him to answer my single question. But it's all right, I guess he'll get around to it. Now that I've taken the floor he can speak for another half hour, I suppose.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** I would just like to point out to the honourable members that the Honourable Minister had three minutes left of his half hour. The Honourable Minister.

**MR. SHERMAN:** I had my watch out, Mr. Chairman. I knew exactly how much time I had. I would just like to say to the Honourable Member for St. Johns that on these Estimates, and I don't argue with it, I expect it — we were three hours in Committee last night from 8:00 to 11:00 — I presume the Honourable Member for St. Johns was tied up in the other Committee. I listened to members who spoke their full time and succeeding members who spoke their full time. I was intending to use my time this afternoon. The question the Honourable Member for St. Johns asked me happens to be approximately question no. 25 of questions that were asked me, and I will answer it, but I was starting with questions that were put to me by other members. —(Interjection)— I don't intend to speak for another half hour at this juncture. I intended to use my half hour and then to give other members an opportunity to speak according to the rules of the Committee. Mr. Chairman, if I may just terminate on this one point, and I'll have to speak again because there are a number of questions that I want to answer that honourable members raised.

If I may just terminate on this one point, I do want to assure the Member for St. Boniface, the Member for Seven Oaks, who have led the opposition's campaign in these Estimates and done so effectively, and as I said I believe constructively, that I have many communications from medical personnel on staffs, in executive positions related to different hospitals in the city and in the province who have suggested to me things that the honourable members would have done themselves in the year circa 1978 as Ministers of Health. I don't accuse them of not having run the shop with good stewardship, but we were in a position, and they know it, where health care costs, hospital operating costs were escalating at a substantial percentage every year, year after year, not only in Manitoba but across the country, not only across the country but across the continent, and experts everywhere in the field, many of whom are known by reputation and probably personally to those two honourable members have argued that there had to be some contraction, there had to be some containment, there had to be some control over the tap, or we were going to bankrupt ourselves and would not be able to maintain the services and the facilities that we have.

I suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that if the Honourable Member for Seven Oaks and the Honourable Member for St. Boniface were the Ministers of Health today as they were respectively a few years ago they would be looking for and attempting to do virtually precisely the same thing that we're attempting to do today. Perhaps they wouldn't have used precisely the same approach but they would be doing the same thing, trying to control, contain and contract those escalating costs in this field. That's what we're attempting to do while preserving the quality of patient care. If they know of instances of patient care that are suffering then I'd like to know about them because

we'll take remedial action.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

**MR. ADAM:** Thank you. I don't know if the Member for St. Johns wanted to ask a question. I'll yield to him.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Mr. Chairman, maybe I should take fifteen seconds and answer the Honourable Member for St. Johns' question because he may want to get back to the other Committee.

The answer to his question is really — Mr. Chairman, although I conceded to the Honourable Member for St. Boniface last night that I have not used the Board of the Commission to the same extent that previous Ministers of Health did. I have relied on the Chairman of the Commission and his immediate staff perhaps substantially more than was the practice in the past' rather than relying on the commissioners.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the Honourable Minister, and I do thank him for giving me the consideration. It is true, I do want to go to the other Committee as well. May I then ask, who makes decisions of the Health Services Commission? Is it the Minister, the Board, or the administration?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Minister.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Well, the day-to-day decisions of running the commission are made by the chairman. The decisions with respect to government policy have been made by the Cabinet after seeking very close counsel and advice from the chairman of the commission and from the medical consultant that I have in my office, Dr. George Johnson, and from some meetings of the Board. But the Board has only met three times since I became Minister and they will be meeting again to deal with some issues this month of June. So the basic advice that I've had has come from the chairman of the commission and my special medical consultant.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister. I'm getting the picture. The Minister has indicated that hospitals have been given the opportunity to present budgets to indicate how they can live within the limitations set for them. Who will be reviewing those budgetary statements?

**MR. SHERMAN:** We intend to put those budgetary statements to the commissioners, to the Board later this month, Mr. Chairman. That may not be the final definitive step because obviously they've then got to come back again to the government. The buck stops here, I guess, but I want the Board's opinion on the response that the hospitals make to the budgets they've had prescribed for them.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Does that then mean, Mr. Chairman, that the Board approved and support the limitation of the percentage increase that was imposed by the commission?

**MR. SHERMAN:** That the Board of the Commission approves that, or the Boards of the hospitals? That the Board of the Commission approves it? N, I couldn't say that, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure that, in fact, — this would only be a guess — I'm sure that the Board might have argued that the budgetary limitations laid down by the Cabinet were too difficult. They were never asked to approve that budgetary limitation; that was purely a Cabinet decision.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Mr. Chairman, we now have the Cabinet deciding on the limitation, instructing the Health Services Commission Chairman to pass that on to the hospitals, then to invite the hospitals to respond as to the manner in which they can deal with that budgetary limitation, and now the Board will be given the opportunity to review the responses from the hospitals that make recommendations or decisions. I believe, from what the Minister said, just to bring it to the next logical step, that the Board will not have the right to make decisions but will have to pass on recommendations to Cabinet which will make the final decision. Do I have the picture correct?

**MR. SHERMAN:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Then, Mr. Chairman, the Chairman of the Board, I understand, is one of two nominees of the government — I'm pretty sure I'm right — in a negotiating or consultation committee

with the doctors, with the Manitoba Medical Association. If I am correct, and I believe I am — well, possibly I'd better pause and make sure that I am correct as to who represents the government on the consultation committee with the Manitoba Medical Association.

**MR. SHERMAN:** The honourable member is talking about the consultative committee that was set up between the MMA and my office. The government is represented by the Chairman of the Health Services Commission, Mr. Reg Edwards, and the Chief Medical Consultant to the Minister, Dr. George Johnson.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** To whom do these people report, Mr. Chairman?

**MR. SHERMAN:** They report directly to the Minister, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Well, Mr. Chairman, now I would like to enter on the concern I have in regard to the attitude of government in dealing with medical fees. The Minister indicated to us that part of the subjects for discussion at that consultative committee is the principle of assignment from patients to opted-out doctors of the fees, and I would like to caution the Minister of the danger involved in this principle, and get from him some understanding as to the manner in which this consultation takes place.

The Chairman of the Board of the Health Services Commission is one of the persons involved and is presumably a non-political person. Whether or not he has personal opinions on the question of the opting-out principle, whether or not he has opinions on the question of assignments to opted-out doctors, and whether or not he has opinions on another aspect, and that is to the fact that patients do not know, as a regular course, — I have certain points to make — right now, today, a patient does not know what is being billed to the commission by an opted-in doctor; that's true. The next point is, the doctor who has opted out is given full information as to the payments being made to the patients.

I have now touched on four different aspects of relationship between the commission and practitioners in Manitoba, depending on whether they're opted in or opted out. I would like to know whether the Chairman of the Commission has any terms of reference which permit him to state an opinion on behalf of government, or whether all he's doing is listening and reporting back. I would assume that the medical advisor to the Minister — I forget his exact title, but Dr. George Johnson, who bears the affection of most of us who know him — he will have opinions and will state them, but I want to know if there's any difference in the authority given to the two members in the consultative aspects of the committee's work.

**MR. SHERMAN:** I don't think I could point to a specific, defined difference, Mr. Chairman. The committee has not been in operation all that long, as the Honourable Member for St. Johns knows, and I suppose we're feeling our way with it a little bit at the moment, but I can assure the honourable member that since assuming my office, I have had many long and relatively complicated discussions with the Chairman of the Commission and have sought his advice on many matters, and I think he feels free to proffer that advice. I don't see the structure of the consultative committee as impacting on that freedom or flexibility of the Chairman of the Commission at all; I would expect him to make recommendations, to express opinions and to give me advice, the same as I would expect it from any other member of a consultative committee. I don't know whether that answers the honourable member's question, but thus far, the committee is feeling its way somewhat, as I am feeling my way with the committee, and we're hopeful of developing something here that can provide a very vital, dynamic line of communication and advice for the Minister. I know these things have been tried before and not always worked out. We're hoping, or I'm hoping that that's what will result from it, with all four members of that committee speaking up freely in terms of recommendations.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't for a moment think that the Chairman of the Commission ought not to proffer advice to the Minister, although I would think that they should be of an administrative nature more than a policy deciding nature; however, that's advice to the Minister. I want to know whether the Chairman of the Commission has any authority or has been given any instructions about the discussions that he is to participate in at the consultative committee. That's not a question of giving advice to the Minister, which I think he ought to be doing with his experience. I'm talking about whether or not he may speak on behalf of the Minister in the discussions he carries on, and indicate to the committee his opinion on policy matters. And I speak specifically, I mentioned several; one of the most important, I think, is the question of assignments out of the assignments to doctors, to opted-out doctors.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Well, maybe I could best resolve the question and help the honourable member if I approached it from the other perspective, Mr. Chairman. The Chairman of the Commission has not been given explicit instructions or explicit terms of reference that permit him to speak on behalf of the Minister at those committee meetings. I would hesitate to suggest that even Dr. Johnson, whose official title is "Special Advisor to the Minister — Medical" speaks on the Minister's behalf. The way the system is operated up to this point is that there are certain subject areas, subject matters put on the agenda, one of them being, let's say, the establishment of an ongoing machinery for provision of the MMA fee schedule on a year by year basis, while avoiding long, drawn out negotiations or confrontations, because that is one of the subjects. Now the two members from the MMA and the two members from my office sit down and bring their perspectives from their professional fields of expertise to bear on what could be achieved. Nobody brings in a recommendation for the Minister and speaks for the Minister; neither the Chairman of the Commission nor my Special Medical Advisor. What they do is they address a set agenda, and then they hopefully reach a consensus and bring back that consensus to me. I then file it or proceed to prepare a Cabinet paper on it and discuss it with my Cabinet colleagues. So, it's really the other way around that the thing operates. Nobody speaks for the Minister at those meetings. I'm asking the members of the committee to reach a consensus at those meetings and come back with advice to me on particular issues.

The question of assignment, while I'm on my feet, Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to say that I would hope that the fact that the subject of assignment is on the agenda should not be construed by the honourable member or his colleagues that this Minister, or this government, is in any way disposed to moving towards assignment. The fact of the matter is that when we put the committee together, I suggested, through my representatives, Mr. Edwards and Dr. Johnson, that there were a couple of issues that I wanted to have some advice on. The MMA had the right, because they were asked to be on the committee to do the same thing, so they suggested the subject for the agenda, but that has to be thrashed through to a consensus and the consensus may well be, don't touch it with a 10-foot pole, and if the consensus is that, that's as far as it goes. If the consensus is, do look at it, and here are the things you should consider about it, that still is only a suggestion that would be coming back to me, and it might not get one step beyond me. And certainly, if it did, then it would have to go to Cabinet; it might not get one step beyond my first colleague in Cabinet. So it shouldn't be construed as anything other than a courtesy concession to the MMA that permitted them to put a couple of things on the agenda because we put a couple of things on the agenda.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Well, Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Minister indicated earlier today that he wants to listen, and is prepared to hear advice and I'm prepared to give him some advice. So let me deal with a few of the matters discussed.

The first one is to tell him what he probably knows, and that is that the problem we had some years ago with the Manitoba Medical Association was, I believe, around one issue, and that was the desire of the Manitoba Medical Association to have a written agreement with the government which would relate to policy decisions by government. And the discussions reached the stage where the MMA were saying, "Well, we don't want to bind the government; we want the government to undertake to consult with us before they make any change." And of course, they wanted to be involved in the decision making, and finally they said, "Well, before a change is made, at least make sure you discuss it with us." It took quite a bit of discussion with the representatives of the MMA to learn that most of them believed that the agreement they wished to have would not be referable to the courts or be binding on the government in any way. Most of them believed that to be the case, but it finally turned out that the people who were doing the actual negotiation had every intention of having the kind of a written agreement which would entitle them, or enable them to carry the agreement into court and to hold up a policy decision by government until the question of extended consultation could be reviewed by the court.

I caution the Minister that once the larger number of doctors, I believe, who were participating, learned that this was indeed the objective of the negotiators, they pulled back and said, "No, we do not wish to assert our veto power, or any other strength to attempt to prevent government from making decisions of a policy nature." I cautioned the Minister that at that time, there was a great deal of public debate saying, "Well, why should the government hesitate or be concerned about entering into an agreement?" And the answer became clear to the doctors themselves who were part of the discussions and who pulled back on it when it became clear that the danger was that government might be abrogating its responsibility to others in any attempt to show that someone else had a right to become involved in the decisions of government on policy. I caution him about that.

I also caution the Minister and would urge him to read the debate of about 1968, at which time the Conservative Government passed legislation dealing with the Medicare with opted-in and



doctors when I think it was Buck Whitney, who was then the Minister of Health, when he introduced the important feature that was accepted, I think by all sides, was that doctors would have the unilateral rights to opt in or opt out of the plan. But if they were opted in, they would be wholly opted in; if they were opted out, they would be wholly opted out, so they would either be practising direct and negotiating for fees direct with the patient, or completely with the Commission.

It was made clear in the debate that any rights of assignment given to any opted-out doctor would mean that the patient would give up his right to deal direct on a financial basis with the doctor, and would therefore, if it were permitted, then it would be an encouragement to a doctor to completely opt out, but then take assignments from those patients for whose payment he would look to the Commission and leave the patients for whom he did not feel the Commission should be responsible, and from whom he would attempt to extra bill, free for that purpose.

I caution him that although we succeeded in having opted-in doctors amounting to over 95 percent of the practising physicians in the province, that a provision for assignment is so dangerous to the whole concept of the Commission that it would be an encouragement to probably all the doctors to opt out and have the standard form of assignment available so that they can get that signed which, of course, would derogate from, people might say, the doctor-patient relationship. For some reason there are some doctors who feel that they have a better doctor-patient relationship if they bill the patient direct than if they deal through the Commission, except for those cases where they plead for assignment. So I caution the Minister not to encourage anyone to think that assignment would be a practical thing in the interest of the plan. The main reason that I say that is that the costs of medical care would escalate tremendously, just astronomically, if assignments were allowed.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to deal with two matters which have been practised for a long time in the Commission, with which I disagree. One is; I do not believe that an opted-out doctor should be entitled to know when his patient gets paid by the Commission. Up to fairly recent time that was routine. When cheques would go to patients, information would go to the opted-out doctor saying, "We paid patient so-and-so so many dollars for the services you provided." I believe that true doctor-patient relationship for an opted-out doctor should completely ignore the Commission. I don't see what right they have to do it, because the result is that the opted-out doctor says to the patient, "I am not opted-in the plan, I am not in the plan, so I will give the information of the service I provided, I will give that to Commission, so that the Commission can pay you. But I am not concerned with the Commission's payment to you, I am concerned with my billing to you direct, and I will bill you and you will pay me." Now all that is very well, except that the next thing that happens is that the doctor's bill does not go to the patient until the doctor knows that the patient has received the money from the Commission, and then the doctor has the audacity — and I use that term with full sense of what I mean — has the audacity to say to the patient, "You have received the money from the Commission, why don't you give it to me, because it is my money" when in fact it is not the doctor's money; the doctor has opted out and said the patient's relations with the Commission is his own business. I think that it is wrong for the doctor to be able to say to the patient, "Sign your cheque over to me and I will extra bill you for the difference." That money is the patient's money, it is not the doctor's, and I think that the Commission is facilitating the operations of the opted-out doctor at the expense of the people of Manitoba, and those who are opted-in. Because in effect they are doing the bookkeeping for the opted-out doctor when he has rejected the opportunity to participate in the scheme.

One of the great advantages of opting in is that you don't have accounts receivable that you worry about collecting; that you don't have bookkeeping that you are concerned about; you don't have a billing procedure, and for that doctors have a sacrifice, they accept something less than the fee that they are entitled to get. —(Interjection)— Well, it is all relative. Of course, there is a fee that they would like to get and I don't begrudge them their livelihood, but I am saying that it is at the expense of the opted-in doctor that the opted-out doctor gets a service.

However, there is another aspect to it. I think that patients should know the cost of the services that they request. I think that patients should know what the doctor is billing the Commission, and now I am talking about opted-in doctors, on behalf of that patient. For one thing the patient should know what he is costing, he should know the money he is spending, although it is not directly his, it is still taxpayers money. I think that instead of the spochecks that are now done, where the Commission sends out a statement saying, "This is just to inform you that in the last period of time we have paid your doctor the following moneys on your behalf." I think that is really sent out to indicate to the patient that if the patient doesn't know that those payments were being made, he better think back to see whether he actually made use of the services.

But I think there is the other side of the coin, although that is not a bad idea. I don't even think it is wrong for a patient to be asked by the doctor, rather than the bill being sent to the doctor, I would see nothing wrong with the patient being asked to sign the slip which goes from the doctor to the Commission for payment so that the patient both authorizes the payment and has full

of it.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the medical profession has provided a great service to the people of Manitoba. I don't begrudge the medical profession its return for services, and when I say that I am speaking of the profession and not individuals, because there are always individuals who make improper use of the service, and I think that it is necessary for the doctors to be involved. I approve of the consultation aspect, but I would like to point out to the Minister that the medical profession to a large extent controls the cost of the entire plan of Health Services; not that they get the money, but they control the costs. The use of the hospitals and the abuse of the hospitals, and the additional services they provide to patients who demand service although they are possibly not entitled to the service, is within the control of the doctor. Many doctors will say, "How can I refuse to have the patient come in? How can I refuse to provide the service that the patient demands?" And I say to them very often, that the public school teacher who is being paid by tax dollars does have the right to say to a student, "You are taking, you are demanding too much of my time and effort. You are taking too much time. The taxpayers cannot afford this direct service." I believe the doctors have to discriminate in the provision of their own services, and I think doctors are the only ones who can say to a patient, "You are abusing your privilege and not in my interest, but in the interest of the overall scheme to make sure that you are not demanding more than you ought to be demanding. You are asking for too much by way of service, and therefore I cannot properly distribute my caseload amongst all the patients that I could do it with."

The same applies to the use of the hospitals. I think that the patients have to know that they cannot use the hospital services any more than the doctor authorizes, and I know in many hospitals they have committees that review the use of hospitals by doctors to make sure that there is the best use, the optimum use of hospitals. I would like to think that that type of communication and that type of two-way discussion between doctors and the providers of the health services, that is the Commission, which is responsible for financing them, is indeed discussed at meetings such as the Consultative Committee, to make doctors partners in the concern about the use of facilities which are paid for out of taxpayers dollars.

Finally, I want to caution the Minister that I am very apprehensive about the Conservative Government being prepared to bring in user fees in hospitals and to the doctors. I sincerely believe that their philosophy is such that he invites the introduction of user fees into the entire scheme. I would hope that this Minister disagrees with that and is prepared to say so publicly. I would hope that he will make a statement along that line to reassure those of us who think that user fees will affect the poor and the low-income much more than it will those who have the ability to pay and to whom a \$1 or a \$2 fee per visit is no great problem. I indicate to the Minister, I have very serious doubts about this government's philosophy and its intentions in regard to this, and I would hope very much that he could take a straightforward position on that and make a statement, I think, to reassure the people of Manitoba about that part of a program.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Minister.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. Johns for his suggestions, all of which I appreciate. I would like to say that with respect to the question of assignment, I want to assure him that the subject of assignment is not new to me although I am sure I don't know as much about it as the previous Ministers of Health, who are sitting side by side opposite, but I have been certainly exposed to it in the past seven months, and it is a matter that has been advanced by spokesmen for the MMA in my office on several occasions. I am not suggesting that the entire Manitoba Medical Association or even the majority of the Manitoba Medical Association has been pressing for it, but certainly spokesmen, representatives of the MMA have pressed for it in my office, so that I have been exposed to a discussion of it prior to the establishment of the Consultative Committee. Having been asked for it and asked about it by the MMA some months ago, I then hastened to educate myself in the ramifications of it, and to seek advice from just such persons as have already been mentioned in this debate, including the Chairman of the Health Services Commission, on the subject. I want to assure the Honourable Member for St. Johns that I am not waiting for the opportunity to introduce assignment. My inclinations are quite the other way, but since we put a couple of items on the agenda, as I have suggested it was as much a matter of courtesy as anything else to permit the MMA representatives to put a couple of matters on the agenda; that happened to be one of them, although not by any means the primary one.

At the moment the major item on the next Consultative Committee meeting is delivery of geriatric services.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Order please. In accordance with Rule 19(2), I am interrupting the proceedings for Private Members' Hour and will return at the call of the Chair.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

**MR. JORGENSON:** Unless there is someone in this Committee that is anxious to go and proceed with Private Members' Hour, my understanding is that we will proceed right straight through in Estimates until 5:30.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Agreed? (Agreed)  
The Honourable Minister.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As I was saying the major item on the next Consultative Committee meeting is the delivery of geriatric services and that item will be discussed, hopefully there will be some consensus as to some of the directions we should be taking, and those will be referred either to the Commission Board, to the Commissioners, or to myself, as I instruct, for further examination at that level.

But the question of assignment certainly is one that has interested and intrigued the MMA for some time, and so there certainly have been some discussions on it. I would say to the Honourable Member for St. Johns that I share, and did from the outset, with him his reservations — and they have been expressed by the Honourable Member for St. Boniface — as to the destructive effect that assignment could have on the whole Medicare, on the whole opt-in, opt-out structure. My initial reaction was that if you are going to have assignment, then that's the end of Medicare as we know it; that's the end of the opt-in, opt-out arrangement. But as the Honourable Member for St. Johns probably well knows, there are refinements of the assignment system; there are modifications of it, such as the one that is in place in Saskatchewan, and I believe in some other provinces, but certainly in Saskatchewan, where there is a third option. And it's not just two positions at the end of a spectrum with nothing in between; there is a third option there that involves the Blue Cross or the equivalent of the Blue Cross.

And so, in the interests simply of honest, objective examination of the whole subject, I have no objection to the consultative committee's looking at the subject of assignment, examining the different refinements or modifications, the different pros and cons, and let's see what their consensus is. It well may be that there is no way that any form of . . . otherwise, should be introduced in nt, -n- . assignme ed Manitoba, and if that's it, well, fine, so be it.

The honourable member made suggestions, offered some counsel in the area of opted-out doctors and the advice that they got with respect to payments being made to patients and I accept it as good counsel in the spirit in which it was offered. Certainly, at the present time, some of our opted-out doctors are being advised of those payments, but it was done, I am advised, basically, in fact, purely, as an administrative convenience to the Commission. The Commission informs me that they are inundated with inquiries and that if the doctor and patient are not advised of payment at the same time, then it results in a tremendous and burdensome administrative load and response load for them, so that was why it was done. But I accept the rationale of the Member for St. Johns, and I would agree that once a doctor has opted out of Medicare, that then he or she is saying, de facto, that I want my relationship with my patients to be strictly private doctor-patient relationships and I don't want anything to do with the Commission, and I'll take my chances, and that's certainly a legitimate argument, and it's something that I will look at. As I said, I appreciate the honourable member's advice.

With respect to the medical charges, and the advice suggested for patients of opted-in doctors, I am advised that we do send out audit confirmations to 5 percent of patients going to opted-in doctors every month, as a check on the doctor, as a check on doctors generally. But to do this on a 100 percent basis would add substantial cost. Certainly in my brief time as Minister it hasn't been suggested to me as a practice that we should invoke on a 100 percent basis. I would have to look further into it. Again, I say, I recognize the validity of the position that the honourable member puts. The only answer I can give him at the moment is that it is done as a means of maintaining a spot check among 5 percent, but to go to the whole 100 percent would add substantial cost in the Commission, and perhaps presumably, previous governments, have been reluctant to go to that additional cost.

I suppose the other key question that the honourable member put to me was that of user fees in the system, and I can tell him and members opposite that this government has no plans to introduce user fees into the medical and health delivery system whatsoever. I suppose one would have to say that to a certain extent there are user fees in place in a sense that, for example, the insured Personal Care Home Program is based on user fees; Pharmacare involves a user fee; there are some other examples. But beyond those that are built in to those components of the system, I know what the honourable member is referring to; and that he is referring to medical and hospital services generally, and I want to give him the assurance that this government does not contemplate, plan or intend to introduce fees of that kind.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the response by the Minister. I have three items: the first is the question of user fees. I would say that we have just heard what I believe is a contradiction of Conservative Party policy, but still, a clear-cut political position, which is consistent with their fighting Autopac and then saying, "We will not cut out Autopac," because I think that if they took a position of using user fees in the medical services field, that it would be to their political disadvantage, but it's something that they will have to live with and it's beneficial to the people of Manitoba that they see the political position that supports a rejection of user fees.

Two questions, however, rise in my mind: Firstly, I was not referring to spot checks alone when I spoke about the patient having to know what is being charged for the services provided to that patient. I believe it's a matter not of a spot check on the doctor as much as the patient should know the extent to which that patient is calling on the use of facilities. For example, Mr. Chairman, there are occasions when a patient will go to a doctor and will have a bunch of lab tests and other tests ordered for him, without realizing that that complaint he had has resulted in a cost to the taxpayer of either \$7.50 or \$107.50. I think a patient should know. And although I know the administrative costs would be very great to send out statements to the patient, yet I would think that it might not be a big problem for the patient to initial the chit which the doctor sends in with his billings, to certify not the amount as much as the fact that the service was provided. It seems to me something like that could be done. It may also be that an annual statement to the patient may not be out of line. It seems to me that it is not a bad idea and I don't know the cost; it might be worth exploring.

The other point that I really didn't understand was the suggestion that it is an administrative — I forget the term used by the Minister, but that it is to save administrative costs that the opted-out doctors informed the payments made to the patient; I don't understand that. He says it saves a lot of inquiries. If the inquiry is from an opted-out doctor as to whether or not the patient was paid, I would say it's none of that opted-out doctor's business. It's not his affair. So I don't know what it is that the Health Services Commission is involved in when it comes to information given to an opted-out doctor, and I would like to have some clarification in order to understand why it is that the Minister supports the idea, or does not challenge the idea. I'm sorry, I've put that wrong; the Minister has already said that he doesn't really see the point to it or the advisability of it, but he has been told that it is for administrative purposes beneficial to the Commission. I don't understand that.

**MR. SHERMAN:** Well Mr. Chairman, on that point, the salient point and complication is that the opted-out doctor submits a bill on behalf of his patient directly to the Commission; he is required to do that. He submits a bill and then if he is not paid, or she is not paid, by the time that the payment is due, the Commission advises me that they find that both the doctor and the patient start contacting the Commission, or, in many instances, it even goes beyond that and the doctor will submit another claim on behalf of the patient, with more confusion at the Commission end. I'm responding to the honourable member on behalf of the Health Services Commission who has to deal with the paperwork and the phone calls and the processing, and certainly it's something that I can look into more deeply. I would advise the honourable member that it's the first time it's been brought to my attention and I am interested in the point he raises, but the Commission's response is that it would make for an extremely tedious and laborious additional workload in terms of paperwork and response and telephone calls, and all of that adds up, as the honourable member well knows, to office time and expense.

**MR. CHERNIACK:** I would conclude. I am pleased that the Minister has taken the matter under advisement and will look into it. I just make the point that I don't believe that an opted-out doctor has any right whatsoever to bother the Commission about whether or not the Commission has made a payment. I think if that doctor does a double billing, that is, a billing twice to the Commission, then that doctor is doing the wrong thing, and the only question then arises is, did the doctor send in the report of services to the Commission? That's really all it is. And then the doctor bills the patient. There are times, I think, when the Commission might reject a billing by any doctor, opted in or opted out, and does not make a payment. And I think again, that that's a question as between the patient and the Commission, unless the doctor is opted in. I hope the Minister will look into it, and I hope eventually we'll hear something about the conclusions he arrives at after he has looked into it, but I do conclude, Mr. Chairman, by thanking the Minister for responding to the points I have raised.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** The Honourable Member for Inkster.

**MR. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to see the Minister of Health respond in what

appears to be an unequivocal way to the Member for St. Johns' question as to whether there is going to be user fees, and the Minister said "We do not contemplate, intend or plan." He at least used those three words; perhaps additional ones. I want to —(Interjection)— At least those three, those three, and no additional ones. All right. It really doesn't matter very much. At least those three.

Mr. Chairman, I want to indicate that the Minister at the same time said that he is considering assignment, and he was very lukewarm; as a matter of fact, I would even have to give him the credit for having been negative rather than lukewarm. But negative or lukewarm, Mr. Chairman, he did say that he was going to consider the question of assignment, and he also, Mr. Chairman, indicated that the right to opt out, which I share with him in defending, is something that the Province of Manitoba is going to defend, and that as a matter of fact, I think, Mr. Chairman, that he indicated that there is some consideration to facilitate it, that the Commission would facilitate an opted-out doctor by taking certain proceedings on his behalf.

Now Mr. Chairman, I want to indicate to the Minister that I believe that his statement vis-a-vis assignments and the facilitating of opting out, if not by conveniencing the doctor, but by holding the line on medical fees in such a way as to encourage the opting out, and I'm not suggesting that the Minister has done that. But I'm suggesting that anything that would result in MMA militancy to the point that there would be a significant opting out by the doctors in the Province of Manitoba, could indeed result in the very thing that he says that the government does not contemplate, intend or plan, and that is, a user fee. Because the user fee merely means, Mr. Chairman, that in addition to the medical care payments that are provided socially by all of us together, the doctor will be able to charge a fee. And of course, every opted-out doctor can do that today, and does do that; he charges a fee to his patient; that fee need not have anything to do with the price that the public pays to the doctor, and he hopes, and I would think in 99 percent of the circumstances, collects the amount that he is receiving from Medicare. He doesn't collect it directly from Medicare, but he sends his patient the bill, Medicare pays the patient, the patient pays the doctor's bill, which usually involves the amount that he receives from Medicare plus — that is, Medicare will offer \$80 for the service; the patient receives a bill for \$100, gts in touch with Medicare; Medicare sends \$80; the patient sends \$100; that's a user fee.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'm not blaming that on my honourable friend. We at all times were aware that that kind of thing could happen. What we said, Mr. Chairman, and the reason that we didn't break — you see, we bent a great deal without breaking — but we told the doctors at all times that our negotiations with them were based on the fact that we desired them to stay in Medicare, and that 90 percent of them — when I was the Minister of Health, the figure was in the area of 78; I hope I'm not too far out. But it went up over the years, and at that time they threatened opting out; it went up over the years to something over 90. And then we had quite a controversy with them about three years ago; they said that they would opt out, and they scared the hell out of us. I don't want to make any bones about it, Mr. Chairman; we were scared; but we were not scared to the point that we were going to sacrifice the principles of legislative government in the Province of Manitoba. We saved those for you. We did the same thing, I want you to know, with the Northern Flood Committee.

They wanted an agreement as to what the policy of the province would be in northern Manitoba, and we told the medical profession, "Yes, we will consult; yes, we will try to negotiate reasonably with regard to fees; yes, we will state principles that we have the intention to keep fee-for-service and that we have intention that there will be no opting out, but we will not sign an agreement that this will be the medical policy of the Province of Manitoba." And I tell my honourable friend that we did that because democratic government meant more to us than even the problems that could arise from a doctors' strike; we would not let any single group say that they could twist the tail of the government into confirming some type of medical policy. So, in our negotiations with the profession, we told them that we are negotiating with the intention that the medical profession will not opt out, and we therefore wanted to be reasonable with our fees. And that even if the MMA told us it was ridiculous, we were thinking, "what is the doctor saying?" And the doctor was saying that the government was being reasonable, and eventually the MMA saw that, and they stayed in.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'm not asking that the medical salaries be whatever is demanded in order to keep them all in, because I don't think that the medical profession in the Province of Manitoba wants that. I think that that kind of statement will be made in negotiations. But I want to urge on the Minister that he not negotiate with the intention of saying, as appeared to be what was happening some time ago, that we will set the fee, and if you don't like it you will opt out, and on that basis have 75 percent of them opt out, then we will have a user's fee in the Province of Manitoba. We will not have a legislated user's fee, but to the extent that we do not have a good relationship between the public and the doctors, and to the extent that we encourage opting out — by the way, I shouldn't blame this Minister entirely; the former Minister at one time said, "If you don't like the fee, you

can opt out." And you know, I suppose that's a statement which is a challenge of a negotiating position on the other side, but it's something, Mr. Chairman, which will, if carried to its conclusion, destroy Medicare in the Province of Manitoba. That what you will have with such a procedure of opting out, is, you will not have Medicare; you will have Doctacare, that the minimum will be what the government pays, and they will get that in any event; beyond that, they can charge what they want. We will provide a basic minimum salary — not the minimum wage of \$2.85 an hour, but a basic minimum salary as to what you can get from Medicare; whatever you don't get from Medicare, you can get from the patient, and if the patient doesn't like it, he doesn't get it. And you will have subsidy of people who can afford to pay the user fee, which is back to where we were before, Mr. Chairman. What you will be doing is providing a subsidy for those people who can afford to pay a doctor's fee. That's the end result of it.

So, when the Minister says that there will be no user fee, I hope he is saying that in its entire context — that the kind of relationship, the kind of activities — and I suggest to the Minister that he's going to need other than fee-for-service activity; he's going to need an option. And that's why the creation of the community health clinics has to go side by side with fee-for-service medicine, because the fee-for-service doctor who is entitled to be well remunerated, and has been, has to at the same time know that he doesn't hand out all his own money; that there are people providing the service and the public is generating an increase in medical health clinics so as to not put the public in the position that if everybody opted out, suddenly we don't have a Medicare program. Because that's the ultimate of it. Now, it hasn't happened, Mr. Chairman, in any province in this country that I am aware of. — even where they permit the assignments, it hasn't happened. Even as the Minister says, in Saskatchewan, they can get an assignment.

**A MEMBER:** They can't extra bill with that assignment?

**MR. GREEN:** In other words, if they get the assignment of the money from Medicare, they cannot send an additional bill. —(Interjection)— They get it from the other agency. They have a Blue Cross. But they can't ask for additional money; they just have the medical plan. Well, Mr. Chairman, that to me makes no sense in the Manitoba context, because we already have one agency paying all the fees. It probably may have made sense when Mr. Taylor was making his agreement with the doctors in 1962, because at that time what the doctors said was that they wanted to deal with their own agency, and the government said, as long as you have the same rules with your own agency, we will lower our pride and say that you can go ahead and get it from them, provided it was on the same rule.

But Mr. Chairman, if you are considering assignment from the point of view as it was raised in 1968 when the Member for St. Boniface dealt with it firstly, it's a very dangerous concept. The concept of assignment, in accordance with what the medical profession wanted at that time, is they wanted the right of a patient to come in and get his treatment and sign an assignment to Medicare to pay that doctor what was coming to him. It wasn't going to Blue Cross or anybody else; it was to go back to the doctor, and the doctor could charge that patient what he wanted to. Mr. Chairman, when the Minister says he's not intending or planning a user fee, I say to the Minister, don't, at a future date, worm out of that statement by saying that assignment is not a user fee; assignment is a user fee. Assignment is a user fee; as a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, it may even be better than a user fee from the point of view of the particular doctor who is getting the assignment.

I don't want to go beyond that at this point. But he could be an opted-out doctor, he doesn't even have to work with the assignment if he doesn't want to; he can charge whatever you want; he has the right to collect it from Medicare or collect it from the patient, and all that we wind up with is a change from what was the free medical system prior to the public deciding that they were going to accept social and joint responsibility for everybody's medical expenses. The people who could afford it went to the doctor; he made his money essentially from those people, and treated a lot of people who couldn't afford it. The medical profession has always done that; I will never take that away from them; they are decent human beings. What we have said is, we believe you should be paid for your services, and we believe that everybody is responsible for everybody else's medical treatment; in other words, I am my brother's keeper, and my brother is my keeper, and we are going to see to it that you get paid. We are going to negotiate with you the level of service, but we want everybody to be treated for that level of service, and if they are not, then the plan is worse than meaningless. It will provide a basic income for the doctors and will not provide any security for the person who can't afford to pay the user fee except what he had before, that is, the right to go to the doctor, who then will say, "You know, you can't really afford this, but out of the goodness of my heart, I will do it for you," or the result to get what Tommy Douglas best put as tin-cup Medicare. That it becomes — where the citizens of this province now hold their heads high, and say that we together have seen to it that we all pay for and are entitled to the best medical treatment available, and I say, as high a level of medical treatment, or nearly as high, or as comparable

to any given anywhere in North America. —(Interjection)— In the world. Okay; that's fine. And that we pay for it, and that we get it as a matter of having paid for it — nobody has a free ride — and we do not get it in such a way as to consider ourselves charitable receivers, we get it as a result of the efforts that all of us make in our society.

I am happy that the Minister says that there will not be a user fee. I tell him that his negotiations regarding assignment for consultation should rule out a user fee; that an assignment will introduce the user fee; that behaving with the profession in such a way as to cause mass opting out will introduce the user fee, and therefore, I hope that when you say that there will be no user fee, you do not say it in the narrow sense, but that you say it in the broader sense.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to deal with some of the statements that the Minister has made today. I must say that I was surprised to see him lead with the question of Ethelbert, because — I might say that in the time that I had some of the responsibility that he now has, these things were dealt with by the Commission, so therefore I'd like to ask him the following questions. I know that he won't have all that now, but the Chairman of the Commission is listening and maybe he can get that for us later on.

First of all, I'd like to know if the people of Ethelbert have ever applied for a licence, made an application in the last — let's say the last three or four years. And then I'd want to know if this was done, what happened? Was there a recommendation from the Commission that reached the Minister? And was the recommendation positive, or negative? I also wanted to know how many beds this hospital would have had if it had been applied for. I wanted to know if this was before the new legislation; if they had the owner's equity needed in those days. They also wanted to know if they had doctors in that area ready, if they could make sure they had a doctor in this hospital, and also how far they have to go now, without a hospital, where they have to go for their medical care.

Now, Mr. Chairman, there's one thing that surprised me coming from the Minister, a man who has been in politics as long as he has. I can understand some over-eager backbenchers coming in with this in their first session, but I'm surprised that the Minister would try to leave the impression that it doesn't mean very much when you approve something officially, such as the five year plan, and this is what he said today. He said it doesn't mean very much. Well, what does he expect the government to do? The first few years if there's a change in government there's not much as we can see — witness today. There's not much that's coming out because the government is reviewing everything. It wants to decide on the policies. And if you're accused the last year and a half that you're doing everything for an election, what does that leave to do anything at all?

Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend said, "Was there any money voted for Snow Lake?" I say and I have all the figures here that two years ago, not last year, two years ago — in fact it might have been longer than that — there was a formal announcement that the government was embarking on a five year program. This was passed on to the commission. The commission prepared that for what amount of money would be spent where on every year. There is no way with the staff that was available — in fact, the Minister said himself that there was a reduction in administration of a few hundred thousand dollars because there were some people working on that program that are no longer needed, and this progress of different — any Minister is not following every stage of every construction in that case. The public was informed, the commission was informed, and they were taking proper steps. This was going along exactly as announced. And when you work as a government you go along as if you're going to be there. If you say well I might not be there in two years, fine. It is understood, as my colleague said, that we can not tie up any government. This is not the complaint. The legal right, or any right — I'm not going to qualify that — the present Minister and the present government can freeze any programs that were announced by another government. Now the only thing that will stop them doing that might be the political implication of certain things, although they might not agree — it might have gone too far and they won't risk it, or it might be that it's too far gone down the pipe that they can't do anything about it, but I don't think it is fair for the Minister to say, "Well, all right, you have announced that; we froze it." The Minister had to take an action. If it didn't mean anything he would just let things go. But the Minister announced in this House and publicly that there would be a freeze and that freeze would be for 90 days and at the end of the 90 days they would make a decision.

I think it's most unfair and I don't think it's correct at all to then stand up today and say, it didn't mean a darn thing, you approve in principle. It was more than an approval in principle. It wasn't a wish. It wasn't a dream. We do a lot of that. I've done it and the Minister has done it, and that is probably the first step to many things, because you might find yourself alone at first.

The Minister and I agree on a number of things. For instance, we don't think it's fair to force retirement at 65. I said that. The Minister said that. Now we know that this is not an action of the government, of any government as yet. It wasn't done in my days and it's not done now. It is

that individually — or it might be the department or it might be the government who wants to do something, who announce they're going that direction but they haven't brought legislation as yet. That is something a little different.

Now I can understand the Minister if he wants to, or anybody say well, you know, sure you finally announced it, but you were there eight years, then why didn't you announce it the first year. I don't know if it would make that much sense, the thing is we can say that about anything and everything. But then comes a day when you make a decision and you have to live with it, and I think that this is exactly what that five year program was. So I was kind of surprised to hear the Minister say that.

And then yesterday one of his backbenchers got up and lauded the Minister and the government because they unfroze one of the programs that was going to be — one that was already approved, and then to hear some of the people talk it was something new, it was something that the former government had not approved, although it was very clear that it was part of the five year program.

Now, we had a bit of a battle a while ago and the Minister is very good with words. I give him that — a hell of a lot better than I am.

**MR. SHERMAN:** No way.

**MR. DESJARDINS:** Oh yes, you are. There's no doubt about that and when I say that the Minister is misleading — he might come in and say to me, "Well, I didn't say that. I didn't say that it was high time, somebody else said it." But the Minister in his own way, and he knows it very well, is whipping something up and getting people to think well then, it's somebody else's fault.

The Minister, when he was asked the question about the sheets — I was minding my own business, I hadn't said anything about the sheets at all, it was my colleague, the House Leader, but then he added — it's cute, it's good, but I resent it and I'm going to fight if it's going to be something that is going to make it appear that the fault belongs somewhere else. Unless it is my fault, and the Minister said well, the same policy that was established on such a date. Then I check into that and that wasn't correct. Now the Minister often says, "I've had all kinds of doctors told me that. I've had boards" — I can't call him a liar for that. I've got to accept his word. Now it could be true and maybe it isn't true. We're all human beings and it's exaggerated on both sides. It is the easiest thing, and I don't say I've never done it. I try not to do it, but I wouldn't be surprised if somebody could quote — well this is what you said. I try not to do it. I can't think right now of any time I've done that but I'm sure that I must have done it — we all do it. But that's the easiest thing in the world to do. You know, they get up and say well you can say what you want, but these people are saying that — a bunch of doctors are saying that. See, and then it is always these things — not in the House. The Minister I must say has been more than fair, more than fair. He's gone out of his way to try to say well, this is what they were trying to do, and this is what I'm trying to do. And there hasn't been all this bad administration and, mind you, there are certain things that we would do differently. He's been more than fair, but outside the House it hasn't been exactly the same thing. There's always a little bit left and, you know, some of it is fair, or course, but it is also fair, Mr. Chairman, for us — we're put on a defensive when this comes up and we then want to respond.

You know, for instance, on April 18th when the Minister said the government won't yield to public pressure, and he said "Mr. Sherman, earlier in the Legislature, said that government faced a difficult financial situation in part because the former NDP government promised new programs without regard to the ability of the taxpayer." These are the things, and then you can say what you want, but this is, you know, something that they don't do but it's the fault of somebody else.

I think that we've gone a little further than that now, and I think that we should — it is a question of ideology — it is now, on both sides. The Minister by his own admittance has said, "No, you haven't mismanaged, but we're looking. We have the right, and it's our mandate, and so on." It has often been said by my colleagues, and by the members of the government, yes, this is the mandate that they have.

I might be alone, but I don't agree that the mandate can be that. The mandate, and I believe that the majority of candidates of the Conservative Party believed it, because it was said so often. It was: this government is mismanaging the affairs of Manitoba, and their programs — they have way too many civil servants. Their programs are too rich or they're mismanaged, and we will save enough money out of the administration — and this was repeated time and time again — to be able to keep on the programs. The Minister himself stated, \$10 million saved, and at first, Mr. Chairman, the Minister was saying without any idea what this was all about until he found out and he learned and he realized that there was no way — there was no way — and he went a long way by admitting certain things but certain things he still wants to blame us and I guess it's natural. We're political enemies.



Mr. Chairman, they wanted not to give an increase of 2.9 percent, they wanted to reduce the Estimates of the department by at least \$10 million to \$15 million. And then, all of a sudden it was that the Minister of Finance had given a guideline. The Minister of Finance, and I say this in all due respect, he's got enough of his business and his background and all that — knows nothing about the field of health, nothing at all, and I say it was preconceived, and this is what we're arguing, the policies and the priorities. This is what my friend and I have been repeating so many times. Well, admit it then. Let's come out in the open. Don't be ashamed of what you stand for.

Now, we had debates last year in the Estimates and the then Leader of the Opposition who is now the Premier of this province wanted no part of discussion of the social programs or health. That was not debatable because we both agreed on that, and what did he say? He wasn't going to have any reduced pharmacare, there were going to be no premiums for medicare. The services would be maintained — and that's another thing that the Minister said in the same article that he's talking about \$10 million of a reduction — \$10 million to \$15 million and saying that the Minister of Finance gave this target which, of course, they didn't live up to — of course they didn't live up to. And he said at the time, the services will not suffer, and this is where we say that that is not possible. And in a way he's lending credence to that because he is saying that as far as he's concerned that the administration has been good.

So, Mr. Chairman, the main thing that we're fighting now is very clear, that the first thing — and we're saying that and they don't like it, and I don't know why they don't like it because they're doing it with their eyes open and that is their first priority. They rushed into a special session and they reduced certain taxes. Now they had stated repeatedly — repeatedly, and I can quote answers and I can quote articles that I have right here with me, and their Leader has said, in fact their Leader, during the campaign had accused my Leader of scaring the hell out of the older people by saying that these programs would be curtailed or would not be continued. And he said that's not true. In fact I think it's well worth, Mr. Chairman, that I find this and include some of the things that have been said. Well, first of all, we know that the Member for Rhineland has made all kinds of speeches in this House that he wanted more beds, but I'll just quote from last year just a paragraph or so.

On Page 246 you'll find Mr. Brown, "The number one problem disrupting health care in Manitoba is the problem of the long term stay patient in the hospital. To date some 370 patients who should be in nursing homes are occupying acute hospital beds. Now when you consider there is a turnover of at least five patients per every long term stay patient, this means the equivalent of some 1,800 acute beds are tied up by long term patients. Furthermore, accommodation for these long-term patients in nursing homes is around \$25.00 per day as compared to \$110, \$120 in a hospital where they are occupying an acute bed."

Now, Mr. Chairman, this is the same gentleman that yesterday was giving us a lecture that you divide by so many families, and this is what it would cost if they spend more money. But when he was sitting on this side of the House money didn't mean a damn thing. We were asking for a \$35 million increase but he wasn't analyzing that. He wasn't warning us that, you know, if we spend that money this is what it would cost every province. He was saying you're not going fast enough. You've announced a plan last year but you haven't gone fast enough. So this is what the gentleman was saying. Now the Minister himself last year, and I quote from Hansard again, and this is the present Minister: "The greatest difficulty, I think, confronting the opposition, confronting society generally in this area, is the one that arises out of a shortage of facilities and shortage of space per person chronically ill and semi-ambulatory, who find themselves winding up in acute care centres occupying acute care beds in hospitals." And then he went on that we should do more for the senior people. These were some of the things that were said, and we are reminding them of that.

Now, in the Throne Speech, as I say, on February 21st, the then Leader of the Opposition was saying that financing of the universal hospital Medicare insurance scheme out of General Revenue is accepted across Canada, and this party has no plans for change. Consequently, Medicare and Medicare premiums, he declared, are not an issue. Well, we are told that this will go. He announced his support for the Pharmacare program; he declared services to the elderly are not an issue; he didn't want to discuss that at all; in fact, he made the statement that most of these things were started when the Conservatives were in power.

There was a list of all the party's promises during the campaign on October 8th, and one of the main ones for the Conservatives was retain premium-free Medicare, Pharmacare, and more nursing homes. And I can go on and on, Mr. Chairman. Now, it was felt, and it was repeated, and this is actually the mandate that these people — well, in fact, before I leave this, the policy of the Conservative Party, the paper on the policy that they had last year was to recognize that in most parts of Manitoba, the need is not for additional acute care beds, but for alternate facilities, to develop facilities capable of providing various levels of care so as to ease the strain on acute care facilities; to work in co-operation with health care professionals in Manitoba; to maintain in this

province the highly-qualified health professionals who have been trained here; to work with educators to develop preventative health care in the province; to develop and improve alternate health care facilities by providing suitable facilities to support the needs of our growing elderly population; to assist these facilities to serve the elderly patients within their communities and to offer support to families maintaining elderly relatives in their homes; to stimulate higher standards of research and service within health fields; to improve the morale and recognize the dedication and professionalism of those involved in the health field by providing sound administration, rational policy," — we've asked what the rationale was for the increase of 2.9, and I'm expecting the Minister to answer me soon — to provide air ambulance service, to maintain Pharmacare programs. These are some of the things that they say.

So, Mr. Chairman, we are criticized first for reminding the people what they said to the public and to challenge them — I do, anyway — to challenge them when they say that they have a mandate to do what they were doing. They made it quite — they never said, during the campaign, that it was cost first and need second, and I won't take the Minister out of context — he did say that when he was referring to the five-year plan, but he repeated that in other areas when we were going through this thing, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, this was happening. Now, we found out by this exercise that if there is anything separating, it's that they say that all our programs are good. We didn't mismanage, but they don't feel that Manitoba can pay so much. Fair enough. That is supposed to be the difference, because, you know, they can't say there was mismanagement and we left them all kinds of debt; they either have to raise taxes — and they don't believe in raising taxes — or go in the hole if they keep on with the programs. So you know, it's fine to say, well, we believe in all these programs, and some day, when we clean up this mess — well, there is no mess. And the days will not change. You will have to pay for these programs with tax dollars, and if there's too much today, it will be too much tomorrow, and it will be too much next year. This is what we're saying.

Now, no responsible government can just give a blank cheque to anybody, and I don't think we were doing that. I think that we were tough; to say that this challenge was never given to the people, that is not true, and I'm not going to bore you with this. But again, I have all kinds of copies of newspapers, articles, Hansard, and so on, where we told the hospitals that they had to cut down, and the Minister has even admitted that. And they found it tough. I remember, they were saying some of the things that are being said now, I don't think we're going to live with it; it's going to be tough. And some of them came with deficit and the Member for Wolseley reminded me of that. He said, "You're not consistent." Well, there is no doubt that on this side, we have to be honest and we have to be fair, but our main duty is constructive criticism; and there is no doubt that on this side, they should also be honest and so on, they have the added responsibility of governing. And you can't fault somebody too much if they have a different twist, when they are sitting on this side, rather than on the other side, but you still have to be consistent, I agree, and you have to be fair.

Now the difference is that the Leader of the Opposition, who is now the First Minister, also said, "Don't think this is another Jerusalem." You're always saying that you have programs, because we were bragging about our programs, like personal care homes — we were the only province that had gone universal on the hospitalization program. We talked about our home care, which was the best in Canada, and one of the only ones in Canada. Maybe it's too much; the other Conservative provinces are saying it's too much; you shouldn't do that. And this is what I want to surface, Mr. Chairman, if this is a Conservative government like other Conservative governments. I know they are saying, "No, don't try to take the person from the cradle to the grave." That was said many times; I think that was exaggerating.

I think that there are the two extremes. I disagree with some of the members of the opposition and some of the members from my side; I think that you can have a happy medium somewhere, and that you can do certain things, but nobody can do it all, and I wouldn't want to see that. I think that these are not empty words, because those that were here last year heard me talk on Day Care and many of the other programs, and the difference — when we come down, if we take all this thing away, these accusations back and forth, and these blaming one party, then the others, and we come in, now, what are the facts, what are the facts? I say, Mr. Chairman, that what we don't like about this government is that it was all predetermined; that the Task Force was used for a scapegoat, and that the Minister is too indifferent, saying he might not agree to that. But, as I said, he's pre-cued, that's the way to get public opinion, and it is my duty, as I see it, to expose it — was flying balloons, have been flying trial balloons. And I'll take his word today on assignment; that, I think, was a trial balloon. And on premiums, because there have been different versions of different things. Fine. And if this is the way that he can keep his finger on the pulse of the people of Manitoba, fine; that might be the way that he prefers. But I don't think it's wrong for us bringing this to the surface and exposing these kind of things, because that scares the hell out of the people and then we are blamed.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister said another thing. If you have any abuse, you come and tell me, I'm going to do something about it. I don't think it's his job to run the hospitals. I think that we're talking collectively about some of the abuse — I hesitate mentioning it here because it could happen, no matter who the Minister is. I know that when I was Minister, that one of the proprietors of a private nursing home was using the same bathwater to have two people take the same bath. Well, as soon as I found out about it, we certainly — he was chastised, and the Commission was told to monitor this quite closely. I'm sure that this has happened to the Minister. I think that sometimes when you're talking about the Estimates you have to bring up some of the abuse, some of the ridiculous things, and this is what we were trying to do, to show that the people are cut so fine; they are doing their best, and they are bringing up some things that border on the ridiculous, or endanger the good standards that we have in Manitoba. And this is our job, Mr. Chairman. Our job is not to police the area and go and tell the government what they did in a certain area; if there's something serious enough, of course, we've got to bring it up; we do it privately with the Minister, like we should do. But I am not going to stand up here and start giving names of hospitals or anybody else; I'm not going to do that, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to try to be responsible enough not to, every day come in and say, you know, 20 people told me that, and invent all kinds of things like that; that the Minister can never call me a liar, the same as I can't call him a liar when he does that; if you do that too often, I don't think that you're being very responsible.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I've often said that politicians have a tendency not to respect each other and take advantage of things even when they don't know it's true. And this is one of the things that has got my dander up in the last few days. Some of the things that were said by the Minister, that there will be consultation, not confrontation with the medical profession. The Minister again today said, "Well, I'm saying, you can say." You know, of course he's right. If you wanted to really look at the words, I can stand up and say, "You people can say this." Well, it seems to indicate that — ordinary people talking, it means that you've said it. It doesn't say that you have permission to say it, but if I want to play on words, I could say, "Well, I never said you said it." I can say, "You can if you want;" and it wouldn't change anything.

But, Sir, if you really want to be honest, it's misleading, and at no time did I ever say that I can remember — I can say that in general — the medical profession was overpaid — single them out and say that they were overpaid. And at no time, as far as I'm concerned, did I have a confrontation with the medical profession. Not any more than the present government. But I had a certain responsibility. I had a responsibility, and in fact, I don't like the way my colleague stated today that I said, "If you don't like it, opt out," because this is certainly said out of context. I can say, Mr. Chairman, if I can be very honest, that I bent backwards to try to get along with the medical profession and the MMA; that when the first fight erupted, I wasn't a member of the Cabinet; I wasn't a member of the House at all. I wasn't a member of the Cabinet, anyway, when this started; then I was maybe Chairman of the Commission shortly before there was an agreement. In fact, I signed — it wasn't a contract, it wasn't an arrangement between the government and the medical profession; it was an arrangement between the Manitoba Health Services Commission and the MMA, and I was the one that signed, representing the Commission.

The following year, probably I tried too much. And I think that the Chairman of those days, of the MMA, also tried too much. By then I was the Minister — he came directly to my office; he felt that there were a lot of people saying that it wasn't worth it, but he really wanted to make it work, and we discussed it. Sir, we were talking about the 13, 1 — percent in those days they wanted to ask about 25 . . .

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Order please. The hour being 5:30, I am now leaving the Chair to return at 8:00 o'clock.