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Speaker: Honourable Patrick McNicholas

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The House met at 3:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

Oral Questions

MR. BARRY:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Leader of the
Opposition.

MR. BARRY:
Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier is he aware that the Government of Canada and CUPE, on behalf of the General Labour and Trades Group, representing approximately 1,000 employees within the Province, have signed an agreement whereby federal employees in this Province will be paid in the lowest job classifications - they have these so-called regional job classifications - and Newfoundlanders will receive some \$3 per hour less than a person working in Moncton, for example? Is the Premier aware of this?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I do not know the details of it, Mr. Speaker. I would be surprised if CUPE, or whatever union is representing the workers would agree, if in fact the jobs are the same, that they would be paid differently. I do not know of the structure that they are using, but obviously I will take a look at it and see what the story is there.

MR. BARRY:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Leader of the
Opposition.

MR. BARRY:
Mr. Speaker, I think this is something that has been around for some time under the Government of Canada although it has been fairly well hidden. But I would like to ask the Premier if he is not aware of it, whether he would check and establish whether in fact the difference in pay between workers in this Province and workers in other parts of Canada has in fact increased as a result of this last agreement that was signed, that in addition to maintaining the so-called regional salary classifications that we see an increase in the gap between what is paid employees in this Province and what is paid in other provinces? I wonder would the Premier undertake to check this out?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I will so, Mr. Speaker, undertake to check it out and see just exactly what is going on there. Obviously we do not want to see a situation where somebody can make a valid charge of discrimination because of where we happen to live, and I will definitely check that out and just see what the story is and, if there is a legitimate concern there, then we will make the appropriate representations.

MR. BARRY:
A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Leader of the
Opposition, a final supplementary.

MR. BARRY:

I am glad the Premier mentioned the matter of discrimination because I have taken a look at the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and I would refer the Premier to Section 6, Mobility Rights, which says that while a person is entitled to pursue a livelihood in any province, that is subject to certain laws, but those laws cannot discriminate on the grounds of provincial residents, as the Premier will recall. And I would refer the Premier to Section 15 and, in the absence of the Minister of Justice (Ms. Verge), ask if he would have that minister establish whether in fact any such agreement that would see employees in this Province paid less than employees in other parts of Canada who are working for the federal government, whether in fact that does not discriminate also and contravene Section 15, Equality Rights, which says every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination. And they say 'in particular without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin.' Now, perhaps we have a case here of discrimination based on provincial origin, which would fall, possibly, within Section 15 as well as within Section 6.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

It probably falls within section 6, as I was saying when I was sitting down and breaking the rules of the House. The Mobility Clause that the hon. member refers

to is one that I was very instrumental in getting included in the Charter of Rights at the time, as a matter of fact. It was just this Province that insisted on it, and we were successful in getting it.

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ottenheiner) will remember the occasion when that was done, and we are very proud that we were able to get it in there. But the hon. the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Barry) was right, especially on that first section. I do not know about under the Equality Section, but we will have it checked out, because it is a very important point and one that has to be checked out, and I will undertake to do that.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Blanchard), but in his absence I will ask the Premier. It concerns the Workers' Compensation Board report that was tabled yesterday in the House by the Minister of Labour and its appeal procedure.

The Premier is well aware, I am sure, that the present appeal procedure means that a claimant has to go to the same people to appeal a decision that those people made. He goes to a commissioner first and then to a board of commissioners. I know the Minister of Labour has promised some legislation in this regard. I would ask the Premier when we can expect that legislation and just what the nature of the appeal procedure

will be in that legislation.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

I forget the exact details now, but the minister has promised it, and it is going to be done, hopefully, in this session, this Spring. We are very eager to move to change the present appeal procedures because, as the hon. the member for Fogo has pointed out, they are appealing to themselves, the appeal comes back to the same people and, obviously, it is not a proper appeal procedure. So we are going to be establishing an appeal committee outside the Workers' Compensation Commission to hear the appeals that various claimants will have against the commission itself.

The exact composition I forget, but there will be people from outside the workers Compensation Commission who will sit on that appeal committee and hear the various appeals.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the government taking the lead. I think it was the Leader of the Opposition, who had a Private Member's resolution at one point on that. I wonder if the Premier could inform the House that those people who have been discriminated against, or at least feel that they have been discriminated against in the present appeal

procedure of appealing to the same people who made the decision in the first place - and I have a number of cases myself, as every other member of the House has - will have a time frame built in as to when those people can go back and appeal those decisions?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

We have also looked at that, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure now, I will have to just undertake to get the details on it, but there has been a lot of debate as to when the new appeal procedure will kick in and whether then it would apply to some back claimants who obviously feel that they have been unjustly treated by the old system. There has to be a cutoff date somewhere or another. I do not know how far you could go back, otherwise you would have an awful mountain of work on your hands.

There is concern by the government and by the minister and by the department over the staging of that and that is something that we are going to try to address. So we are aware of what the hon. member is talking about and it has been debated by the government and by Cabinet. I can assure the hon. member that we will be as fair and as reasonable in how we deal with back cases as possible.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, the report, as put out by the Workers' Compensation

Board yesterday and tabled in the House by the minister, points out that there has been a significant increase in the number of fatal injury claims. I also note that there have been some increases in the permanent disability and dependency benefits as well. I wonder could the Premier give us an explanation as to how great the increase was and perhaps what the causes of those increases were? Were there some outstanding causes that might have caused those things to happen?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

I will have to take that question as notice. The hon. member is getting into a fair amount of detail and I just do not have those numbers at my fingertips, but I will undertake in the next day or two to get the information for the hon. member and report back to the House.

MR. TULK:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, also under the legislation and the regulations of the Workers' Compensation Board, one of the processes that is supposed to be established under the rehabilitation services of the Workers' Compensation Board is to enable the worker to obtain a level of earning capacity when he is injured that is equal to or greater than the pre-injury earnings. Now I want to ask the Premier, is the rehabilitation process serving that purpose or are claimants in Newfoundland

still being asked and still being told that they can do light work? The Premier knows what they mean by light work. I do not know, to be quite frank, what they mean by light work because it is hard to find in Newfoundland. But I would ask the Premier if indeed the rehabilitation process is working in that regard, if people are getting the same income as they come off Workers' Compensation that they were originally getting in their original jobs, or are we still seeing people being asked to do light work, which I would suggest to him and which he, I think, knows himself, does not exist in this Province or rarely exists in this Province?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Well, there is no perfect system, Mr. Speaker. I guess we are doing our best. I noticed in the charts yesterday when I looked at the report the still fairly high percentage of rehabilitation out of the total amount. I know they are trying hard on it, but obviously there are going to be cases where there is not going to be the possibility to put them into a job which pays them as much as they were being paid before they were injured. That is what you have to aim for. I will check with the Workers' Compensation Board later today or tomorrow to see what the percentages would be, how many of those who are actually declared as being rehabilitated and actually get jobs somewhere near the levels they were at previously and how many are not, to see what the breakdown is because there is a big problem there. The hon. member is right, the light work syndrome is great stuff, but it is a great job to

feed your family on, to get a job on light work around this Province. I will just check it out to see what the percentages are and to see how successful they are. I know of a couple of cases, as we all do in this House, I guess, of individuals, and I know a couple right off the top of my head who have been very successful in getting into jobs afterwards that were as good as or better than they had before. One comes to mind as a matter of fact from my own constituency, where a person went and did a trade and then went to university and is not into a job situation which is even better than the person had before, but that, I say, is the exception rather than the rule. I will get the statistics for the hon. member just to see where we are on that kind of breakdown.

MR. TULK:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, one of the departments of the Workers' Compensation Board is a medical department and I understand that they have three doctors on staff at the present time. Many people, I find point out to him, also feel that the medical department is sometimes used by the Workers' Compensation Board to justify the refusal of a claim when in fact the claim may very well be justified. Many doctors in this Province outside that medical department say the claim is justified but the medical department of the Workers' Compensation Board say, no, it is not justified. I ask would the Premier look into that aspect as well of the workings of the

Workers' Compensation Board to see if indeed the medical department is being used somewhat by the Workers' Compensation Board to turn down claims rather than to give justice to the people who deserve to have their claims approved?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

I will check it out, but I just say to the hon. member that I know of cases and have seen cases where it is the other way around, where very often the doctor or specialist in a hospital somewhere in the Province has this person as a patient and has been the one to recommend that this injury was not caused by the previous work experience, just as much as I have seen it from the medical department in the Workers' Compensation Board.

MR. TULK:

And the other way, too.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

You get quite a few cases the other way, and they you get disputes between both the board and an outside doctor. I will just check it out and see if there are many instances where this happens. Let me just also say, Mr. Speaker, that the whole Workers' Compensation area is a very, very important area. Not only is it important, but I think if you look at what we are doing in this Province it compares very favourably with what is happening in other provinces. As a matter of fact we are better than most, I would say we are in the top two or three and the amount of levy now charged against employers is the highest in Canada.

MR. W. CARTER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:
My question is to the hon. the Premier. I wonder if the Premier is able to tell the House now if a decision has been made with respect to a request from the Torngat Co-operatives to assume management of the Northern fish plants. They have, I understand, wired the Premier a telegram to that effect and I wonder if he is able to say when the announcement will be made, whether or not they are going to get the opportunity to manage those plants?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I will have to take that question as notice and check with the Department of Fisheries, Mr. Speaker, just to see where that is. Obviously the time is going by and we will try and give them an answer as soon as possible.

MR. W. CARTER:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary, the hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:
Mr. Speaker, I wonder can the Premier comment on the question of the Newfoundland Northern Fisheries Development Corporation and tell the House what has happened to it? Because I understand, and I think the Premier is aware of this, that Mr. Siddon is supposed to have said, at least the people who sent this telegram have a letter in their

possession to the effect, that the Minister of Fisheries in Ottawa told him that the Province has missed the boat, the Fishery Development Corporation has missed an opportunity. Can he comment on that and tell us the status of the negotiations now with the federal government with respect to the establishment of that corporation?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
As the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Rideout) pointed out on a number of occasions, we are aware of the statement made by Mr. Siddon, but from our perspective we are still very much committed to that kind of an agency or instrument for Northern Newfoundland and for Labrador and we want to pursue that again with Mr. Siddon. We have not given up on it at all.

Let me also say that it is quite erroneous, although I have heard some statements over the last number of weeks, and I am sure the hon. member for Twillingate (Mr. W. Carter) has too, about how we lost an opportunity some time ago when apparently there was \$10 million or \$15 million allocated. That was a fictitious number, it was never allocated by the federal government. I was in on all those negotiations personally myself and I know for a fact.

The other thing was what the federal government of the day wanted was the Saltfish Corporation to operate and be the major agency to take over those plants, not the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation, and on that Saltfish Corporation we would only have one representative. So we would be passing over to the federal government management of a

lot of the fishery in Northern Newfoundland and Labrador and that was an unacceptable proposition, and that is why, at the time, the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation did not come off. Because I think very few people in the Province would have wanted to see us relinquish completely, except for one person on a board of eight or ten, any control over the processing sector in Labrador and Northern Newfoundland, and that was the early proposal. But we are still committed to it and we are going to try to persuade Mr. Siddon and the federal government that this is an instrument that we should use to do a better job on processing and catching, and so on, the fishery resource in Northern Newfoundland and Labrador. We have not given up on it at all.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Justice (Ms. Verge). Last week when we received the Public Service Commission Report, for 1984/85 I believe, it was indicated that only two women were hired in what is called the uniform trades. At that time the minister indicated that she would get the information for the final year that just passed until March 31, 1986. Could the minister give us some indication of how many women have been hired in the uniform trades now that the Affirmative Action Programme has been put into place and has had a year to work?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MS VERGE:

Mr. Speaker, government adopted an Affirmative Action Programme for Women in The Public Service last August, August of 1985. Treasury Board have been charged with implementing that policy, and, of course, the department and the minister responsible for the Status of Women will be instrumental in the implementation of the policy.

The idea is to basically neutralize the advantage enjoyed by men in the Province historically in getting jobs and advancing in their careers, and to open doors for women to make possible for women opportunities which formerly were denied them for one reason or another, so that women can participate fully in the Public Service of the Province, and so that the Public Service and the government can have the benefit of women's talents and ability, that Affirmative Action policy is now being implemented, the idea I have outlined. The approach is practical in the sense that there will be targets and objectives set which may be measured. The deputy ministers of each department will be responsible for implementation in that department with, of course, the Public Service Commission being charged in the usual way with recruitment and evaluation of applicants for jobs.

In the case of the uniformed forces which come under the Department of Justice, in the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary we have now only fourteen women out of 382 members throughout the Province, that is fourteen out of 382. Of course, it was only in recent years since this

administration took office that the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary was opened to women at all.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which is a federal force providing provincial policing services under contact with the Province, has about fourteen women out of 450 members in this Province.

In the case of the St. John's Fire Department, there is not one single woman employed. And in the case of Penitentiary Services in the Province, there are nineteen women employed now, most of them, fourteen of the nineteen, working at the Women's Correctional Centre at Stephenville. The nineteen women employees is roughly proportionate to the percentage of women offenders who are accommodated in our penitentiary system.

Just recently, Mr. Speaker, in consultation with my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, we have begun to set up a committee to try to improve the record of recruiting, hiring, and promoting women in our uniformed services. That committee will include officials of the Justice, Career Development and Treasury Board Departments of government, as well as the Deputy Chief of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, Deputy Chief Coady, Chief Stanley of the St. John's Fire Department and the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for our penitentiary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MS VERGE:
Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the official Opposition are not interested in womens issues. I

have to commend the member for Menihek (Mr. Fenwick) as being the only member opposite who has asked a question pertaining to women's issues in recent memory. It is a good question and I hope he continues to encourage public discussion of this issue.

MR. FENWICK:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
Before recognizing the hon. the member for Menihek on a supplementary, I am trying to get as many questions and answers in as I can, so I ask all hon. members to keep their questions and answers as short as possible.

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought my question was short.

The question I asked was how many firemen, warders or Royal Newfoundland Constabulary constables were hired in the last year, now that we have an Affirmative Action Programme. Although it was a wonderful speech, nowhere in there did I find the actual numbers I am looking for. I only want the numbers.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MS VERGE:
I gave the member asking the question the total numbers. First of all, I pointed out that the Affirmation Action policy was just adopted last August and it is not implemented yet. Implementation is being worked on. There will be targets that can be measured, it will be a practical Affirmative

Action Programme. The St. John's Fire Department has no one, that is obvious.

MR. FENWICK:

Zero there. Okay, what about the Constabulary?

MS VERGE:

In the penitentiary system there are a total of nineteen women warders.

MR. FENWICK:

How many hired last year?

MS VERGE:

I do not have the information about when those nineteen women were hired. In the case of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, which has fourteen women, only one was hired within the past year, one out of all applicants who were screened, evaluated and judged more than a year ago.

MR. BARRY:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

On a point of order, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BARRY:

Despite the fact that the tame member of the Opposition has given the minister written notice beforehand to let her prepare her notes, it is an abuse of Question Period. We are all interested in women's issues, Mr. Speaker. The minister is giving a prepared statement, presumably because the member for Menihek alerted her that he would be asking the question. Mr. Speaker, instead of paying lip service to issues the minister should tell the young lady who is out there in the wildlife officers' training course, or the forestry course in Stephenville, why she cannot get

in the front door of the wildlife office just to get on-the-job training this Summer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BARRY:

That is the type of issue that she should be dealing with instead of this garbage that she is going on about. Get out and implement the real Affirmative Action Programme instead of paying lip service like you have been doing for the last six years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER PECKFORD:

To that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

To that point of order, the hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Now we see the abuse. The Leader of the Opposition gets up and gives a speech trying to pretend that he is somehow in favour of women's rights when he will not allow the Minister of Justice to answer the question.

MR. FENWICK:

To that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Do I have to take these kinds of ignorant, arrogant insults from the lackluster Leader of the Opposition?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. BARRY:

Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I must rule there is no point of order. But I would ask all members on each side to keep both questions and answers short.

MR. FENWICK:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

I know this is like pulling teeth from a hen but the answer you have given is that before we had the Affirmative Action Programme we had two women hired and now that we have the Affirmative Action Programme we have only woman hired. Will you confirm that that is what the situation is up to this point?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MS VERGE:

Mr. Speaker, I have answered the question to the best of my ability. I have explained, number one, that the government has adopted the principle of affirmative action but we have not yet implemented the programme. I have given the member the numbers of women in our uniformed

services pointing out that it is a very, very low percentage, acknowledging that there is under-representation of women, undertaking to try to do better in the future in consultation with my colleagues.

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Windsor - Buchans.

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last Thursday or the latter part of the week, Abitibi-Price removed the bridge from what is known in the local area as the Buchans - Southwest Brook Road. The removal of the bridge effectively takes away access from the general public, the travelling public, from Lloyds River, the hunting area known as Dashwoods, ten miles of government funded road and will also cost Buchans dollars from people who spend money when they go into that area to hunt and fish. The question I want to ask the Premier is whether or not his government was asked its permission to remove that bridge?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is anywhere near my rabbit camp but if it is I going to have a problem with the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands (Mr. Simms). But I think he has all the information on it so I will ask him to answer the question.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, first of all I can confirm for the hon. the Premier that it is not near his rabbit camp.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. the member for Windsor-Buchans (Mr. Flight), of course, has made his reputation over the years of trying to be a self-confessed environmentalist and by attacking the paper companies. That is how he has made his reputation -

MR. POWER:

What little it is.

MR. SIMMS:

- and in most cases he has done it irresponsibly.

MR. POWER:

It is not much of a reputation.

MR. SIMMS:

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a situation where the paper company has a road which it built and which had a wooden bridge on it, approximately a ten foot span I am told, which was delapidated and falling apart, which the company decided it had to remove for safety purposes. Now that is what happened in the case of the Otter Brook Bridge. But let me tell the hon. member something more important that this government has done. The company had indicated at one time it wanted to remove the bridge over Shanadithit, which was even more important because, Mr. Speaker, that would have meant people would have to drive seventy-odd miles down around the other area to come back up around to get into it. And this government would not let

that happen and told the company to leave that bridge there and put a new bridge up over the Lloyds River. That is the answer to the hon. member's question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Windsor-Buchans.

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker, does the minister who just answer the question agree that the area West, or on the other side of that bridge, is the key area identified by the development committees in Buchans to develop the recreational and tourist potential area? That is the main area, and by denying access to that area you have not only adversely affected but probably wiped out any chance they had to develop a potential tourist industry in the Lloyds Lake area, West of Lloyd Lake, King George Lake, and the Lloyds River area? Will the minister admit that by taking out that bridge he is undercutting everybody in Buchans who is trying to develop a potential tourist industry, and denying the travelling public, all over Newfoundland, the ability to get into that area? Now will the minister admit that?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, as I said to the hon. member, this government has acted on representations it received from people in the Buchans area who were concerned about the

company wanting to remove its bridge on the Shanadithit River. That was their major concern. And I would ask the hon. member for Windsor-Buchans, who represents the area, to get on side with this government in trying to do everything it can to support Buchans, like supporting Buchans as the site for the prison, like getting MILAP for the people in Buchans and, in this particular case, he would be wise to get off the bridge, so to speak if he wishes, and support the people of Buchans who did not want that bridge removed on Shanadithit River, and it will not be removed because this government insisted. The bridge he refers to, Mr. Speaker, is a ten foot wooden bridge, falling down, falling apart, that the company decided they had to take down for safety reasons.

MR. FLIGHT:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Windsor-Buchans.

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker, since the minister is speaking for government, obviously, do the government and the minister support Abitibi in its going in and removing that bridge without any prior consultation, without letting anybody know, without asking any questions? Does the minister support that kind of action by Abitibi Price on that bridge?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, I would be very irresponsible if I did not support

an action that was taken for safety reasons, to save the lives, possibly, of people who might go in over that bridge and fall down through it. I would be totally irresponsible.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Just imagine if the hon. member went in and fell down through that bridge.

MR. SIMMS:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. I could not support that. Now if the hon. member wants to show responsibility, Mr. Speaker, let him be responsible in his questions. The bridge was removed, I am advised, on company land, by the way, their bridge, their road, their limits, for safety reasons because the wooden bridge was falling apart, Mr. Speaker. How can I condone their leaving it there? That would totally irresponsible, much too like the hon. member for Windsor - Buchans would be.

MR. FLIGHT:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Windsor - Buchans.

MR. FLIGHT:

Assuming we take the minister at his word and the bridge was unsafe, then why is it that the minister stood by last Fall and watched literally hundreds and hundreds of Newfoundlanders use that bridge to get into the moose hunting areas, and fishing areas and not one word? The road was closed for the Winter.

MR. TULK:

He did not know anything about it.

MR. FLIGHT:

This Spring, Price goes in in a helicopter and blows the road. Where was your concern for the safety of the travelling public last Fall and up until Thursday? You are a bluff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! Order, please!

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, now this is sort of a total different twist. The hon. member did not ask me if I would approach the company to see if they would replace that bridge. Now if he were to ask me that, then I would be most happy to make representations to the company, and I have a feeling I might even be able to have some influence on a decision such as that in a positive way, if that is what he is asking. But if he is just going to get up and attack the company and attack the government and attack everybody, then, Mr. Speaker, he cannot expect to get anything done.

MR. FLIGHT:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fortune - Hermitage.

MR. FLIGHT:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member had two final supplementaries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, the House will be aware that yesterday The Report of the Working Group on Child Sexual Abuse, a Blueprint for Action was made public. In this context I want to raise with the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. Doyle) a question on a related matter. Last June he will recall that he introduced into this House, and the House subsequently passed, amendments to The Corner Brook Act, The St. John's Act, and The Municipalities Act, all of which had the effect of enabling municipalities to draft and implement regulations relating to the control and display of pornographic material.

To my knowledge, I say to the minister, no municipality has enacted such regulations and just about a year has now passed. In view of that, would the minister indicate to the House whether he has done some second thinking on the issue and whether he is contemplating proposing a change in the legislation to give the enacting authority back to the Province where it probably belongs?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. DOYLE:

No, Mr. Speaker, we are not contemplating any such move. As a matter of fact, the Department of Municipal Affairs responded to a request from the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities to implement this type of legislation and it was put in place. Any municipality wishing to take advantage of it and to implement these regulations is free to do

so. As a matter of fact, the Department of Justice has a draft set of regulations which we make available to any municipality interested in bringing in those types of regulations.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The time for Oral Questions has elapsed.

MR. WARREN:

A point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of privilege, the hon. member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, I understand you have to bring up a point of privilege at the earliest opportunity so I want to bring up a personal point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I have been waiting to get a copy of Hansard from this morning but, unfortunately, it will not be ready until about 4 o'clock. However, I think I should proceed with my personal point of privilege.

This morning at the committee hearings on resources the hon. member for Fortune-Hermitage (Mr. Simmons) was Acting Chairman for a time. I was a duly appointed member of that Committee this morning, filling in for the member for Burin (Mr. Tobin). I proceeded at ten minutes to one to take part in the debate by asking the Minister of Development (Mr. Barrett) some questions pertaining to his department which were of interest to me and of interest to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I was about ten seconds into my comments when I was interrupted by the Acting Chairman of the Committee who advised me

that, because I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development (Mr. R. Aylward), one department in this government, that I was not allowed to ask any questions to the minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

What! What!

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):

Order, please!

MR. WARREN:

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that, as an elected member of this hon. House, I have had my rights infringed upon by the hon. member for Fortune-Hermitage (Mr. Simmons). Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, with that, I challenged the Chair at ten minutes to the hour and it was known then that we were going to adjourn at 1 o'clock. The Acting Chairman refused to bring it to a vote. The Acting Chairman would not let the challenge go to a vote, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is an infringement upon me as an elected member. If we attend those Committee hearings and if I am appointed by the government to be a part of the Committee hearings then, Mr. Speaker, as an elected member, I have the opportunity to ask any minister on those Committees any question that I deem necessary and important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, I have two points. One, by the Acting Chairman refusing to allow me to proceed, he infringed upon my rights and, secondly, when I challenged the ruling of the Chair, he

immediately, according to the House rules, was suppose to call a vote, which he did not do. He refused to do it and refused to hear other comments from other members on the Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Fortune-Hermitage will not muzzle me from doing my duties in this House. I assure the hon. member or anyone opposite that I will continue to function as a member, regardless of the objections from the opposite side.

Mr. Speaker, going back to the Standing Orders, on Page 37, Section 118 (3) it says, "Standing Orders 86 and 87 apply to each committee." Standing Order 86 (b) says, "Any member of the House who is not a member of a Standing Committee." I am a member of that Standing Committee. Any hon. member can take part in the debate but cannot vote. I am a part of that Standing Committee therefore, I was permitted to take part and therefore, I was permitted to make a motion and vote. I think, Mr. Speaker, it is a disgrace by the hon. member for Fortune - Hermitage (Mr. Simmons), an abuse of this House and shameful that the hon. member should stoop so low and act so childishly and in such an unworthy manner.

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):

The hon. the member for Fortune - Hermitage.

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, it would not be appropriate for me to debate the merits of the case. I was the acting Chairman at the time. What I would like to do, just in the manner of a couple of sentences,

is to inform the House as to what happened. I will leave it to other members who might want to debate the merits of the point that has been raised by the gentleman from Torngat.

I just want to inform the House on two points. The Committee was scheduled to rise at 1:00 p.m. At about 12:50 p.m. I informed the member, in my capacity as acting Chairman, that it was my understanding that a parliamentary secretary, being a member of the administration, could not ask the administration questions. That was my ruling, rightly or wrongly.

The second point is that I have to take issue with the information the gentleman has just given the House in that I had not allowed the issue to come to a vote on the challenge of the Chairman's decision. I was hearing points of order and as the hon. the Speaker will realize when you get into an issue as complicated as this one has the potential to be, ten minutes does not take long going when you have three or four people who want to speak to the point of order. We were still hearing points of order at 1:00 p.m. when I rose the Committee with the full understanding, of course, that tomorrow at 10:00 a.m., when the Committee sits again, it will have the opportunity to deal with the issue which is before the Chair, and that issue, at the moment, is the challenge to the acting Chairman's ruling.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):

Order, please!

Actually, the Chair has heard enough to comment on this matter at this stage. I do not think this matter should -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

I have heard enough on this. This matter actually should not have come to the House at all.

MR. TULK:
It should, sure it should.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please! I ruled on a very similar point of privilege yesterday and I quote, "The reason it does not constitute a prima facie case of breach of privilege is that all the authorities are agreed that a matter arising in committee is first to be dealt with in Committee and only secondarily in the House."

In this connection, I refer all hon. members to Beauchesne, Fifth Edition, paragraph 608, which reads: "Procedural difficulties which arise in committees ought to be settled in the committee and not in the House." So, I rule there is no prima facie case of breach of privilege.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. MORGAN:
Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege of this House, not on a point of personal privilege.

MR. EFFORD:
You rose on that before.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Bonavista South.

MR. MORGAN:
Mr. Speaker, it has been known that a member of the House of Assembly should never be obstructed from performing his duties as a member of the House. Now, this morning, irrespective of the ruling made or not made by a committee, I saw a member's activities as a member of the House of Assembly being obstructed. He could not ask questions about his riding.

AN HON. MEMBER:
He has already ruled on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. MORGAN:
Mr. Speaker, if I could make my case.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

MR. MORGAN:
This means, Mr. Speaker, that a member was obstructed from performing his duties on obtaining and extracting information from government about his respective district, in this case, Torngat Mountains in Labrador. If he is obstructed in that way, from extracting information regarding his own riding, that, Mr. Speaker, is clearly an example of the abuse of a member's rights and is clearly, in my view, a violation of the member's privileges because he was indeed obstructed from doing so.

If, for example, Mr. Speaker, you leave the ruling to be made by the Committee, as the Speaker has now ruled -

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

It appears to me that the hon. member is just recapping the point of privilege that was raised.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
So I must rule that the hon. member is not making any prima facie case of breach of privilege.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. MORGAN:
I rise again on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am fighting for the privileges of this House. The member here has had his privileges violated and I will stand for his rights as well as my own. Mr. Speaker, I want to rise on a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. TULK:
On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORGAN:
On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

MR. TULK:
On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

The hon. member for Fogo is rising on a point of privilege.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, my point of privilege is that the member for Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan) is today

questioning the ruling of the Chair. He is doing so in a most arrogant fashion. He is trying to do in this House what he has tried on a number of occasions to do in the Committees, take the place on his back, question the rulings of the Chairman or the Speaker and it is the type of behavior that we have come to expect from the hon. gentleman ever since last Spring when he rose on a point of privilege in this House which the government side of the House refuses to deal with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, we can have the same scenario carried out in this House this Spring as we had last Spring, with the hon. gentleman rising in his place whenever he feels like it, questioning the Chair, questioning members of the administration, questioning members of the Opposition, so that he can get a few points in the media. I would suggest to you that what he is doing this afternoon, Your Honour, is challenging the Chair and that is precisely what he is doing. If he is allowed to continue, I would ask Your Honour to name him. If he persists in continuing, name him and give him the kind of punishment, if you want, that the hon. gentleman deserves.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask Your Honour to keep the hon. gentleman in his place and to keep him from abusing points of privilege, of course, in questioning Your Honour. The hon. gentleman is well known for that kind of tactic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. MORGAN:

Mr. Speaker, to that point of privilege now before the House.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of privilege, the hon. the member for Bonavista South.

MR. MORGAN:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman stands to try to abuse me personally. The fact is I have not stood on my feet in this House to make any points in the last, I would say, two months.

I stand today to defend my colleague from Torngat (Mr. Warren) because I feel that he has indeed had his privileges abused. All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, on the point of privilege now raised, is that the fact is that this member tonight, for example, cannot sit according to the ruling made by the acting Chairman of one Committee, an extension of this House of Assembly, a Committee of this House. This member cannot ask questions. Does that mean, Mr. Speaker, tonight he cannot ask questions?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The hon. member is not speaking to the point of privilege raised by the hon. member for Fogo.

MR. MORGAN:

Oh, yes I am, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. MORGAN:

I am speaking to the point of privilege raised by the hon. member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk). I am speaking to that point. Surely, Mr. Speaker, the day has not come

when we cannot speak on points of privilege raised by other members. I am speaking to that point of privilege now raised by the hon. member for Fogo.

I am saying that the issue at stake here is whether or not individual members have a right to take part fully in extensions of this House, an extension of this House being Committees of the House. If we have not, Mr. Speaker, my interpretation is that these rules have now suddenly changed. These rules, in my view, have not changed.

MR. HODDER:

That comes under the Speaker.

MR. MORGAN:

That is right. Under the Speaker, not the Committee.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of privilege, I must rule there is no prima facie case raised by the hon. member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk).

The hon. the member for Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan) rose on a point of order, and I am prepared to hear that point.

MR. TULK:

You have ruled on it.

MR. SPEAKER:

The point of order he has risen on. The hon. the member for Bonavista South.

MR. MORGAN:

I am merely on a point of order to raise the matter whether or not all members of this House of Assembly - private members not ministers - appointed to committees of this House of Assembly by the House, have a right as individual members to

serve on and to take part in activities of committees of this House. That is the point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is a very important question for all of us, because if one member cannot ask questions why should any of us be involved in asking questions?

This member wants to ask questions at tonight's committee meeting and the point of order, Mr. Speaker is this, and it is a very important point of order: If we are going to have order in the House of Assembly, let us also have order in extensions of the House of Assembly, at the committee stage. vel.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, to that point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, the hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

The hon. gentleman cannot do through the backdoor what he is not allowed to do through the front door. His Honour has ruled that the committees are masters, to a certain extent, of their own fate, and the hon. gentleman is now trying to make a point that he tried to make on a point of privilege. I would submit to Your Honour that what he is doing is questioning a ruling of the Chair indirectly. The hon. gentleman is good at it. That is about the only thing that he is good at, doing things indirectly that he cannot do directly, and for that I congratulate him. But I would suggest to Your Honour that he cannot carry on this kind of behaviour, of which we have seen so much from the hon. gentleman in the past year.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, may I comment on the point of order?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, as I understand the point of order raised by the member for Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan), it raises a very important question. Members on these Estimates Committees are members who have been appointed, indeed voted to serve on these committees by this entire House. Now, Mr. Speaker, the real question here is whether or not that vote of the House to appoint members to these committees is a valid vote if they are not permitted to ask questions in committee. That is the important question here, Mr. Speaker. I think the member for Bonavista South has a legitimate question that Your Honour should perhaps take time to consider. It is not the overall question of whether the committee is master of its own business, of course it is in terms of order and keeping order in committee and that sort of thing, but Mr. Speaker, this is a much more important point and I submit to you it is a different point and a very, very important point that could have ramifications for the future operations of this House.

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fortune-Hermitage.

MR. SIMMONS:

To that point of order. The gentleman from Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan) stated his point of

order in terms of whether private members could ask questions. Now, I have two concerns about that: First, it has been long and often ruled in this House that you cannot put hypothetical questions to the Chair. He has put to the Chair, I submit, a question which is general and hypothetical and not dealing with any particular case before the House, because the only related case, Mr. Speaker has ruled, is before the Committee right now and not the House. So, in that context, it has to be seen as a hypothetical question rather than one that deals with a specific circumstance before this House at this time.

The second point is that I support the underlying implication of his point of order, and that will come as a surprise to him. I support the essence of his point of order, if we can take the man at his word. If he is talking about private members, I have no difficulty.

MR. MORGAN:
Even ministers.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. SIMMONS:
Mr. Speaker, the question related to private members and I am responding to the point of order raised by the gentleman from Bonavista South. I have no difficulty with private members on whatever side of the House, of course private members, but in no jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, are ministers or parliamentary secretaries construed or defined as private members. They are members with access to information about the administration, they participate in the administration of government. So, Mr. Speaker,

insofar as private members are concerned, yes, I agree with the gentleman from Bonavista South.

Now, if the gentleman for Grand Falls (Mr. Simms) wants to get exercised and say there is no difference between the gentleman for Port de Grave and the gentleman for Torngat, perhaps he can explain how it is that fellow has half an office and that fellow has two?

MR. SIMMS:
Just a final word, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
I think I have heard enough on the matter.

MR. SIMMS:
It is important to the point raised by the hon. member.

MR. SIMMONS:
No, it is not, because you do not understand.

MR. SIMMS:
It is important because the hon. member has just -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Alright, A brief comment.

MR. SIMMS:
The hon. member, Mr. Speaker, has just said that in no jurisdiction is a parliamentary secretary treated as a private member. That is incorrect, Mr. Speaker, because in this jurisdiction there have been rulings given in the past, by the Chair, which allowed parliamentary secretaries the right to ask questions of ministers, the same as any other private member. Therefore, in this jurisdiction it is recognized.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:

No, Mr. Speaker. He has heard enough now.

MR. SIMMONS:

He has had two kicks.

MR. SIMMS:

He has heard enough now.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):

The hon. the member for Fortune - Hermitage, a brief comment.

MR. SIMMONS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this House and in many other Houses, parliamentary secretaries are on the public payroll in their capacity as parliamentary secretaries; they receive a stipend from government in response to the performance of their duties as part of the administration. That is the key issue, and it is that, among other issues, which distinguish them from being private members. They are not private members, they are part of the administration. There is no question about that.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, I would like to again refer hon. members to Beauchesne, page 196, Section 608: 'Procedural difficulties which arise in committees ought to be settled in the committee and not in the House.' There is no point of order.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER:

This being Private Members' Day, the hon. the member for Gander (Mr. Baker) adjourned the debate and he has ten minutes left.

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BAKER:

My time is very limited today, and perhaps I should first, very briefly, summarize what went on before I spoke a week ago. The members from the government side of the House by and large agreed with the purpose of this resolution, agreed with the various clauses in this resolution put forward by the member for Fortune - Hermitage.

There was a contribution by the member for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter), and he talked in terms of as consumers use more electricity charging higher rates to stimulate conservation and the wiser use of electricity. By and large, that is about what was said by the opposite side.

Now I agree with the general thrust of much of what has been said. I am very concerned that, first of all, the high energy costs have created a tremendous burden on a number of people in this Province. I think, particularly, of people on fixed incomes, people on pensions, and people on low salaries. They, too, have to heat their homes, they, too, have to have light, and so on, in their homes or apartments or whatever. The cost has become very, very prohibitive. My problem with that

is that energy has become an essential part of life in this Province, of life anywhere. Everybody needs to consume energy, and we have been sold on that. For years and years we have been sold, in this consumer society, on the idea that we have to have things electric. A measure of a person's success is how many electrical appliances he or she has in his home. We have been sold on the idea of overuse of electricity. Granted, this was in the days when the cost of oil was not as high as it is now or not as high as it was a short while ago, and when electricity was cheap to produce.

Then, when consumers had gotten into this age of consumption, encouraged by all kinds of agencies in our society, all of a sudden the world oil prices go up, the cost of electricity goes up proportionately, or perhaps even more than proportionately, and they are caught in a bind. Their incomes have not gone up as quickly, especially in Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker, where most people have been under some kind of wage restriction or freeze for a large number of years. So their salaries have not gone up and the cost of heating the home and the cost of energy has become a higher and higher proportion of the usable money that people have, which has created all sorts of hardships.

Within the Department of Social Services, obviously the minister and people working there recognize the problem that creates, where families are allowed a certain amount of money, depending on their dependents, and they are allowed a certain amount for rent, and so on, from government, and they find that half of what they

get, or more than half of what they get, has to go to pay the light bill and then they have nothing left for food. In other words, they use the allotment they are receiving for food to pay their light bill, therefore, they do not have enough to eat. So they have a choice to make, as do a lot of people in this Province, between paying their energy costs and eating. It is a harsh reality, it is a fact of life, and that is the situation in this Province with a lot of people right now, a lot of people who are on fixed incomes and pensions.

That hurts me. I do not like to see that. I am sure members on both sides of the House do not like to see this situation. Perhaps this is why there is so much agreement on this particular resolution. I am just very briefly going through the resolution, as I only have a few minutes left. Everybody knows there has been a major decline in the world price of oil. Everybody knows that the price consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador, and anywhere, would pay for gasoline, home heating oil, electricity and so on should be directly related to the cost of oil because, after all, that is where the majority of these costs come from, with the exception of electricity. Only a portion of that comes from the cost of oil. By and large, energy costs are directly related to the cost of a barrel of oil coming out of the oil well. The cost to consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador of gasoline, home heating fuel, and electricity is amongst the highest in Canada. Absolutely true! Perhaps in some sections of this Province it is higher than in others, and I am talking about places which have the diesel generated electricity

"AND WHEREAS these costs are a crushing burden to a great number of consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador, namely those on marginal and fixed incomes." I have already dealt with that and I am sure all members agree.

"BE IT RESOLVED that government commit itself to passing on, as they occur, the full benefits deriving from the decline in the world price of oil to reduce the costs of gasoline, home heating fuel and electricity to Newfoundland consumers." Again, I think there has been general agreement on that. I realize that government is not the agency directly responsible for this, government would attempt to see that these increases would be passed along by the businesses concerned, by the oil companies in one case and by Newfoundland Hydro in another case. That is a sensible kind of thing that members opposite have agreed with.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that government specifically renounce any intention to take up, in whole or in part, any benefits to the Newfoundland consumer, by way of taxation, resulting from the decline in world oil prices." I am sure that members opposite agree with that as well. Obviously, as the price of oil goes down, the Minister of Finance (Dr. Collins) is not going to say, 'Ah, ha! people have been paying \$3.20 a gallon for gasoline, they are going to continue to pay that price and I am going to grab the extra taxes.' He is not going to say that, he is too kind a gentleman. I think everybody would agree that the decline in the price of oil should not be taken by the Province, grabbed by the Province as an extra tax revenue source. As a matter of

fact, if I understand the situation correctly, as the price of oil drops, the tax income to the Province actually is reduced, because I understand the taxation is, in part, related to that original cost. Government, I would think and hope, is actually receiving less taxes as the price of oil goes down and would not attempt to make up any of the slack with extra taxes.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that government undertake an investigation to determine whether the full benefits resulting from the decline in world prices in the areas of gas, home heating fuel, and electricity have been passed on without delay to Newfoundland and Labrador consumers by the oil companies and Newfoundland Hydro." Now, we have already been assured by the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) that this investigation is going on, that actually, he is, through his department investigating to see that these costs are being passed on and that, in fact, there is no major rip-off. We have been assured that that is happening.

"BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that government undertake a study to determine the impact of home heating costs on those citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador on fixed incomes, particularly senior citizens and, contingent upon the findings of such a study, devise proposals of assistance for senior citizens." This is really, Mr. Speaker, the only part of the resolution that has not been addressed. As I pointed out, members opposite and members on this side agree with everything down as far as there. I have not heard any direct reference by members opposite to this part of the resolution, and I am wondering

if it could be that they are going to use that as an excuse to vote against it. I cannot see them voting against such a resolution, but are they going to use that last part there to vote against the resolution? I think they would find it extremely difficult to do so. 'A study to determine the impact of home heating costs on citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador on fixed incomes.' Surely, this is something that is not only necessary but is the humane thing to do. Not only that, I would go even a step further than this particular resolution and not only determine the effect of the cost on these citizens of our Province, but ensure that when the world price of oil does go up again - and we all hope it does, because we have, sitting off our shores here, Hibernia. We are told that in the 1990s the price of oil is going to rise and we are going to have tremendous income in this Province from Hibernia. When that price of oil increases, let us hope that the cost that is passed on to the consumer at that point, number one, is no more than the decline when the price went down. If the price went, let us say, from \$30 a barrel to \$10 a barrel, to pick figures out of the air, the cost of a litre of gas went down a certain amount. I am willing to bet that as it goes up, from \$10 to \$30, the cost of the litre of gas will go up a lot more than it has gone down recently. I think that study should also address itself to the fact that as the price goes up, to make sure that the price of a litre of gas does not go up disproportionately, and that somehow some help be provided for senior citizens and people on fixed incomes in terms of relief of energy costs to avoid what is happening in the Province now, as

I mentioned earlier, to avoid the fact that people in this Province have to chose between their light bill and food.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I can see no way that members opposite can, in all clear conscience, vote against this particular resolution, except that last part, and I think that basically they cannot go against that, either. After standing up and supporting all these things and saying surely we are doing this, this has already been done, this is a good idea, after going through the whole thing and saying it is good, how can they vote against it? To do that would make a charade of everything that is going on here. It would make people question the validity of what happens in this hon. House. If you support something, you vote for it, and I hope members opposite remember that when it comes time to vote later on today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Greening):

The hon. the member for Stephenville.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must commend my colleague, the member for Gander (Mr. Baker) on a fine speech on a very fine motion put forward by my colleague for Fortune - Hermitage (Mr. Simmons). I must agree with the member for Gander, in that I cannot see how government will vote against such a fine motion. I am going to read this motion and go through it, so that everybody is well aware of what it says:

"WHEREAS there has been in recent months a major decline in the world price of oil; and

WHEREAS the price consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador pay for gasoline, home heating oil and electricity should be directly related to the world price of oil; and

WHEREAS the cost to consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador of gasoline, home heating fuel and electricity is amongst the highest in Canada; and

WHEREAS these costs are a crushing burden to a great number of consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador, namely those on marginal or fixed incomes, especially the senior citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that government commit itself to passing on, as they occur, the full benefits deriving from the decline in the world price of oil to reduce the cost of gasoline, home heating fuel and electricity to Newfoundland consumers."

I am going to stop there and I will go on to the BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVEDs later. The first whereas is a very good one. Some action has to be taken by government to get benefits moving to the consumer. We only have 500,000-odd people in Newfoundland, probably the size of a city in Ontario. There are only so many suppliers, yet nobody can find out who is responsible for where all this money is going. The Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) does not know who is getting all this money or why it is not going to the consumer. We have 500,000 people in Newfoundland, and we only have so

many suppliers. I am really amazed that he cannot find out. Maybe he should meet with the oil companies and ask them why the cost of gasoline is not going down in this Province. It was pointed out to us today that diesel fuel in this Province has not dropped a cent in the last year. Nobody knows where the money is going.

The Minister of Consumer Affairs says he has made representations. Representations of what kind? You can write a letter or you can sit down with people responsible and try to get some real answers. I do not want to believe that the consumers are being gouged by the oil companies or by the federal and provincial governments, but what else are you supposed to believe when the facts are not given to you and will not be given to you?

In Ontario, they have price wars going on and the price of gas has been dropping all over, yet, in Newfoundland, the decline is very, very slow and nobody understands why. Nobody understands the reason why, and the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Communications (Mr. Russell) does not know the reason why.

I think he should come up with a new plan to tackle the problem. This motion, so ably put forward by my colleague from Fortune - Hermitage (Mr. Simmons), presents some actions that could be taken, and very good ones. Before I get into them, though, I must say that today there are people in Newfoundland and Labrador who have to decide whether or not they are going to put food on the table or pay their electricity bill, or their gasoline bill. I get calls every day, as every other MHA does, from people who are facing

that decision every day. It has been a very hard Winter, yet no action has been taken by the provincial government to make real representation, not just this wimpy representation. There are people out there, senior citizens especially, people on social assistance, people on fixed incomes and so on, suffering because of the lack of action on the part of this government. The only conclusion I can come to is they do not want to pursue this matter.

MR. FUREY:

He is a head waiter for the multi-nationals.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

A head waiter for the multi-nationals. That is a very good phrase. It is lack of action. It is not as though there were 10 million people here, and there are so many different oil companies and there are big conglomerates and everything else. There are only three or four or five suppliers in Newfoundland, yet we do not have a clue as to why the prices have not gone down. We have made representations I do not know how many times, supposedly, over the last number of months, yet we do not know where the money is going or why the prices have not gone down. Yet, a representative of the vendors on this Island, gasoline stations and so on, came out and said, "The price is going to drop ten cents in one month, no sweat." We have not seen it yet, and we are probably never going to see it.

We have just come through a cruel, hard Winter and people have suffered, yet they continue to pay energy bills which are too high because of the lack of action by

this government. We have twenty-two Cabinet Ministers, one specifically for the purpose of representing the interests of the consumer of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we have not had a thing done. He does not know when anything is going to be done, he does not have any information, he does not have a clue. It is amazing! Well, we have put forward some suggestions to this government and I hope they will heed them. I cannot see any way they can vote against this resolution, because it commits them to a plan of action.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that government specifically renounce any intention to take up, in whole or in part, any benefits to the Newfoundland consumer, by way of taxation, resulting from the decline in world oil prices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that government undertake an investigation to determine whether the full benefits resulting from the decline in world prices in the area of gasoline, home heating fuel, and electricity have been passed on without delay to the Newfoundland and Labrador consumer by the oil companies and Newfoundland Hydro; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that government undertake a study to determine the impact of home heating costs on those citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador on fixed incomes, particularly senior citizens and, contingent upon the findings of such a study, devise proposals of assistance for senior citizens."

That is a good plan of action, something that could be done to address the problem, yet they are probably going to vote against it

this afternoon because it is a motion put forward by the Liberals. We have put forward some great motions, some excellent motions. They can play politics all they want with this one, but -

MR. BARRY:

They are all excellent motions.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Yes. Super motions, as a matter of fact, and a lot of them composed by my hon. colleague here. This is an issue which government could do something about, but they will do nothing. They are just too darned lazy to go at it and try to correct it.

People on this Island and in Labrador are suffering and they are going to continue to suffer because of the lack of action taken.

We can see how much Ottawa and Mrs. Carney, Minister of Energy, want to help Newfoundland and how much they really care about what happens here in Newfoundland, so we might as well forget making representation to them to find out what is going on with oil prices and gas prices in this Province. They are trying to take away pensions of senior citizens, de-index pensions and so on, and that shows the initiative they want to take to help senior citizens in Newfoundland and all over Canada. She takes away the PIP grants, and now our offshore is in trouble, or in jeopardy, or whatever.

MR. TULK:

Even the Premier thinks that.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Yes. And we have the Western Premiers running to Ottawa now to get help. She took a programme

away from them and now they want it back.

MR. FUREY:

Jobs are in jeopardy.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Jobs are in jeopardy, right!

MR. BARRY:

The PGRT.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Yes, the PGRT.

MR. TULK:

There is only one job that is not in jeopardy, and that is his.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Oh, that is for sure.

My colleague is throwing me off my great train of thought. Oil prices in Newfoundland are a direct result of a bad line of communication, because no such line of communication exists anymore. Ottawa calls and says, 'We am sorry, we are not doing anything for you, and that is it.'

So we have seen lack of action taken. We know that you cannot get information from Ottawa, even if you wanted to. They showed their lack of action when it came to energy related matters. They do not care if Hibernia goes under. It just does not matter, it is only Newfoundland. But if Mr. Getty in Alberta says, 'Hey, come and save us,' they are going to go and save them. No problem with that whatsoever! We wonder who has the clout. We cannot get a forestry center in Newfoundland, but they are getting one in New Brunswick. So there are a number of reasons. I mean, look at the clout we have down here. We had more clout when there was a Liberal Government in Ottawa than

we have now with a Tory Government in Ottawa.

So when we are looking for help down here with energy related matters or any other related matters, we are not going to get it from Ottawa. We might just as well wave goodbye. The telex machine is now broken down, it is not working anymore.

MR. FUREY:
P.E.I knew.

MR. K. AYLWARD:
P.E.I knew, yes. They have the idea now that they are going to have to fight, really fight.

MR. FUREY:
New Brunswick knows.

MR. K. AYLWARD:
New Brunswick knows. Newfoundland knows, also. They know already. But it is amazing, the co-operation and consultation bit we got during the last election campaign: 'Vote us in and it is going to be prosperity forever. The big boom is on. Hibernia is going to go. Everything is going to move because there is a Tory Government in Ottawa and there is a Tory Government in Newfoundland.' Well, that was the saddest statement ever made in an election campaign in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the furthest thing from the truth.

MR. TULK:
The infliction of prosperity.

MR. K. AYLWARD:
The infliction of prosperity. I will guarantee you that I would love to be inflicted with prosperity, but I do not want any of this. We are being done in. The oil companies are making a

mint and here is Ottawa going to save them again. They are going to save them in Alberta, but you can forget Newfoundland. We are going to pay the highest price. So, for political reasons or for whatever reasons you want, it is to heck with Newfoundland. That is it. There are only 500,000 people and they have no clout. Decentralize them. Do not give them any regional monies to help get them going. Strip away everything and let them go. It will be a case of survival of the fittest.

One of the reasons why oil prices in Newfoundland are not declining is because there is a lack of action by the government in Ottawa and the provincial government. There is a lack of commitment to take care of the consumer in Newfoundland and Labrador. The fact that we have no clout down here has been seen in every agreement, in every initiative taken by this provincial administration since the Ottawa crew got in, and it is going to continue to be so.

The people of Newfoundland have been hoodwinked once but it will be the last time. It is never going to happen again. We are being raked over the coals when it comes to oil prices and energy, and there is not a peep being made by the provincial administration, not a peep.

I would like the Minister of Consumer Affairs to table minutes of his meetings, or table representations he has made on this issue. I would like to see him do that so that we can see the great action that has been taken to defend the consumer of Newfoundland and Labrador by the great defender of Newfoundland and

Labrador when it comes to consumers, when it comes to senior citizens who are out there trying to survive on fixed incomes, when it comes to people on low incomes who are trying to survive. Where are the fighters for the consumers of Newfoundland?

Here we are with a ton of oil offshore which we may never see because of the lack of action on the part of this administration and the administration in Ottawa. The promises of four or five years ago are going down the tubes. It can still happen, but it is does it will be just luck. The lack of action by this administration is so plainly evident to everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador that it is offensive. The election was an untruth, it was a falsehood.

MR. BAKER:

It was a lie.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

It was a lie. That is what it was. Right! It was a shocking deceit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are getting done in everywhere you look.

MR. BAKER:

What about jet fuel prices?

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Jet fuel prices? We have a flight from the West Coast, one airline flying a forty seater -.

MR. BAKER:

What?

MR. K. AYLWARD:

- a forty seater and the price has gone up. There are less seats and the price of fuel has gone down.

So, I mean, where are the fighters for Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. FUREY:

The warriors have become wimps.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

The warriors have become whimps.

I think they should get their Telex machine rolling again, probably order a couple of more, as a matter of fact, because you are going to need two or three to get the message across.

MR. SIMMS:

(Inaudible) down there.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

That is no problem. My colleague here gives me great advice, unlike the member for Grand Falls.

I say this administration had better get its act together. Contrary to what they may think their popularity is in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are a lot of people out there starting to say, Well, I voted Tory last time because there were Tories in Ottawa. Since they are of the same political stripe, they are supposed to talk to each other, they are supposed to discuss with each other the many issues that will benefit Newfoundlanders. They are supposed to sit down together with none of this hostility. They are supposed to talk, they are supposed to consult, they are supposed to co-operate. This is the biggest deceit that ever existed.

MR. W. CARTER:

The winds of changes are blowing.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

The winds of changes are blowing and for good reason. We need to again bring back fighters for Newfoundland, because they are gone, they are non-existent. As a

result, we are suffering and we will continue to suffer. The consumers of Newfoundland and Labrador are going to continue to suffer.

It took our party to bring in a motion, bring in a plan of action which should have been taken to address the problem. But they do not know how they are going to vote over there. I bet they are all confused now. They will say, We cannot vote for that, that is Liberal. I think hon. members should consider it very carefully before they vote, because if you vote against this motion, if you vote against a plan of action to protect the consumers, the low income consumers, every consumer of Newfoundland and Labrador, then the message will go out to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. And I will broadcast it everywhere I go, I will tell you, and it will not be an untruth because the motion is there. It is a plan of action. Something can be done, and you just do not want to do it.

MR. FUREY:

How are these declining prices affecting the macroeconomy?

MR. K. AYLWARD:

How are the declining prices affecting the macroeconomy?

MR. FUREY:

Yes, the food that was being transported.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

That is a very good question. We have a 6 per cent increase now in the ferry rates coming over. Not a word! No. "We are going to send some representation off", probably in three month's time, after the tourism season is over, not a Telex, a little letter, you

know, with a cup of tea to go along with it. So, I mean, that is the real essence of a problem here. We are being done in. This is where you are hit right in the pocketbook. People have to live every day in their homes, trying to keep themselves going, and they have to dish out increased prices for fuel to keep going when they should not have to, because of a lack of action by a government that does not want to do anything about it. That is the only conclusion I can come to because we have a Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) who does not want to do anything about it. We are not a gigantic country. We are an island of 500-odd thousand. We should be able to identify where the money is going, we should be able to identify how much taxes we are receiving, we should be able to identify what the problem is, but we do not want to do it. No! We do not want to do it! We might offend our buddies up in Ottawa! We do not want to do that, you see. We have to be very careful about that.

So, my colleague from Fortune - Hermitage (Mr. Simmons) - I must say I am very proud today to stand here and support a resolution put forward by our party as the Opposition, a very credible Opposition party who are going to present good proposals, this one being another example of an excellent one that is a plan of action.

MR. TULK:

Do you know what bothers me about this party?

MR. K. AYLWARD:

What is that?

MR. TULK:

It is the wait we have before we

can get across to the other side. I mean, the Liberal tide is swinging East.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Yes, it is, and when we get in and take over, we will make sure, at least, that all the facts are out there. We are not going to hide things away. We may look bad, but sometimes there are certain issues where you have to stand up and say, 'Hey, I want to change it,' or 'I want to do something about it,' instead of having people going around - and everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador are saying it - saying, 'How come the price will not go down? It is going down in Ontario and everywhere else? How come it will not go down?' Now, that is a very hard question. What a hard question that is!

MR. FUREY:

The world prices have been cut by more than half.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

It is amazing! Twenty-two Cabinet ministers and they cannot come up with an answer to that one! Well, I think they should all go back to school, because it is absolute foolishness! Why do we have a Minister of Consumer Affairs?

MR. TULK:

I cannot understand how they are going to vote against this motion.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

I cannot either, because if they do that, the letters are going to go out, the voice is going to go out, everybody will know that there is a lack of action by this government. 'It is a plan of action that we have to bring in at the earliest opportunity. We presented questions to this House to try to find out what is going

on but, no, we cannot get an answer. We are not sure what is going on. We trust the oil companies and we are sure that they would not gouge the consumer.' Those are the kinds of responses we have been given. Well, I tell you now, I can only go by - I am a decently well-educated person, I hope, anyway. I think my education has been decent.

MR. TULK:

You are very well educated.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Thank you. And, you know, when the price drops on a barrel of oil by more than half then, I assume that after five months we will see a similar decrease in the price. I can only assume that. Now, maybe that is the wrong conclusion.

MR. FUREY:

Their public cars and public credit cards insulate them.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Yes, that is right, but now, they have relatives and everything else. The consumer out there, the person who has to strive and struggle every day on \$500 or \$600 a month to survive, who throws out \$250 a month on electricity or oil costs and who has to continue paying that over the Summer because he could not afford it during the Winter, he or she is the one who knows the difference. They know the difference. They cannot understand the logic, neither can I, neither can the Liberal Party, the Opposition. We intend to try to do something about it. Whether or not they like it over there, they are going to have to get up and there is going to be a standing vote today, I hope, to vote against this. If they do, we are going to make sure

it is very well known. It will show the content of what they really want to do. It will show that 'we do not want to bother our Ottawa buddies at all about any of these matters.' If you wanted to find out information, why is not the Minister of Consumer Affairs getting together with the federal minister to find out what the oil companies are making?

MR. FUREY:

He does not care.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

No, he does not care. I think they ran out of tea bags for a cup of tea, that is all they did. It is a shocking statement for this Island, for Newfoundland and Labrador, that we have to live with this lack of action by a newly-elected government, supposedly, a year into its mandate, that is supposedly getting along better than it ever has, just like the FFT decision, out the window, just like the railway may be gone. One says they are talking and the other says they are not. That is amazing, that is a love-in, that is co-operation, that is consultation! We are on our own down here. We have to survive. It would not be so bad if they had left us on our own but they have taken away everything from us and that is getting bad.

MR. FUREY:

A mandate to create snow jobs.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

That is a good one.

But it is really unfortunate. I would like the administration respond to this very worthy resolution. There is a plan of action put forward that could help get information out to the public

so that they would not think the oil companies are gorging them for their profits, so they would not think they are getting taken to the cleaners. The present administration prefers to sit down and do nothing about it.

MR. SPEAKER (Greening):

Order, please!

The hon. member's time is up.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FUREY:

Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member for St. Barbe.

MR. FUREY:

A point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday, in the absence of the member for Fortune-Hermitage (Mr. Simmons), I had the privilege of introducing this resolution on his behalf and, of course, he will close out debate, as was agreed by consensus. I am just wondering if I have the opportunity, because I spoke on his behalf, to speak to this resolution again?

MR. SIMMS:

To that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:

The hon. member is obviously being facetious. He must be just kidding. It must be the sun, it must be the heat. He must be struck by the heat, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member has spoken in the debate.

MR. FUREY:

On behalf of the hon. member.

MR. SIMMS:

Yes, but the only privilege this side gave was that he could speak in place of the member who had introduced the motion initially, so he has already spoken in debate. There are no ifs, ands or buts about that. The hon. member should know this.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Further to that point of order, the hon. member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

The Standing Orders of the House are quite clear. The person who introduces the resolution, the person who puts the resolution on the Order Paper has the right to close the debate and my friend is not saying anything against that. The whole point of the argument is, and the member for Grand Falls (Mr. Simms), the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands said it quite well, is that he replaced the member for Fortune-Hermitage (Mr. Simmons). He was speaking in place of the member for Fortune-Hermitage by agreement of the House. He introduced the resolution and, in all senses of the word, he was at that point the member for Fortune-Hermitage. He was doing the job of the member for Fortune-Hermitage and the House agreed to that. So the hon. gentleman, obviously, should be allowed to speak again. There is no doubt about it.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, just one final submission on this point.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:

There is no doubt about it that he replaced the member for Fortune-Hermitage in terms of introducing the resolution and may have done a better job than the member for Fortune-Hermitage might have done, I do not know. The hon. member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk) seems to think he did. I think that is what he implied in his comments but perhaps I was wrong.

MR. TULK:

You are quite wrong.

MR. SIMMS:

Anyway, according to the Standing Orders, Mr. Speaker, 53 (2) says, "Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order 49," who is the member that introduces and closes the debate, that is covered in 49, "no member may speak for more than twenty minutes in the debate on a private member's motion." Now, Mr. Speaker, it could not be much clearer than that.

MR. TULK:

Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Further to that point of order, the hon. member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

The gentleman is absolutely right but the argument with the member for St. Barbe (Mr. Fury) is based upon the fact that really he was replacing the member for Fortune-Hermitage. We all know that it has been tradition in this House that the member introducing the resolution closes the debate at twenty minutes to six. There is no doubt about that so if we are to follow the logic of the

Minister of Forest Resources and Lands (Mr. Simms), then we are really denying the right of the member for St. Barbe to speak because he was at that point in time replacing and doing the job of, in the absence, and this was in the agreement of the House, of the member for Fortune-Hermitage. The fact of the matter is the gentleman has not spoken on his own behalf. He has spoken on behalf of the member for Fortune-Hermitage.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order. The hon. member actually spoke in the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Yes.

MR. SPEAKER:

So, really there is no point of order.

MR. FUREY:

I spoke on behalf of the hon. member for Fortune-Hermitage.

MR. SPEAKER:

There is no point of order. The hon. member for Burgeo-Bay d'Espoir.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the hon. Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:

If hon. members want to pursue this maybe members on this side might be prepared to let the hon. member - I know my hon. friend for St. John's North (Mr. J. Carter) will be appalled at what I am about to suggest but he may even support it. If the hon. member

wants to speak now, we might be prepared to allow the member for the St. Barbe district to speak now but, if he speaks, he will close the debate on the resolution. Is that what the hon. members would like, Mr. Speaker?

MR. TULK:

Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, the hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. J. CARTER:

You are wasting the time of the House.

MR. TULK:

Listen to who is wasting the time of the House. We spent, I think it was, three months last year on the Privileges and Elections Committee which he refuses to call back together to deal with a specific question.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. TULK:

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me address the point of order I wanted to address before I was so rudely interrupted by the hon. gentleman. The agreement was that the member would introduce the resolution last Wednesday because everybody in this House knew that the people were not going to be back from Norway but only for that specific day. There is no point in the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands carrying the argument to a ludicrous extent because the point that I make to him is that my friend from St. Barbe replaced the member for Fortune - Hermitage only for that day and he should be able to speak again.

MR. SPEAKER:

I have already ruled on that point of order. The hon. the member for St. Barbe already spoke in the debate.

The hon. the member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. GILBERT:

You have stolen my thunder, my colleague. At least that was a nice way to start. This is what I was going to say: we stand here to debate a motion ably put forward by the member for Fortune - Hermitage (Mr. Simmons). This is a very important motion. It is one that I am sure many people in Newfoundland today are very concerned about because it deals with the price of hydro and the price of oil and stuff like that.

Yet we find that the government members of this Province are sitting there silently again, as they have sat so many times. When we talked about the labour legislation, when we were closing the House back in March, they sat and did not make any comment. Now we find again that there is an important issue that we have put forward concerning a very, very serious problem.

I suppose in Newfoundland, when you consider that last week one of the national news magazines had a picture of the hon. Premier on the cover with the caption, "a province in peril", what should we expect. We have the distinction of getting singled out all across Canada as a Province in peril and we have the highest gas prices in Canada and the highest oil prices in Canada and the highest diesel prices - diesel prices have not

moved at all I understand - and the highest hydro rates, yet we find that the government members have not availed themselves of the opportunity to support this motion which was introduced by the member for St. Barbe last week, on behalf of my colleague from Fortune - Hermitage.

Now the first thing that we find in this motion is: "WHEREAS there has been in recent months a major decline in the world price of oil." Now that is a very important point. It is a point that you would almost think that members opposite would be taking an opportunity to get up and debate. There has been a decline in the price of oil over the last few months.

All we have had is the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) sitting there with a bovine look and nodding and saying that, yes, he knew the price of oil had come down. But we have not had anyone over there stand up in this debate and talk about the fact that it has come down and wonder or make any representation. They are the people who are supposed to be governing this Province. It seems strange to me that here we have people who are supposed to be governing and they can sit here and let a motion like this go without being debated. The price of oil is dealt with in the first "WHEREAS", "WHEREAS there has been in recent months a major decline in the world price of oil," and yet members opposite have sat here this afternoon, as we debate this very important motion, and have shown total disdain for the people of Newfoundland by not taking the opportunity to rise, debate and support this very serious and meaningful motion on the part of my colleague from Fortune -

Hermitage.

Now, this seems to me to be a crime when we see the attitude that is taken by the government. We can bring in the ideas, and this is a good positive idea put forward by the Opposition, but what did we get? Total disdain for the people of Newfoundland by members opposite because they refused to stand and even give their token support to it. So we will see as we go along. I wonder why?

The second WHEREAS, "WHEREAS the price consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador pay for gasoline, home heating oil and electricity should be directly related to the world price of oil." This seems to be a case again, Mr. Speaker, of double standards. Since 1979, when the price of oil started to go up, we were told, as the questions were asked here in this House of Assembly, that the price of oil in Newfoundland was tied to the world price.

It seems awfully strange to me, Mr. Speaker, we would be tied to the world price when it is going up and it is tied to a Newfoundland taylored price when it is coming down. This is the thing that I find extremely difficult to be able to understand or see why it is that we saw the price of oil go from \$1 a gallon up to something over \$3 a gallon. We were told during that time by members opposite that the reason that it had done this was because of the fact that the world price of oil had risen.

Now we find that the world price of oil has gradually come down over the past three months. It came down a lot faster than it went up but there has been a three

to four month breather, so we will give the oil companies the benefit of the doubt that they can pass this through their system and sell the high-priced oil. We should by now, be starting to see some benefits, other than tokenism, from the reduction in the price of oil. Crude has gone down. Now this is manufactured into oil.

As I found out today, diesel, which the truckers use, and again, which keeps the cost of living up in Newfoundland, I understand in the times since these past reductions in the price of oil products, diesel fuel has remained the same price as it was this time last year. Now this seems to me to be a very, very strange sort of phenomena. I think if the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) were doing his job, he certainly would have had to ask this question to the people that are controlling the oil industry in Newfoundland: "How come when we hear that the price of oil has gone up another \$2 a barrel, it went up two cents at the pump? Now we are finding that it is after coming down by over \$20 a barrel and we find that nothing at all has been passed along. It has not come down by the gallon anywhere in relation to where the price is." I think a very important question from the Minister of Consumer Affairs would be to ask "How come there was a marginal decrease in the price of gasoline but there is none at all in diesel fuel?" I think that would be a good question.

Maybe if the minister was not showing the total disdain that the government is showing towards this motion, he would be in his seat and maybe he would be taking notes and trying to find out exactly why the world price of oil was not

transmitted to Newfoundland when the price started to come down. This, I think, is showing the situation again when we have members sitting opposite and are not prepared to support this motion. I think the people of Newfoundland should be made aware that this is the sort of things that we expect from their government. This is what their government is doing with a very serious situation.

The third WHEREAS, "WHEREAS the cost to consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador of gasoline, home heating fuel, electricity is amongst the highest in Canada." The one thing about Newfoundland when it comes to highest, anything on the deficit side, we can take it, there is no problem about it. We can say we have the highest unemployment in Canada, we have the highest fuel prices in Canada, and we have the highest freight rates in Canada.

AN HON. MEMBER:

The highest paid Premier.

MR. GILBERT:

The highest paid Premier as my colleague pointed out.

MR. BAIRD:

And the lowest calibre of Opposition.

MR. GILBERT:

The best kind of Opposition and very low calibre of government members as they sit there. We see the members that are sitting there right now and the ice tourists in the back row that move up in the front for sessions like this. The thing that we have is we claim some Canadian records for the highest things here in Newfoundland.

MR. TULK:

I wonder did he see a recent Gulf News?

MR. GILBERT:

Well anyhow, we have no problems with that. We have some records in Newfoundland that I would like to talk about now, Mr. Speaker, and the records are not the ones that we should be proud of. We hold the records for the highest freight rates, the highest electricity rates, the highest oil prices, highest cost of living, highest paid Premier. So we find out that we have all those highest and yet we have a motion here that is pointing out to the members opposite, the government, that all these things are there. We find that there is very little being done about it and we wonder why. Why is it the highest in Newfoundland? I suppose one of the reasons we can see why the cost of living is so high is we find that the price of fuel oil and gasoline has been reduced in the rest of the world. In the United States right now you can buy a gallon of gasoline for around \$1. What is it here? What is the price of a gallon of gasoline now?

MR. TULK:

About \$2.60.

MR. GILBERT:

\$2.60, and we take into consideration the exchange rate and we still have not been anywhere near where we should be.

And now we find that diesel fuel has not been reduced at all. Most of the freight that is coming into Newfoundland is coming in now or transported by diesel trucks. As we know, the government has taken a stand on the railway which they do not want to come out and talk

about yet but we are aware of what they are going to do to that. Everybody in Newfoundland is aware that they have double standards when it comes to talking about the railway. They will talk up front that they want to keep it and then they are up in Ottawa signing agreements to give it away. Our birth right has been sold for a mass of pottage again and what is this going to do to our cost of living?

MR. TULK:

Remember you were talking the other night about when there was a giveaway in Newfoundland. When has that?

MR. GILBERT:

That was back in the late nineteenth century and there were representatives from the Government of Newfoundland who went to Canada to see about joining Canada. There was a little slogan that said, "Tupper and Shea went over the way to barter Terra Nova away." I think we are getting it now in another way. They are doing it a little more insidiously. They are making the arrangements up in Ottawa. We are not even being asked to consult with them. All we are doing is we are hearing the federal minister in Ottawa is telling them that there is going to be something done with the railway in two weeks time.

So this is the spirit of co-operatism we get.

MR. TULK:

We get the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Rideout) talking to the Manager of the Torngat Co-operative and he will not talk to this crowd.

MR. GILBERT:

Yes. I am glad to see that the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) is back in the House.

MR. TULK:

That is not the right name, it is called Corporate Affairs.

MR. GILBERT:

Corporate Affairs is it?

MR. RUSSELL:

You would not know the difference any way.

MR. GILBERT:

I am glad that he is back because maybe now he will get up and support this very important motion that was put forward by my colleague from Fortune-Hermitage (Mr. Simmons).

I will point out for him again that we have a few records in Newfoundland that he should be aware of, the highest gasoline prices, the highest electricity rates, and the highest freight rates and the highest cost of living.

MR. RUSSELL:

You fellows sold out Churchill Falls.

MR. GILBERT:

We have a profound statement coming from the Minister of Consumer Affairs that you fellows sold out the Churchill Falls. What a very profound statement, I am glad that the minister is able to make a statement like that this evening.

MR. RUSSELL:

I only said it because it is true.

MR. GILBERT:

I am glad that the minister is able to make a statement like that because I really would look at

that and I would say, "Now that is the thing that I have always thought about the government members opposite. Here they are, they have been in power for fifteen years. The Churchill Falls agreement was signed back in 1967 or 1966 and to some of the members over there who were here. It was a unanimous decision of the House. Some of them voted on it, and we find out right now that after all this the only thing that he can say to justify his existence is, "You fellows sold out Churchill Falls," twenty years ago.

MR. TULK:

I would like to ask another question. Where were all the members, including the NDP member, where were all the members in 1966 on this side of the House?

MR. GILBERT:

The other thing that was one of the things that I was going to get to is that most of the members on this side of the House -

MR. TULK:

All of them.

MR. GILBERT:

All of them, well, none of them were involved in politics, I would say, in 1966.

MR. FENWICK:

The first vote on the Brinco deal was in 1961 actually.

MR. GILBERT:

Well, none of us were involved in 1961 or 1966, whatever it is. So when I hear statements like that from the Minister of Consumer Affairs, that is the thing that I see. This is the type of attitude we get. It is no wonder the Province is in the condition it is in, Mr. Speaker. No wonder we can

make the cover of a national magazine, Maclean's magazine last week saying, 'a province in peril', with a picture of our Premier. The highest paid Premier in Canada, on the front page, and the poorest Province in Canada.

MR. RUSSELL:

What did it say about your leader?

MR. GILBERT:

No matter what they said about my leader, wait until you see the next time around. Do not worry about they said about my leader. You wait until you see him on the front page of MacLean's.

MR. BAIRD:

You are only a disgruntled Tory anyway. We know all about you.

MR. GILBERT:

I have no problems at all. I could say, I suppose, like the poor old woman down on the Great Northern Peninsula who was in the last election. CBC interviewed her. They said, "Well, Madam who are you going to vote for?" She said, "I suppose God will forgive me. I voted Tory once."

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:

I had the same experience.

MR. GILBERT:

So I can say that. I have no problems with that. Everybody is entitled to one mistake. But once you sit there for fifteen years and not do any more than you are doing, now that is really a crime.

MR. RUSSELL:

(Inaudible) thirty-five or thirty-eight years ago.

MR. GILBERT:

Well, I am sure it was not me anyhow. But thank you for the compliment.

As we go now to the next WHEREAS, and "WHEREAS these costs are a crushing burden to a great number of consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador, namely those on marginal or fixed incomes, especially the senior citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador." Well, Mr. Speaker, here we have another record. We have just heard some statistics that came out a few days ago made by one of the union leaders in the Province that said we have a new record. Right now we have reached the stage in Newfoundland where one-third of our work force are now permanently employed, the rest of them are part-time employees. The other thing we heard back about a month or so ago was that Newfoundland had another record this Winter. The unemployment statistics came out and for the first time in Newfoundland's history we went over the 100,000 mark with people registered for unemployment. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a record that the government members should be proud of. I am sure they certainly are because otherwise they would be up supporting us and up trying to do something to get Newfoundland going again, getting people back to work.

When we take those 100,000 people who are registered for unemployment in Newfoundland, then we take the youth who were never registered, we take the people on social assistance, instead of 100,000, Mr. Speaker, I say we have 180,000 out of a work force of maybe 220,000. Now this is a record, Mr. Speaker. We have the highest fuel bills, we have the highest electricity bills, the highest gasoline bills, the

highest diesel fuel bills, now we could say 70 per cent of our work force is unemployed, 30 per cent that we know of of our work force in Newfoundland have full-time jobs. The rest of them are unemployed at some time during the year, and these are only the figures that go through the Manpower Office. They flick out of them the seasonally adjusted, so they come in with a figure something like 30 per cent that are unemployed. This is a record.

Now talking about the crushing burden in this WHEREAS here, the crushing burden that is imposed on those Newfoundlanders, those 180,000 who are not living on any steady income. They are living on a fixed income, a very fixed one. Most of them have been working part-time and are living on \$500 a month, a man and his wife and two or three kids and trying to support them on \$500 a month. Just imagine what that is doing to them when we have again the highest fuel bills, the highest hydro bills in Newfoundland, and yet we have a government that refuses to get up and debate or even support a motion put forward by one of my colleagues asking him to do something about reducing the cost of electricity or hydro for the people of Newfoundland. It is not for the few, but the many that are out there, the hungry and the ones that do not know where their next meal is coming from and do not really know how to handle the situation and have no place to turn.

The senior citizens in many places in Newfoundland are maybe in a little better condition than some of the people that are trying to live on \$500 a month unemployment with no subsidies. This is the thing that we should be aware of.

We have another record in Newfoundland. We have a government that is uncaring and does not want to do anything about it. They sit there and decide 'if they want to talk about it fine, but we are not interested.' I think the people in Newfoundland should be made aware that the government members sat there this afternoon while we debated this very, very serious matter and refused to make any comments on it.

We must now go on to "BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the government commit itself to the passing on, as they occur, the full benefits deriving from the decline in the world price of oil to reduce the costs of gasoline, home heating fuel, and electricity to Newfoundland consumers."

Now, it is pretty hard for them to commit themselves to passing on anything if they refuse to support this resolution. This is the thing that I find very strange about this government. We have a situation that I have outlined and everybody is aware that we have those records, and now we ask the government to take a positive step to commit themselves to doing something about it and passing on the decline in world prices to Newfoundlanders. First of all by the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) going to some of the good supporters of the Tory party, I suppose, and asking them what they are going to do. Tell them 'you do not have to give as much to the war chest next time, just reduce the price of oil and gas to the ordinary consumers in Newfoundland. We would want to see those people get some benefit from it.' That would be the first commitment we could expect from the Minister of Consumer Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER (Greening):
Order, please!

The hon. member's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
By leave.

AN HON. MEMBER:
What?

MR. TULK:
A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Fogo on a point of order.

MR. TULK:
Surely, Mr. Speaker, since the worn out, tired, about to go out of office whenever an election is called over there, surely on this resolution, if they are not going to put somebody up themselves to speak on this very important resolution that has been put forward here to the consumers of Newfoundland and Labrador, surely they will have at least the good manners to allow somebody on this side who wants to speak a few more minutes on leave to speak. Surely, Mr. Speaker, that is not what we have reached. Are they all dead? Are they all gone over there? Have they been flattened out? Are they being run over, Mr. Speaker, by this resolution? The hon. gentleman does not have to have leave.

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible).

MR. TULK:
I am not speaking. I am up on a point of order.

It is normal to go back and forth across this House and the hon. gentlemen cannot find it in themselves to get up. Now surely

they will give a few minutes leave to somebody who wants to finish off. I mean this is scandalous.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, there is no point of order.

MR. KELLAND:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Naskaupi.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. KELLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to speak in support of the resolution put forward by, I guess we have to call him the surrogate member for Fortune - Hermitage, also known as the member for St. Barbe district (Mr. Furey). I would have to say initially that it does certainly appear to me that the official Opposition, of which I have the honour of being a part, is taking a positive stance in this and all other aspects of their duties in the House by putting forth motions that have some meaning and have some feeling and express some concern for the underprivileged, those who do not have as much as others within our Province. I think it is important that we have that opportunity as Opposition members. I am a little surprised, to be quite frank about it, that such a motion would not have come from the government side which has some level of authority to actually do something about the inequities which exist within our Province as it relates directly to this resolution. Nevertheless, part of the Opposition job of course is to be critical in a constructive fashion, which we are well known for, very constructive

criticism in every case and on all occasions, to try to steer a misguided and misled government in the right direction, to do something for and have concern for the people of this Province, Newfoundland and Labrador.

So it is certainly no problem to express the views of support which I hold for the resolution as put forth by my colleague. When I listened to my colleague from Burgeo-Bay d'Espoir (Mr. Gilbert) when he talked about the fact that no one on the government side chooses to speak in support of this resolution and that is very unusual in that, if you look through the meat of the resolution, it is certainly something that would be of benefit to those on fixed incomes in our Province. It would strike me that as a Government of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, they have an obligation to get up and speak in support of something that would benefit the people who elected them in the first place. I find it a little unusual that government members refuse to do that. So the thought comes to me then, are they not speaking on the resolution, no matter what their own private feelings are, simply because it was put forth by a member of the Opposition and not one of their own members. In other words, are they playing little political games here?

"Well if we had thought of this particular resolution and had put it forth ourselves we could certainly get up and speak in favour of it," government members might be thinking. But because it was a member of the Opposition, a respected and experienced politician who has a lot of thought and concern for the people of this Province, and has shown it

in many ways and demonstrated it in many ways, many times, as the other speakers who have spoken before, because it comes from a member of the Opposition, the government, for some reason, refuses to get a member up on his or her feet.

MR. MORGAN:

He is only here for one term anyway so let him go.

MR. KELLAND:

Mr. Speaker, I will ask that any other outburst from the so aptly described 'colourful' member for Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan), please put a muzzle on it.

Anyway to get back to what we were saying, these minor interruptions are from minor brains, I suppose. Is it only because the thought came from a member of the Opposition that we do not have government members up speaking in support a resolution that is very meaningful and very important to the people of this Province. You know in looking at Hansard from yesterday, I notice that the member for Torngat Mountains (Mr. Warren) had no problem at all when he talked about the misnamed good news budget. He had no trouble speaking in support of a different or a more beneficial electricity rate for the people in his district. However, his approach to the solution of the problem is a little bit mind boggling. He said what he would support was an averaging of the electricity rates. That means to say that those who are now enjoying a reasonably low rate would be raised and those who have to pay a high rate would have their rates lowered. Now, not even the people who use diesel-generated power would support that position. What the member for Torngat Mountains

is telling the people of this Province that he wants to see several areas that enjoy a reasonable rate, have their rates raised. It is right here in Hansard his comments.

MR. TULK:

That is edited version.

MR. KELLAND:

And he goes along these lines, "Mr. Speaker, I am alarmed," 'I am disgusting,' pardon me, that should read "I am disgusted, I am shocked, and everything else to know that an individual in Cartwright and an individual down the Southwest Coast, in Port Hope Simpson, pays so much for electricity while an individual in Goose Bay can use the same number of kilowatts and pay only roughly one-quarter or one-third of the cost." I am trying to read it much the same way as he said it, but it is difficult. "Mr. Speaker, I believe the people in Labrador City pay even less. I believe, Mr. Speaker, we have to arrive at a time in society when every Newfoundlander and every Labradorian is compelled to pay an average for the consumption of electricity. Whether the people in Labrador West and the people in Happy Valley-Goose Bay have to pay more".

This gentleman represents not only his district of Torngat Mountains, but many times the Premier and his boss, the Minister of Rural, Agriculture and Northern Development (Mr. R. Alyward) says he has special responsibilities when it comes to Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER:

He is a mini-minister.

MR. KELLAND:

He has special responsibilities.

Is part of his special responsibility to make sure that those who enjoy a reasonable electricity rate have to pay something more? Is this his responsibility to put the boots to some of the people in Labrador? That is what his statement sounds like, and I realize that frequently it garbled, but I am sure this a a fairly accurate representation of what he said.

So I find that a little unusual. I could not support that averaging policy. With the declining price of oil in the world, there is no way that you should raise the lower ones up to a medium point to meet the higher ones which are being lowered. No way at all. The high ones should be brought down to the lowest rate that exist in the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. KELLAND:
There is no question about that. Anyone who supports some other thing where he wants to force a number of residents and citizens of this Province to pay a higher rate than they are now, you know, who could accept that, who could support that? I am sure if the member read his statements himself over again and had a chance to reconsider what he said, he would have to reconsider and withdraw that sort of a comment, an averaging, raise the low guys, lower the high guys, make them all average. No, the method is to lower the rates so everybody enjoys a low rate.

Surely the utility companies have made enough profit that they can absorb that kind of an adjustment. If you talk about inequality and inequities in the

system, what we are doing is suggesting other inequities. That is what the member for Torngat Mountains (Mr. Warren) is doing, suggesting an inequity that no one could live with, no one could possibly support. I certainly could not support it, and I represent one of the Labrador districts and I have a concern for all of the people in Labrador and all the people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. FUREY:
You will be a minister for Labrador.

MR. KELLAND:
And my colleagues assure me that very shortly I probably will be a minister for Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:
There is no doubt about that. Get rid of that whimp, there will be no mini-minister in Labrador in the next election.

MR. KELLAND:
It depends when the current administration runs out of time or feels they are in greater favour than they certainly are today. If I did receive that honour from the electorate and from the government and from the administration of which I hope to be a part, I would certainly do my best to fulfill the function.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:
I am willing to bet that if the Premier-elect in the Liberal Party did not make you a minister, we would probably all resign.

MR. KELLAND:

I thank you for that.

MR. FUREY:

Get that on the record, quick.

MR. KELLAND:

No, we will let it go.

Anyway, that is what we are talking about here. Another thought which has not been addressed by any government member and that surprises me, particularly when we have a government member from Labrador, is the price of gasoline at the gas pumps in Labrador has not been lowered the same as it has on the Island portion of the Province.

Now, the immediate explanation, and I have heard it for the last twenty years, is, Well, the people in Labrador are buying old-stock gasoline that came in at the old price. On the surface that seems a fairly logical explanation. I can understand that.

In supporting this resolution, let me put a suggestion to the government to consider and perhaps next week, when they steal this idea like they do with most of our ideas, and claim them as their own original thoughts, I will get up and applaud their action. We are talking about gas pump prices, and gasoline costs a lot more in Labrador than it does on the Island anyway, and then you see a reduction in price everywhere because of lowering oil prices, yet the gas pump price to the people in Labrador stays the same. Now, would it not be more than a gesture, would it not be a very meaningful and significant act on the part of the present administration to lower part of their provincial tax on the gas in Labrador to the amount equivalent

to the reduction in the base price here on the Island with the result that everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador would end up paying the same price at the gas pumps? Why would they not make that gesture? Why would they not take that positive step? Why would they not eliminate the inequities and the inequalities which exist right now in the differences in fuel prices? I put that forth as a suggestion that they can use. It certainly, in the vein of the intent of the resolution as put forward by the surrogate member for Fortune-Hermitage, a.k.a, as I have mentioned already, the member for St. Barbe district who has now, in my personal opinion only, been deprived of his right by the machinations and grandstanding of the Minister of Forests Resources and Lands who has exerted certain influence and deprived the surrogate member for Fortune-Hermitage, the actual member for St. Barbe, the right to speak on his own behalf and in his own right as a member of the House of Assembly.

Another interesting point in the total resolution, and I think one that government should pay particular attention to, those wonderful colleagues of ours across the way, those who have the welfare and the well-being of the underprivileged, the senior citizens, the disabled, and others on fixed income at heart - obviously at heart, because as soon as I sit down, of course, another member will spring to his feet.

In fact, Your Honour may have some problem in deciding who was first on his feet, his, hers, whatever. They are all sort of lumped together. You may have that decision to make and, I suppose,

under normal circumstances you would recognize on a sort of pecking order basis. And I can understand that. Some of them are pretty big peckers. When you talk about the pecking order, those who peck hardest become the biggest peckers and those who peck smallest become the smallest peckers and, therefore, down the pecking order and probably would not get recognized quite as readily as some of the ones who are higher up the list.

I want to make a point here when we are talking about, "AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that government specifically renounce any intention to take up, in whole or in part, any benefits to the Newfoundland consumer, by way of taxation, resulting from the decline in world oil prices." Now, I think that is worth considering. I know that the greedy little hands of government are pretty sticky in the finger department. You have to consider that they want to fill their coffers all the time. Some people say fill their pockets, Mr. Speaker, but I do not say that. We let the electorate say that. We talk about 'fill their coffers', but when they fill their coffers by undue and overburdening taxes, they do allow themselves the opportunity to reap further benefits as government members of this House, and it was referred to by my colleague from Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir (Mr. Gilbert) when he said that we have the highest paid Premier in the country. That may or may not be the case, but he is certainly well paid. Perhaps we could say one of the highest paid premiers in Canada. And when you consider the constraints and the problems that low-income and fixed-income people have in trying to survive, buy a little

electricity, get a bit of food on the table, perhaps a drop of gas for their boats so they can do a little fishing and whatever, Mr. Speaker, we are in the same context and in the same provincial bracket as a premier who does not even have to buy one single slice of bread to put on his own table because the overburdened taxpayer in this Province not only provides him a big salary and all the other benefits but also buys his groceries. I mean, what are we living on? Are we back in feudal times, when the ultimate authority was the ultimate authority and the feudal system was in sway and the serfs of the Province had to kowtow and kick in their meagre earnings, their crops, to support a very, very affluent lifestyle by the leader and his cohorts and colleagues?

Can we fathom that? Can we support the idea that we have an affluent, and I mean personally affluent, government over there, highly paid? If I were running a business and I had those 36 people in my employ, my immediate job would be to lay off 20 of them as being utterly useless and not worth the money they are being paid.

MR. RUSSELL:

Fifteen of them would be on your side.

MR. KELLAND:

Mr. Speaker, I try to ignore these asides from from hon. members.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! I should inform the hon. member that he has about a minute left.

MR. KELLAND:

Well, by leave, I guess.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
By leave.

MR. KELLAND:
Did I get leave?

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

Does the hon. member have leave to carry on?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
No.

MR. KELLAND:
Okay, I was just asking.

MR. SPEAKER:
I take it there is no leave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
No.

MR. KELLAND:
I did not really anticipate leave. You will notice that the only time the duds from the other side can heckle is when they get hit, and they get the little hit that hurts. When you tell the truth about the affluent government, you know, the fat cats of government living off the backs of the starving Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in this Province, then you are telling it like it is. It is about time those people went, and they will be going the next election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. K. AYLWARD:
A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the hon. the member for Stephenville.

MR. K. AYLWARD:
My point of order is very short, Mr. Speaker. I am appalled at the situation this afternoon. We are discussing the price of heating oil to the consumer in this Province and it is only now that someone on the other side is finally going speak to it. I just cannot believe that in this House of Assembly we are finally going to get somebody up on the government side.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. Minister of Forest Resources and Lands.

MR. SIMMS:
We had four speakers last week, Mr. Speaker, and I believe they only had three.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

There is no point of order, it is a difference of opinion between two hon. members.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

Order, please!

The hon. the member for Windsor-Buchans.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

The Chair is somewhat confused with two hon. members standing,

one is seeking the floor - is the hon. member standing for some reason?

MR. FLIGHT:

No, I was -

MR. TULK:

No, but if you want him to speak he will, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The Chair is having some difficulty determining who wants to speak or who is seeking the floor. The hon. member for Torngat Mountains was standing and the hon. member for Windsor - Buchans was standing.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FLIGHT:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the hon. the member for Windsor - Buchans. We are finally getting to it.

MR. FLIGHT:

It is really a point of clarification in my own defence. I simply rose because all afternoon the trend was set; nobody was speaking over there, so I assumed that nobody was going to rise. But we obviously hit a sore point, and I may be right. However, that is why I was up. I will yield to the hon. member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I raised the issue because I thought the hon. member was standing on a point of order. I had already recognized the hon. member for Torngat Mountains and I just wanted clarification.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After listening to the member for Naskaupi (Mr. Kelland), I felt obliged to say a few words. Mr. Speaker, in listening to hon. members this evening, the member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir (Mr. Gilbert) and the member for Naskaupi (Mr. Kelland), one would wonder whether one should say anything at all, because they did not say anything during the forty minutes they were speaking.

Mr. Speaker, maybe I should start off by reminding the hon. member, when he talks about oil prices in Labrador, that the company that operates the gas stations and supplies fuel oil to all but five communities in Coastal Labrador is owned by none other than the gentleman who ran against me in the last election. Now, I would strongly suggest to the members opposite that they go after Mr. Woodward to reduce the price of the oil in his tanks, since he is the one ripping off the people in Coastal Labrador and Happy Valley - Goose Bay. Why do they not do that? The Liberal party has Mr. Woodward in their back pocket, that is why do they not go after him, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TULK:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Greening):

A point of order, the hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Let me say two things to that, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it is not a subject addressed by the member for Naskaupi. He was talking about the world price of oil rather than what is charged by any individual who carries oil up the Labrador Coast and, secondly, let me say to the hon. gentleman, who is now so violently attacking Mr. Woodward, that perhaps Mr. Woodward is now paying for the free plane trips he gave the hon. gentleman when he was a member on this side.

MR. SPEAKER:

I declare there is no point of order, the hon. member is supplying information.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If Mr. Woodward offered me a free ride tomorrow I would still take it, Mr. Speaker, because I am sure the gentleman has ripped off enough money from the consumers in Labrador to be able to afford to pay for a free ride.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me go back to what the hon. member from Naskaupi had to say. The hon. the member for Naskaupi was talking about prices being charged at gas stations in Labrador at the present time, when prices have been reduced here on the Island. Maybe I should ask Mr. Woodward for a copy of the Telex that was sent to that company not by the Liberal party of Newfoundland and Labrador, I might say, but by the

member for Torngat Mountains, who also sent a telegram to the biggest oil company in Labrador, and to which there has been no response to date. I would suggest to hon. members opposite, and to the member for Naskaupi, that if he wants to put action where his mouth is, why does he not go and contact Mr. Woodward and ask Mr. Woodward why he is not reducing the price of oil in the tanks on the Labrador Coast. Now, Mr. Speaker, I shall put that aside once and for all and let the hon. gentlemen opposite put action where their mouths are and get after the companies in Labrador that are ripping off the people.

Mr. Speaker, I have to compliment the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell). The Minister of Consumer Affairs has appointed a consumer representative on the Public Utilities Board. Let me ask another question of hon. members opposite: What members over there have taken the opportunity to sit down with that representative and discuss consumer prices in this Province? What member has asked for a meeting with that consumer representative to sit down and discuss consumer problems in this Province? Mr. Speaker, I will gladly take my seat to let any member on that side stand up and say, Yes, we have contacted him. We have asked for a meeting with him. But, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid to say that not one of them -

MR. K. AYLWARD:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Hickey):

Order, please! A point of order, the hon. the member for Stephenville.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Mr. Speaker, I was going to try, but the gentleman who was appointed to that Board has about three other jobs and I figured I probably would not be able to get to him. He is pretty busy, I hear.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! There is no point of order. The hon. member has again provided some information.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, let it be known to the people of Stephenville, who are paying very high prices for electricity and for fuel oil, that the member for Stephenville never tried, never attempted to contact the consumer representative on that Board. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will gladly take my seat if some other members want to confess that they never made an attempt to contact the gentleman. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir, or for Fortune - Hermitage - I know by the way he is looking at me, I can see it in his eyes, that he never made an attempt to contact Mr. Wells.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WARREN:

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, the member for Eagle River did not, because he is never here. And the member for Gander, where has he been? If hon. gentlemen do not know how to contact Mr. Wells, just leave a message in my office tomorrow and I will put a call through and set up a meeting for them with Mr.

Wells. Now, that is the best I can do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WARREN:

If you cannot do it yourself, all I can tell you is that I will make arrangements with my office to set up a meeting for hon. gentlemen opposite with Mr. Wells. That is the best I can do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the hon. gentleman rising on -

MR. FLIGHT:

No, Sir, the member took his seat.

MR. WARREN:

No. I have a half hour. Do not worry about it.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! Would the hon. member take his seat? The Chair is having difficulty again. I am not sure why the hon. member for Torngat Mountains took his seat, but he is not finished, I take it?

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, you called order and, naturally, being a gentleman I sat down.

MR. KELLAND:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

On a point of order, the hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:

I apologize for being out of the House for a few minutes, when the hon. member for Torngat Mountains made reference to my remarks. My point of order is that he is misrepresenting what I actually said. You see, I did say and Hansard will show, that I felt that the utility companies have made enough profit to absorb reduction. I think Hansard will show that. And further, I made a suggestion which was also misconstrued, that government consider - as, I feel, a good Opposition member making a critical suggestion to government - that government consider reducing their tax revenue to a degree equal to the base price reduction here on the Island portion of the Province. I would like to make that clarification. That is my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! There is no point of order. The hon. member has provided some information. It is a difference of opinion.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There again, Mr. Speaker, is an indication from the hon. member for Naskaupi that he did not contact the consumer rep concerning oil prices in Labrador, which he is concerned about. Mr. Speaker, I understand from the hon. member that he has not contacted Mr. Woodward either about the high cost of oil.

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! Order, please! Would the hon. member now sit down? The hon. the member for Windsor - Buchans on a point of order.

MR. FLIGHT:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Torngat Mountains continues to refer to the consumer representative on the Public Utilities Board and why we have not contacted him. I mean, I am not aware that it is the mandate of the Public Utilities Board or of that member to discuss the price of oil and gas. We want it made the purview of the PUB, but that government, Mr. Speaker, -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. FLIGHT:

- refuses to allow the PUB to become responsible for the pricing of fuel. The member, Mr. Speaker, should stop misleading this House. I would love to have the chance to talk to PUB and hold them accountable for protecting the consumer on oil and gas prices in this Province. The member does not know what he is talking about. What a stupid thing to say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! There is no point of order.

MR. WARREN:

Again, Mr. Speaker, there is another member admitting that he never contacted Mr. Wells. How can you do it, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Wells is available to talk to them anytime. What I will do for hon. members opposite is call my office tomorrow and have them set up an appointment for you, if you are concerned about the high price of oil and electricity and other consumer problems in this Province. Now what else can I do, Mr. Speaker?

MR. R. AYLWARD:

Did you mention that meeting with CN?

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, I suppose I should say, in response to my hon. colleague, the Minister of Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development (Mr. R. Aylward), that I had to cancel a meeting with CN to accommodate the member for Naskaupi (Mr. Kelland) and the member for Eagle River (Mr. Hiscock). Mr. Speaker, I cannot help it if hon. members opposite are coming to me for advice. I cannot help that.

MR. TULK:

Well, advise Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, let me advise the hon. gentleman that he is paid \$15,000 too much now, so I suggest he shut up while he is ahead.

AN HON. MEMBER:

We are paying \$8,000 for (inaudible).

MR. WARREN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I am quite pleased the hon. gentleman brought that, because I was quite pleased to take that opportunity, and I will say more about it at an appropriate time, if the hon. gentleman will allow me.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to get back to the hon. gentleman, I believe he is admitting that he never spoke to Mr. Wells. He wanted to change the subject, because all of a sudden it comes out that hon. gentlemen opposite can talk all they want to about -

MR. FUREY:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. Barbe, on a point of order.

MR. FUREY:

If the member for Torngat Mountains (Mr. Warren) could just clarify something for us. As I understand it, the consumer representative on the Public Utilities Board has no jurisdiction over the set rate of the price of gasoline and oil in this Province. So maybe the member could explain to us why he is going on in such a litany, such a diatribe about whether we contacted a representative of the Public Utilities Board, who is the consumer representative, when he has no mandate to deal with that? It is axiomatic, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

There is no point of order, the hon. member is supplying some information again.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, there is another member admitting that he never made contact with the consumer representative on the board. That is what the consumer representative is there for, to listen to concerns. And why is the hon. member, who was elected by the people of St. Barbe, admitting that the hon. member never even spoke to this consumer representative on the board concerning consumer problems in his district?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Do they have diesel plants in St. Barbe?

MR. WARREN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are diesel plants in the hon. member's district. And there are people up there paying an extraordinary cost for electricity, for hydro, for gas. Now, Mr. Speaker, maybe it is a good time to come back to the hon. gentleman for Fogo (Mr. Tulk). Although I may be off course, Mr. Speaker, in this debate, I would beg you to give me leave to do so.

Mr. Speaker, if there is any property for sale in this Province that I deem necessary as a citizen of the Province to make an offer on, I will do so. Whether it is being sold by the member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk), the member for St. John's East (Mr. Marshall), or the member for Burgeo-Bay d'Espoir (Mr. Gilbert), I will be only too glad to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Now, let me go back, Mr. Speaker, to this resolution. The Minister of Consumer Affairs has appointed a consumer representative to the board. Number one, on a daily basis the minister is following the decrease in oil prices in the

Province. There has been a decrease at the tanks.

MR. GILBERT:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The hon. the member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir on a point of order.

MR. GILBERT:

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member talk about the consumer representative on the board, because that is another patronage appointment. We understand the man has not spoken a word on behalf of the consumer, but he has spoken very much on behalf of the companies and the government. If I were the member, I would not be too proud when I talk about the consumer representative on the Public Utilities Board of Newfoundland.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

There is no point of order, just an expressing of an opinion.

The hon. the member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It should be noted by the media that so far there have been, I think, five points of order by the opposite side. I must really get to them, because they will not allow me fifteen or twenty minutes to speak. I will tell you this much, Mr. Speaker, I feel proud and honoured that hon. gentlemen opposite will not permit me to continue my speech, because I know now I am hitting the bone, Mr. Speaker, and they must be really hurting.

Only a moment ago, Mr. Speaker, the member for Naskaupi came into the House, got up on a point of order and then took off again. It was getting so hot in here because of the comments he made earlier about his oil buddy in Labrador that he had to take off as fast as he could. Mr. Speaker, he has not contacted the owner of the oil company in Labrador, nor has anyone on that side contacted the consumer representative on the Public Utilities Board.

MR. TULK:
(Inaudible).

MR. WARREN:
I should tell the hon. member, if the hon. member continues to interrupt me, he might get a smack in the mouth, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, Mr. Speaker, for that comment. I would not strike the hon. gentleman in the mouth, because I would only hurt my hand.

MR. TULK:
You can say that again.

MR. WARREN:
Yes, Mr. Speaker. His head is made of steel.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me continue. I have spoken to Ultramar concerning oil prices on the Labrador Coast and they have explained that they paid the higher price when the oil was shipped in there in November. The consumer, unfortunately, and I disagree with this, has to pay a price at the present time which is higher than the price at the pumps on the Island, but this is because the oil was stockpiled. However, Mr. Speaker, the same thing will apply again next Fall. If the prices happen to go up and the cheaper oil is stockpiled, the people on the Labrador Coast will

pay less. So it works both ways.

MR. TULK:
Go sell a house.

MR. WARREN:
Mr. Speaker, it goes with the personality of the individual.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the comments from the member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk) are what you would expect from such a gentleman.

MR. SIMMONS:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
The hon. the member for Fortune - Hermitage.

MR. J. CARTER:
On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A point of order, the hon. the member for St. John's North.

MR. J. CARTER:
The member cannot just float in from distant parts and say that by proxy his motion was introduced. I think it is very irregular, Mr. Speaker. He had plenty of opportunity to speak this afternoon but did not bother to, and just waltzed in in his high-handed way. He cannot take the Legislature on his back like this. I think it is a dangerous precedent to start, and I would think it is a mistaken notion to allow him to close the debate.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. OTTENHEIMER:
Mr. Speaker, when the motion was proceeded with, was called last week, and the hon. member may not

have been in the House, my recollection is that there was an agreement that the hon. member for Fortune - Hermitage would speak and close the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I also remember it was agreed that the hon. member for Fortune - Hermitage would close the debate.

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, indeed, as is often the case, the hon. member for St. John's North (J. Carter) was well ahead of me. I was about to acknowledge with thanks the House procedure adopted in this particular instance because of my absence from the House last Wednesday, my unavoidable absence I may say. I thank the House for the opportunity to close the debate on an issue that I feel quite strongly about. The last speaker, and one of two or three for the government side, the gentleman for Torngat, made some interesting points. Nobody can argue that. Among others, he made the point that we all ought to have a meeting with the consumer representative on the Public Utilities Board. On the surface that seems like an imminently sensible idea, if you assume that that gentleman and that board have some jurisdiction in the matter under discussion. We can only construe from the remarks of the gentleman for Torngat, given his undoubted wisdom in these matters as in others, that he was conveying to the House a government intention to mandate to the Public Utilities Board responsibility for oil and gas pricing matters. The gentleman

for Torngat has given that undertaking implicitly today to this House and we on this side, recognizing that he speaks often for the administration - despite his whimsical thoughts about being a private member from time to time, he is a full-fledged member of that administration and, indeed, he should be in the Cabinet. It is the first Cabinet in many years with no full-fledged minister from Labrador, a matter that I am sure will be corrected very soon, given the performance of that gentleman since he became a Parliamentary Secretary. It is only a matter of time before he will come into his own and already, Mr. Speaker, he has made an important commitment on behalf of the administration of which he is a part. Implicitly he said to this House this afternoon that the government intends, the administration of which he is a part intends to mandate to the Public Utilities Board responsibility for regulating oil and gas prices. Now, Mr. Speaker, I say to you, Sir, that if we ended the debate right here we would have achieved a fair amount, because that is an important concession. It removes an important road block, because heretofore we have had nobody to talk to on this important issue.

Now, thanks be to God we have Andy Wells. We have Andy Wells to talk to about oil and gas.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman for Torngat Mountains, who has departed the Chamber but reads Hansard, insofar as he is able, Mr. Speaker, he said at one point that he thought he saw in my eyes a certain emotion. Indeed he did, it was abject pity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMONS:

And, Mr. Speaker, the forestry concerns in this Province have an imminent spokesman in Cabinet in the person of none other than my cousin from Grand Falls. Education -

AN HON. MEMBER:

I will tell 'Len'.

MR. SIMMONS:

He is gone for his fibre. He will be back. Education has its spokesman in the imminent personage of the gentleman from St. Mary's - The Capes. Transportation concerns, not my cousin, which he regrets daily, transportation concerns have a spokesman in Cabinet, a voice in Cabinet, in the person of the gentleman for St. George's. Justice in the person of the lady from Humber East.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMONS:

Health, in the person of the gentleman for Exploits, who -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMONS:

- though he delivered six little Simmonses, missed me by that much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMONS:

All the ones after me he delivered. I think the gentleman consensus was that the doctor before him had done such a lousy job, they better call in an expert. So they did. All these constituencies, Mr. Speaker,

whether it be Health or Education or Transportation or Justice, not to forget Rural, Agriculture and Northern Development, it has a spokesman in the imminent person from Kilbride. So you see, Mr. Speaker, therein lies one of the unique advantages of the Cabinet system of government, that the several concerns get voiced at the Cabinet table and get articulated publicly.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we come to Consumer Affairs. Then we ask who speaks for consumer affairs? Well, in theory the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell), but what a far-fetched theory in the present circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, unless a constituency, be it consumer affairs or any other, has a voice at that Cabinet table, it does not have any real hope of redress, it does not have any real hope of having its ends achieved. Therein, Mr. Speaker, lies the problem which is implicit in this motion and so many other motions we could draft on the issue of consumer affairs.

It is not for me today to praise the efforts of the gentleman in Finance, the gentleman in Transportation, in Municipal Affairs, but in turn I could cite some achievements of each of these people, because whatever our political differences, these people have themselves to look into the mirror at next morning, irrespective of what they think of my views or the views of the Liberal Party or the views of large segments of the Newfoundland constituency. If they think of nothing else but themselves, they would like to have it on the record that they did something

during their stint in power and their time at that Cabinet table. So they can point, Mr. Speaker, to certain achievements. The gentleman who is the Minister of Education (Mr. Hearn) has been associated with the Grade XII issue. It is a flawed issue and we have some thoughts on that but basically it was a good initiative, botched in its implementation but do not sidetrack me.

The gentleman who is the Minister of Career Development (Mr. Power) is now heading up a full reorganization of vocational schools and it will be done imperfectly because we are human beings but I am sure he will be able to take some credit for some good things that will come out of that. Certainly, that is our fond hope on this side.

But what, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell) have to show when his day is done? What will he have to show? As a Speaker, yes he was a good speaker. They have hanged him for it and they will hang him for what he has done in Consumer Affairs in a very different way because, Mr. Speaker, I say to him - and I compliment him that he stayed close to the House for much of this debate - I say to him that if he wants to look at himself next morning in terms of his achievements in Consumer Affairs, he is going to have to get his act together. He could have done it very simply last week by rising and giving support to this motion because, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing particularly earth shattering about the request contained in this motion. We are asking only four things all within the purview and the ability of this government.

We are asking, first of all, that the government commit itself to passing onto the consumer the full benefits of reductions in oil and gas prices. That is what we are asking, for a commitment that these benefits will be passed on to those consumers out there. We are asking, secondly, that the government renounce any intention to take up any of the benefits that would flow from a reduction by way of increased taxation. We are asking, Mr. Speaker, that the government would undertake an investigation to determine whether the full benefits resulting from the decline in world oil prices are being passed on without delay to the Newfoundland and Labrador consumer by the oil companies and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. And, finally, Mr. Speaker, we are asking that there be set up a study to determine the impact of home heating costs on those people in Newfoundland and Labrador on fixed incomes. We are thinking particularly of senior citizens and we are asking that contingent upon the findings of that study, that government would devise proposals of assistance for senior citizens.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of words there but in sum there is nothing particularly earth shattering about it. There is nothing there that would compromise anybody on any side of the House in terms of the principles they hold or the reasons they came into politics.

Surely, paramount among those reasons was a commitment to do the best to redress the grievance of the Newfoundland consumer to see that he/she gets a fair deal. We recognized the minister in his speech last Wednesday, which I read with interest this afternoon,

acknowledged that the prices are not going down as quickly as he would like. He acknowledges, in effect, that those consumers are not getting a fair deal at the hands of the oil companies and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. The minister, on the subject of the study, which is what we are proposing here, his only defense is a cop out. His only defense is that it would cost some money. We know that. We know it would cost some money. How much? Maybe \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$30,000. It would depend on the latitude given to the body appointed and it would depend on the time frame involved.

Mr. Speaker, I point you to a recent incident in the past few days where the government has given licence to Dr. House in his Employment/Unemployment Commission to go out and take a few more months. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that that extension of time, the second now - first from March 15 to April 15 and now until September - those two extensions of time will cost far in excess of \$20,000 or \$30,000 or so, the amount that would be involved in a study into consumer costs. The government had no such hang up about cost a few years ago. Three or four years ago, when it wanted to find something to keep the gentleman from Trinity North busy. Do you remember that particular Commission, the Food Prices Commission? Remember that report? Do you have any idea of the cost of it?

MR. TULK:
No, I do not.

MR. SIMMONS:
Well, in ballpark figures it would be two or three times as much as what this particular study would

cost.

MR. TULK:
But that study had a different purpose.

MR. SIMMONS:
But, of course, if I may be permitted a moment of sarcasm, my friend from Fogo says that study had a different purpose and it had nothing to do with looking after the consumer. Sure it was a study about food prices but it had little to do with looking after the consumer. What we are proposing today would directly benefit the consumer because it would finger the problem and it would set in motion a mechanism to deal with the problem. The problem being that the Newfoundland or Labrador consumer is not getting a fair square deal in terms of oil and gas prices. That other study, to which I made reference a moment ago, the Food Prices Study, had a very different motive. It had nothing to do with looking after the consumer unless by the consumer you mean one consumer, the gentleman from Trinity North.

So, Mr. Speaker, if a government can find ways to, at considerable expense to the taxpayer, keep the gentleman from Trinity North busy until they are able to bring him back into the Cabinet, then I submit it is not too much to ask that that same government find a few measley bucks to underwrite the cost of a study into oil and gas prices.

Mr. Speaker, the crux of the problem is not oil and gas prices, as important as that is. The crux of the problem is not food prices, as important as that is. The crux of the problem is that the consumer, whether in matters of

food or transportation or oil and gas prices or shelter, has no advocate at the Cabinet table. He has no voice. What is even worse, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Russell), in his surprisingly few utterances on the subject of consumer matters, has always, without exception, taken the side of the corporate interests. He has become recognized as the handmaiden of corporate interests.

Mr. Speaker, it is a well known characteristic of certain people who did ascend by base degrees, that having ascended, they get a certain charge out of rubbing shoulders with corporate interests. So, Mr. Speaker, what they used to abhor they come to condone and then to embrace. That is the minister's cardinal sin. He has embraced the corporate interests. He has embraced the corporate interests to the detriment of the consumer. While, Mr. Speaker, we stand full square behind this resolution and will vote for it, and would invite every member in this House to do likewise because to do otherwise is to vote against motherhood. We believe strongly in it. But we believe, Mr. Speaker, that something that would be even more to the point, even more precisely address the concerns implicit in this motion, would be for the Premier to ask for the resignation of the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Communications (Mr. Russell) because he has failed miserably, Mr. Speaker, to give voice to that area which has been assigned to him, failed miserably.

Mr. Speaker, the minister can laugh all he wants. If I have amused him, at least I have helped make his day. He can hide behind that if he wants to. But he has a

fair amount to answer for, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what he has not done for the consumer. That is my message to him. It has nothing to do with him personally. It is strictly a message that he get on with the job or get out of the job and let somebody else do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

Are you ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion "aye", those against "nay".

MR. TULK:
A division, Mr. Speaker.

Division

MR. SPEAKER:
All those in favour of the motion please rise.

Mr. Flight, Mr. Tulk, Mr. Callan, the hon. Mr. Simmons, Mr. Lush, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Alyward, Mr. Baker, Mr. Furey, Mr. Kelland, Mr. Fenwick.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
Those against the motion please rise.

The hon. the Minister of Justice (Ms Verge), the hon. the Minister of Forest Resources and Lands (Mr. Simms), the hon. the Minister of Health (Dr. Thomey), the hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy (Mr. Dinn), the hon. the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Communications (Mr. Russell), the

hon. the President of the Council (Mr. Marshall), the hon. the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ottenheimer), the hon. the Minister of Finance (Dr. Collins), the hon. the Minister of Public Works and Services (Mr. Young), the hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth (Mr. Matthews), the hon. the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Dawe), the hon. the Minister of Education (Mr. Hearn), the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. Doyle), the hon. the Minister of Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development (Mr. R. Alyward), Mr. Baird, Mr. Patterson, Mr. Reid, Mr. J. Carter, the hon. the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Butt), Mr. Peach, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Woodford.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

I declare the motion defeated with a vote of twenty-three to eleven.

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, before you leave the Chair I would like to advise the House that this evening at 7:30 here in the House the Government Services Committee will continue its review of the Department of Public Works and Services and will begin its review of the estimates of the Department of Finance, if time permits tonight. Tomorrow morning at 9:30 in the House, the Resource Committee will review the estimates of the Energy Division, the Department of Mines and Energy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL:

I invite all the Opposition

members, all in tandem.

At 9:30 in the Colonial Building tomorrow morning the Government Services Committee will continue its review of the Department of Finance and begin same, as the case may be. Tomorrow evening the Social Services Committee will meeting at 7:30 in the Colonial Building to consider the estimates of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth.

And Mr. Speaker, I could advise the House as well that tomorrow and Friday we will be doing legislation and the first order of business will be Order 13, Bill 7, the concluding debate on the Department of Justice. It will be followed by Order 15, Bill 3, which is the Department of the Environment, followed by Order 19, Bill 15, the Farm Development Loan Bill, followed by Order 20, Bill No. 25, The Act To Amend The Real Estate Trading Act, Order 21, Bill No. 22, An Act To Amend The Embalmers And Funeral Directors Act, especially for the Opposition. I will give the hon. gentleman a list, okay, in baby talk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

It now being 6:00 the House stands adjourned until 3:00 p.m. tomorrow.