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Speaker: Honourable P.J. McNicholas

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The House met at 3:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

At this stage I would like to welcome to the galleries thirty-eight Level III students from Holy Trinity Regional High of Heart's Content, and also two exchange students from Mexico, Martha Jiminez and Sylvia Robles. They are accompanied by their teachers, Miss Susan Macleod and Mr. Albert Legge.

Statements by Ministers

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a statement on a pet peeve of mine for about ten years. On behalf of myself and the hon. John Butt, minister responsible for heritage in the Province, I am delighted to announce here today, my government's plans to complete the restoration and refurbishing of the historic Newman Building located at Number 1 Springdale Street, St. John's.

In 1969, the Newman wine vaults, on Water Street in St. John's, were declared a provincial historic site. In July, 1981, the adjacent Newman building was slated for demolition. The building had deteriorated to the point where it posed a threat to public safety.

Upon learning of the demolition order, my government immediately entered into negotiations with the

representatives of the Newman Estate, and we were successful in acquiring the property, so as to prevent the loss of this heritage structure.

The historical significance of these heritage structures is rooted in the very trade links that led to the settlement of Newfoundland. I am glad that we have some students in the gallery today, because this is a real piece of history, and perhaps in one of the students' culture classes or whatever, if they have not already investigated or learned about the Newman people in Newfoundland, they may be able to take this back and do a project on it.

The Newman family, merchants in Dartmouth, England, from the 1400s brought their first cargo of Newfoundland codfish back to England in 1589. Richard Newman established a seasonal trading station for dried cod and general merchandise on Pushthrough Island as early as 1672. Pushthrough Island is on the South Coast, in Fortune Bay I guess, if my geography is right.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hermitage Bay.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Hermitage Bay, which is in Fortune Bay, no?

AN HON. MEMBER:

They are separate in many respects.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Separate in many respects. I guess it is like Halls Bay being in Green Bay. Halls Bay is a separate bay, even though we talk about it as all being part of Green Bay.

This was still when permanent settlements in Newfoundland were vigorously suppressed by an Act of Parliament. In other words, the Newman family came here before they were really allowed to, as did most of our ancestors, rightly or wrongly. By 1679, however, the Newmans' seasonal plantations were gradually becoming more permanent. Also about this time, the Newmans discovered, through their bartering trade, that their port wine brought to Newfoundland in exchange for the cod imported into Portugal, and stored here as payment, greatly improved in quality. It was the Newfoundland weather no doubt. Consequently, sending port wine to Newfoundland to mature became a regular practice carried on right up to the present day.

In 1700 the House of Newman and Company established trading stations at Harbour Breton, Hermitage Cove, and Gaultois, and by 1800, William Newman was one of the largest property owners here in St. John's. It is most likely that the Newman wine vaults were established during this period of expansion in the 18th century.

The vaults survived the great fire of 1846, and in 1847 evidence indicates, Newman and Company decided to construct the current Georgian style building that the government has just saved from demolition.

Restoration work on the exterior of the Newman building has now been completed - it was started a number of years ago - and a derelict building has been replaced by a fine Georgian style heritage structure which will serve as a landmark for future re-development in this area of the city.

I take great pleasure today in announcing that a contract has been let to the firm of Titon Holding Limited in the amount of \$229,133 to complete the interior refurbishing of the building. When completed, this building will house the provincial sports archives, which are now presently in the Arts and Culture Centre here in St. John's, and serve as the headquarters for the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council and the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Foundation - two organizations which are making a significant contribution to the preservation of our unique cultural and material heritage. The work on the building is scheduled for completion in October of this year.

Clearly all Newfoundlanders can take great pride that these historic structures are being preserved for posterity and will be put to such productive re-use, and I take great personal pride in seeing this historic and cultural initiative taken. Thank you, kindly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Waterford - Kenmount.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Premier and government for taking the initiative to restore this important historic building. It happens to be located in a ward I represent in council, and I am very familiar with it. It lay there pretty well derelict for a long time, and it

is great to see that government has taken a second step with the interior renovations, because certainly the exterior has been restored quite well.

We would like to examine the costs involved in terms of the exterior renovations and look at the cost overall, if you like, to restore a building of this importance. I say that because, from the point of view of historic buildings throughout St. John's, we have a situation where many of our historic sites are in danger of being lost because of the lack of funds to restore them. In fact, I can give some examples right now: The O'Dwyer property on Water Street is in danger of being demolished because of a lack of funding to really, in that particular case, almost rebuild the building because it is pretty well gone. But it is of historic significance, and is worthy of preservation.

Council is also planning to widen the historic zone West of Adelaide Street, which will take in many more historic buildings beyond the Newman property. The Newman property is, in fact, the last one as you go West in the designated area. As a matter of fact, we have a plan ready for adoption at City Council to extend the historic zone Westward. We are faced with a dilemma with historic sites, and I am not just speaking of St. John's. I am speaking of other areas of the Province where it is necessary to look at the setting up of a possible foundation and look at avenues of funding not just from a provincial perspective but also federal, municipal, and from private sources.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

We have the Heritage Foundation right now.

MR. GULLAGE:

I realize that, but funding that in the past used to come from federal sources, in particular, seems to be cut off now and we have to find other avenues because the numbers of buildings, particularly in St. John's, are such that we feel only a foundation can be the way to go.

The other point I would like to make is that we wonder whether private developers and the private foundation that I speak of, could best be doing this sort of work, and encourage the private sector and a foundation to identify, first of all, in co-operation with councils and with government, sites that are historic, and once they are designated, rather than government dollars being spent as they are in this case, to take the initiative to restore buildings with professional assistance and funding assistance from the three levels of government involved.

I would like to commend the government. It is a good initiative. The Newman building is one of the most historic buildings in the Province and it is good to see it being restored.

I might add before I finish that the three groups you mentioned to occupy that building are badly in need of proper space. The Provincial Sports Archives, for example, have been complaining for a long time of how crowded their quarters are, and the other two as well. So it is badly needed from the perspective of space for these three important groups.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. LONG:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:
We also welcome the announcement by the Premier and see it as a fairly significant initiative on the part of the government to play an active role in the preservation of buildings of historic significance in the city. We also appreciate the tone and even the elegance of the statement made by the Premier today, which reminds us all of the importance of our history.

We would see it as a positive initiative, but there is a lot more to be done. In particular, I would have concerns about what appears to be a rather ad hoc manner in which the government became involved as a result of a crisis situation, where the building was going to be lost, and ask a question about the government's relationship with City Council and indeed other municipalities in the Province, and the need to put in place a more clearly established mechanism so that the government may continue to take such initiatives.

I would also say, Mr. Speaker, with reference to the organizations that are going to be placed in this new building, that I think it is a very positive thing. It will give a good profile to these agencies which are doing good work on behalf of government. I, at one time, worked for the Provincial Arts Council, as an information officer. I would also say that the Sports Archives, the Arts Council and the Heritage

Foundation are indeed in need of more financial support, not just the location.

With regard to the space that will be created now at the Arts and Culture Centre Gallery, my understanding of what would be created as a result of taking the Sports Archives out is that it is still not enough. There are going to be serious problems at the gallery until there is an expansion plan or, in fact, a plan for a new gallery put in place by the government.

I would also say, when we are talking about the Sports Archives, that there is a very real problem not only of space but also in the preservation of materials at the Provincial Archives, in the Colonial Building, which is another building of very important historical significance. I would call upon the government to take a similar positive initiative to protect the materials in the Colonial Building and also to see if we can get a new location for the Provincial Archives, given the government's stated commitment today to the preservation of our legacy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. RIDEOUT:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:
Mr. Speaker, as I have previously stated in this House and on many other occasions, this government remains firmly committed to the continued development of a commercial seal fishery by landsman hunters in our Province.

Our position on the issue has remained virtually unchanged since it was presented to the Malouf Commission on seals and sealing in May of 1985. We have promoted a cautious but steady approach to the revitalization of the seal fishery and we continue to stand by this approach.

The recent renewed efforts been perpetuated by a new anti-sealing group against our sealing industry clearly indicate the need to tailor our present operation in such a way as to regain market acceptance. This government does not feel that the time is right to renew a war of words and propoganda with the various animal rights groups. It would only play into their hands and give them the stage they so desperately desire in order to carry out their anti-sealing campaigns. However, Mr. Speaker, we will not willingly abandon our people to the blackmail tactics of such a lunatic fringe who wish to characterize us as barbarians and who are attempting, once again, to inflict economic genocide on our rural economy and our rural people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. RIDEOUT:

As a government we will do whatever has to be done, in co-operation and consultation with the sealers and the sealing industry of this Province, to protect our rural way of life, including the wise use of all our resources, which includes seals. Additionally, we will be calling on our nation's government to protect sealers against harrassment from the protest groups as they pursue a legitimate liveihood.

Mr. Speaker, in a message I read in this House just last month, I stated that we have seen some very positive results from our efforts to revitalize the sealing industry over the last number of years. The harvest of adult seals has increased from approximately 6,000 in 1985 to over 40,000 in 1987. This increase in harvest has been carried out in a co-ordinated, humane and orderly manner.

The reason for the successful increase in our adult seal harvest stems largely from the co-operation between this government and the Canadian Sealers Association and the Northeast Coast Sealers Co-operative. Since the inception of the Canadian Sealers Association in 1982 we have financially supported this organization in its efforts to preserve, promote and protect the sealing industry. We have also provided technical and financial assistance to the Northeast Coast Coast Sealers Co-op since it was formed in 1986.

A \$200,000 loan guarantee was issued to the Co-op in 1986 and an additional guarantee of \$500,000 was provided by government in 1987. This year the Co-op is projecting a purchase of 20,000 seat pelts to be used for fur and leather sales. Initially the Co-op's leather production was sold to only one tannery in Ontario. The Co-op has increased interest in countries outside of Canada, including Morocco, Italy, Finland and Hong Kong. The Sealers Co-op is now confident that initial sales to these countries can be followed up with larger orders.

Mr. Speaker, it is through initiatives such as those

undertaken by the Northeast Coast Sealers Co-op that the future of the sealing industry rests. Therefore, I am very pleased to announce today that government will be extending the loan guarantees of \$200,000 and \$500,000 for a further period to expire December 31, 1988 subject to the same terms and conditions, as was previously on those guarantees, with the Co-op being required to place a nominee of the Minister of Fisheries on its Board of Directors. This will ensure that an even closer working relationship will develop between the Co-op and this government. Also, government has authorized a \$35,000 grant to the Co-op payable out of my department's 1988 - 1989 budget to defray interest costs on the Co-op's operating line. I am also pleased to announce today that an additional \$175,000 loan guarantee will be authorized for the Sealers Co-op under the same terms and conditions as the other two guarantees. This new guarantee will be released to the Co-op by the Minister of Finance as required, in consultation with the Ministers of Development and Tourism and Fisheries. This means that our government is now standing behind the activities of the Northeast Coast Sealers Co-operative to the tune of \$875,000, in addition to our interest subsidy on their operating line of credit.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

And that is not cucumbers.

MR. RIDEOUT:

And that is not cucumbers.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, this government remains committed to the revitalization of the sealing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. This

commitment is reiterated time and again through the actions of the government by providing technical and financial assistance to both the Canadian Sealers Association and the Northeast Coast Sealers Co-op. Never let it be said that this government has not come through on its promises to develop a revitalized sealing industry in the Province.

I am convinced that our approach to the development and revitalization of our sealing industry has been the right approach. While we see no net gain in a war of words through the media with those anti-sealing groups who appear upon our shores from time to time, we shall not be deterred in our determination to protect and to support our sealing industry. Our record speaks for itself. The sealing industry is on the road to recovery and even though this steady and cautious approach towards rebuilding our industry may not always achieve results as quickly as many, including myself, would like, I stand behind our policy and feel it is the best chance for a truly revitalized long-term sealing industry for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:

I thank the minister, Mr. Speaker, for giving me an advance copy of his statement, but I must say I am not too impressed with its contents. The Premier interjected

during the final few paragraphs of the statement by saying 'that is not cucumbers.' Mr. Speaker, all I can say is it is too bad it is not cucumbers, when we have a government that is more interested in putting \$14 million or \$15 million in growing cucumbers, and then get up and boast about the fact that they are putting \$875,000 into one of our most traditional industries. I do not consider that, Mr. Speaker, as being too much to boast about.

Now, what the minister has done today, and I am not downgrading or demeaning the minister, I think the Co-op could use the \$175,000 that is being made available, and they can certainly use the \$35,000 interest write-off grant, because what the minister has been doing over the years is saddling the Sealer's Co-op with an unbearable debt load.

MR. RIDEOUT:
We are paying it.

MR. W. CARTER:
No, you are not paying it. You are paying \$35,000 toward interest, Mr. Speaker, that this year will be in the vicinity of \$50,000 balance.

Mr. Speaker, the East Coast Sealer's Co-op is in debt to the government for approximately \$875,000. 10 per cent of that would be \$80-odd thousand dollars interest. The government is now paying \$35,000, I gather.

MR. RIDEOUT:
No.

MR. W. CARTER:
Oh? The statement says \$35,000 will be made available.

MR. RIDEOUT:

(Inaudible) loan guarantee.

MR. W. CARTER:
Let us assume, then, they are. The statement is not very clear. But, Mr. Speaker, the fact remains the Northeast Coast Sealer's Co-op is doing a job that the government itself should be doing. Of course, back a few years ago, when the sealing industry, that once great and thriving and traditional industry was going down for the third time, we saw a group of Newfoundland inshore fishermen, in fact about four hundred, who were willing to invest a total of \$120,000 in that industry. They had enough faith in the sealing industry to invest \$120,000 of their own money.

My understanding of it is that that Co-op is now in serious financial trouble. Mr. Speaker, the minister shakes his head. Well, I have it from a reasonably good authority that that Co-op is now in serious trouble and this will do very little toward alleviating some of the problems that they are going to be facing.

Mr. Speaker, the minister makes reference to the harassment on the part of the new conservation group, International Wildlife Federation I believe they call themselves -

AN HON. MEMBER:
Coalition.

MR. W. CARTER:
Coalition, yes.

I was surprised in Committee yesterday when the minister replying to a question that was put to him by myself or my colleague, maybe, for Port de Grave, was unable to table copies of any correspondence that were

dispatched to his federal counterpart when it was first made known to the minister that that group, these publicity-hungry, dubious types were coming in here to disrupt the seal fishery. When the minister was first made aware of their intended visit, he did not make any written presentation to his federal counterpart objecting to their being issued a permit.

Now, we all know that as a result of a recent ruling of the Supreme Court, the Appeal Court, that the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Siddon) in Ottawa has no choice but to make a permit available. However, a condition of that permit, Mr. Speaker, is that a fishery officer be required to travel to the icefields, accompanying the group. I would suggest to the minister that maybe therein lies the answer. Because surely a government that is unable to provide sufficient surveillance of our salmon rivers would not dare make fishery officers available to babysit or to accompany a group of people whose sole objective in life is to destroy a traditional industry in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. W. CARTER:

I said in the House yesterday, I could have -

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, may I conclude?

I saw on television last week one of the representatives from that group saying that he did not care at all, he could not care less what happened to Newfoundlanders,

and the fact that he was denying them their bread and butter was of no interest whatever to him. I would suggest to the minister, Mr. Speaker, that he let his federal counterpart know in no uncertain terms that Newfoundlanders are not going to stand by this time and allow these scoundrels to come in here and, for questionable motives, deny Newfoundlanders their right to pursue an industry that has been, I suppose, in this Province now, and country, for the past 300 or 400 years. The minister, Mr. Speaker, should make that fact known to his federal counterpart.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that the policy this government is following is wrong, and I believe that the policy the federal government is following is wrong, as well. Mr. Speaker, we are in a new era now. We are not talking about humane societies, we are not talking about the SPCA, we are not talking about people whose primary thrust was that they were looking at baby seals being killed or they were looking at a hunt that they felt was somewhat cruel.

Mr. Speaker, the enemy now is individuals who do not believe that animals should be used for human consumption at all. It does not matter what you use it for, whether it is for eating or whether it is for fur or whether it is for flippers whatever

purpose at all.

It is quantitative difference in a debate that we have had over the last ten years. It is, I think, what someone once called the new paganism; they are attributing souls, attributing human worth to animals, and as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, we are in a different kind of fight.

When the federal government closed down the whitecoat hunt, concurred in by this provincial government, it showed a degree of weakness that is now being exploited by this new group that is here. The fact of the matter is, you are never, ever going to placate them as long as one seal is killed. They are not willing to accept anything other than a total cessation of the seal hunt, and when they have finished with that, Mr. Speaker, they will go on to continue with other species.

So, I say again, although there are a few dollars being put in there to try to continue on the subsistence hunt, the fact of the matter is it is a wrong approach by this government, and a wrong approach by the federal government. You are going to have to stand up and fight them some day, so you might as well start now! Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. RIDEOUT:

The Socialists are finally prepared to fight for something.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I would like to welcome to the galleries Tony Anderson, Manager

of Torngat Housing, and Wilfred Lane, Mayor of Postville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Simms). I have to say to him that we are relying on news reports rather than any written statement, because I do not believe either the minister or the President of NAPE did, but I understand this morning that the President of NAPE called a news conference to say that he was not satisfied with the steering committee, on pay equity, that it does not have a mandate to do the job. I understand that the minister says that is not the case, that it does have a mandate, that it does not have to go to Cabinet and that, indeed, its recommendations are likely to be accepted. Would the minister clarify that situation for us, please?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to clarify it and I thank the hon. member for his question. What he has said is in fact what I said today. I did not have a prepared statement because I got so many phone calls

from the press I decided just to have a press gathering to answer their questions, so I had to rely on the press's interpretation of what was said because I was not at the press conference held by NAPE either. I understood, or at least my perception of what was being transmitted to me via the media led me to think that there must be some grave misunderstandings about what the approach is that we propose, because clearly we made the same proposal to all other participants in other unions, all of whom had no difficulty with the approach we were proposing. Yes, in fact, I did say that the steering committee does have a mandate. In fact, the letter I wrote to the President of NAPE yesterday is fairly clear, at least I thought it was clear. It said, 'The steering committee's work will be most significant. It will require that members' - that is, those who will be on the committee, and I asked NAPE to give me a representative to put on the committee - 'have sufficient authority to make decisions on behalf of their organizations at the steering committee level.' So it was fairly clear, I thought, in my letter, but I understand there is a disagreement, perhaps with the interpretation of what we propose. Subsequent to the press briefing I had, I had my officials communicate with NAPE officials to ask them exactly what it was they were concerned with and what their problems were. But, as I said at the press briefing, if they have some problems, if they have some disagreement, then we are more than willing to sit down in a co-operative way to work out those difficulties, because clearly the government's intention, as enunciated by the Premier in the press conference several weeks ago, is that we are committed to

implementing pay equity for the public service for the entire Province, and we are going to do it.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, if I understood what the hon. gentleman said correctly in reading from his letter, I think he said that the individuals representing organizations could commit their organizations to a certain process.

MR. SIMMS:

Sure.

MR. TULK:

I think what we are asking here is where does it go once a committee is put together? What authority does the committee have? What mandate does the committee itself have? I think, if the reports are correct, that is where the dispute seems to be, not in the individuals having the ability to commit or the power to commit their organizations, but what happens after it goes past that point and you sit on the committee? What mandate does the committee have? And I do not believe that the minister has addressed that question here yet.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I have addressed it. I certainly addressed it because I had similar questions put to me by the press, again, at the lunch hour press briefing that I held.

The steering committee, as I thought was indicated clearly in the letter, will be the ones which will have the mandate to put together all of the details, will set out the overall policies and guidelines within which pay equity will be implemented in the Newfoundland Public Service. Now, I do not know what could be clearer than that. This committee will have the mandate. The steering committee will not report to cabinet and it will have the mandate to work out all of the details of how pay equity will be implemented within the Newfoundland Public Service. Subsequent to that, there would be subcommittees to deal with each bargaining unit and issues like the actual wage adjustments and those things would be negotiated. I understand that is what the union wants.

I also understood that this was the approach that they wanted as well, because they asked us to use the Manitoba approach, and this is precisely what we have done in this instance, and instead of legislating it, we thought they wanted to use the consultative approach. and, that is what we attempted to do. Everything we are suggesting we do in this process is almost precisely what has happened in the Province of Manitoba where it was legislated.

We just thought that we would take a consultative approach. We thought that is what the unions wanted and I hope it is still what they want. Maybe this whole thing is a misunderstanding. That is all I can hope for.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, I must say to the hon. gentleman that I do not want to aggravate this situation because we on this side of the House, want to see pay equity in the public service as well. But let me ask him this question, since the process apparently has broken down: Has he taken any steps to get the process back in place? Does he have a time frame as to when he wants to see pay equity in the public service of this Province? Does he have a time frame in his own mind?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:
Well, Mr. Speaker, to two questions: First of all, I have taken steps in the sense that I was not even aware of what the problem was. I was not aware that there was going to be a press conference this morning to announce that the union was going to take a strike vote on the issue. I was not aware of that. All I heard was they were going to have a comment to make on the issue. So, I mean, you will have to forgive me if I have not got specific answers to the questions related to what the union had to say at its press conference, because I do not know. But I can tell you this, that the government is committed to implementing pay equity. We are fully committed to it. The Premier said at the press conference that whatever money is required to do it, we are going to have to do it, so there is no question or concern, or there should not be a concern about funding being made available.

We do not know how much it is yet. That is the work of the committees to determine all of that kind of information. We do not know the length of time over which it would be implemented. But I can tell you this, just as a point of information, and this was made public at the press conference when the policy statement was made by the Premier, in those other jurisdictions where they have implemented pay equity, generally speaking the basis on which the implementation has been undertaken has been approximately one per cent a year - approximately. That has been the rough process. But we did not want to, on our own, by ourselves, say this is what will be done. We have said, let the committees work out the details; let the committees negotiate the wage adjustments and the period of the pay implementation. And they should be able to negotiate that and work it out. But they will have full authority to do those kinds of things. There is absolutely no difficulty with it, and I really have had difficulty understanding what has transpired in the last few hours.

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. TULK:

You have had no contact?

MR. SIMMS:

Sorry! If I may, Mr. Speaker, just to conclude, if the hon. member would permit, yes, I had, at the time that I got the word about what went on at the press conference and I was in a rush to respond to all of the inquiries

from the press myself, my officials contact one of their senior negotiators to discuss with them what the problem was, to ask them what the problem was, and to try to ascertain if there was any way to discuss these matters sitting down in a co-operative way, in a sensible fashion, in a fair and reasonable fashion, and that is what we want to try to do. But I have not had a full report back yet.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Tobin). I want to start out by saying that many times in the last three years the Minister of Social Services and many of his colleagues have accused me of being an alarmist on many occasions, especially, Mr. Speaker, when bringing forth and trying to impress on the government the situation of our people dependent on social services.

I make that short preamble, Mr. Speaker, for a particular reason. It has to do with the national report of the Council of Welfare saying in a statement released yesterday that 27 per cent of Newfoundland children are living in poverty.

Now I assume the Minister of Social Services, and I do not think I am incorrect when I assume it, was aware of this before this report was released, because he is Minister of Social Services. I would ask the Minister of Social Services what steps, since he

became minister in the past few months, has he taken to correct that problem, that 27 per cent of our children are living in poverty?

MR. TOBIN:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. TOBIN:
Mr. Speaker, the Department of Social Services have started taking some very serious initiatives back in the 1970s, I guess after the PC Administration came to office, as it relates to trying to deal with what was happening regarding the unemployed people of this Province. We have initiated a budget in excess of \$30 million for job creation programmes, whereby we are employing people to work in this Province.

The caseload in the Province has not increased significantly. As a matter of fact, the caseload in the Province is basically at the same level. I can say to the hon. member, when you look at the caseload of the Department of Social Services, that in excess of 50 per cent of the people who are on social assistance are people who are not employable, that they are on social assistance for reasons other than not being able to find employment. They are there for sickness, or whatever the case may be.

And we have addressed that with a 159 per cent increase in the Provincial Budget since 1979. We have addressed it, Mr. Speaker, with a significant increase this year in the Budget. We have addressed it, as a matter of fact, with basically a \$20 million

increase in the budget of the Department of Social Services this year. I can say that every year the Department of Social Services have received more money than the previous year. There has never been a year when any division within the department received less money than the year before.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. TOBIN:
I believe, Mr. Speaker, we are on the right track.

MR. EFFORD:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary, the hon. the member for Bay de Verde.

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shameful and disgraceful for a Minister of Social Services to stand in his place this evening, in answer to a question about 27 per cent of Newfoundland children living in poverty, and make the statement that since 1970 these programmes have been implemented. The fact is that these programmes that have been implemented by his department, by his own government are not working. That is a proven fact. He just said they have been there since 1970, but they are not working. Can the minister tell this House, will he address the question I originally put to him, about what steps is his department taking to ensure that we decreased the poverty level of our children at least down to the Canadian average of 16 per cent?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. TOBIN:

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we are addressing it every way we can. We have increased the budget for the Department of Social Services every year. Since 1979, Mr. Speaker, there has been an increase of 159 per cent within the Department of Social Services. That, in itself, is indeed very significant.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that, as a government, we differ from the Opposition. He wanted it brought down to the national average of 16 per cent. We would rather see it eliminated altogether, Mr. Speaker, and we are working to that end.

MR. EFFORD:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

I assure the Minister of Social Services that I would like to see it down to zero, but we are far, far above the Canadian average, and that is shameful in itself.

I say to the minister very clearly, a programme has been implemented by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing whereby they subsidize heating, but the Department of Social Services deduct that out of the income of the people on social services. Would the minister explain, when this type of programme is implemented and Social Services takes it away, with the small amount of money people are living on, how can they get above the poverty line if his department does not implement some new policies and some new programmes?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. TOBIN:

Mr. Speaker, it is great for the hon. member to get up here and talk about the department implementing programmes, and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. What has been done is that there is a certain allocation from the Department of Social Services as a base for food and fuel and whatever the case may be, and that is received. Some people, Mr. Speaker, who are renting units from the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing have that subsidized by that unit. Other people do not, and then the subsidy had to be dealt with. If the hon. member wants to address that, Mr. Speaker, all he has to do is look at the years when his own leader was in government, and what happened? Not only was that dealt with, Mr. Speaker, the people in Newfoundland who had need of social assistance were segregated whereby they had to go to checkouts and line up, and they had notes, Mr. Speaker, to buy food and fuel. The Department of Social Services then would not trust them with cheques for the purpose of social assistance. They were not allowed, Mr. Speaker, to drive a car. When the Leader of the Liberal Party was a member of the government the people in Newfoundland who wanted social assistance were not allowed to drive a car. They had to turn in their license plates. That is what happened to people on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, we do not treat the people of Newfoundland the same way they were treated under the Liberal regime.

MR. SIMMONS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SIMMONS:
Mr. Speaker, were it not Question Period I would have license to say to the minister, stop living in the past, twenty or twenty-five years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services has had brought to his attention a report made public yesterday which points out that despite the twenty years of marvellous programmes by the minister and his people, 27 per cent of the children of this Province are living under the poverty level. Those are the facts. No amount of regurgitation

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Question! Question!

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Speech! Speech!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. SIMMS:
A bit of both, Mr. Speaker.

... of his version of history will take away from that, Mr. Speaker.

My question is, in light of the fact the current statistics indicate that the programmes that the minister is talking about have clearly failed, what new initiatives does he propose taking now as a result of this abominable set of figures which show 27 percent of these children are below the poverty level?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. TOBIN:
Mr. Speaker, the member for Fortune - Hermitage answered that question.

Just the other day I had the opportunity to speak to the Newfoundland Social Workers Association, which dealt somewhat with the same issue.

MR. LONG:
They gave you a hard time.

MR. TOBIN:
No, Mr. Speaker they did not. As a matter of fact, they were very appreciative of my remarks.

What I said then, Mr. Speaker, I say again now: We have to get control of our destiny in this Province. Because of the mistakes of the Liberal regime in the past, whether they want to talk about it or not Mr. Speaker, money has been pumped into Quebec, because of our hydro situation in this Province, over the past few years. If we had that money and were able to do with it, Mr. Speaker, what we would like to do with it, instead of Quebec doing with it what they want to do with it - it is our money - we would be able to introduce an awful lot of programmes in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I also say to the hon. gentleman for Fortune - Hermitage, if he had been a little bit more supportive of this Province than he was when he was a federal MP, when he stood with the Chrétiens and the Lalondes and his leader when they tried to deny

Newfoundlanders the right to their resources, we could have the finances available to put in place the type of social programmes that he is talking about today, and he would have been a lot better off.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Fortune - Hermitage.

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, again at the appropriate time I will tell the House it was not I who hid away when they were restructuring, not I, but the member for Burin - Placentia West, but that is another issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, Oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the line of questioning put by my colleague and me that the minister does not even understand the issue so I will not waste the time of the House on any more questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of the

Environment (Mr. Russell). I will try and focus on what is a very serious issue concerning the environment and the protection of the environment, and it has to do with recent publication of a report by the Canadian Forestry Centre on fenitrothion spray.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

I am sorry to interrupt the member for St. John's East in asking a legitimate question, but I have to rise before time goes by and then somebody on the opposite side might say the time is gone for me to do it.

The hon. member for Fortune - Hermitage got up in his place - I was listening and I think I heard correctly, and I just want to make sure there is no precedent set here - on a supplementary, he did not ask for a supplementary but he made a number of statements and sat down.

Now this is question period, Mr. Speaker, and if a member of the House is going to be allowed to get up and make a retort when it is supposed to be a question and then sit down, then we are setting new rules for ourselves, and to let that go by now, that would become a precedent that somebody could use in the future to substantiate the fact that it is no longer question period but an opportunity for members opposite, who do not like the answer given, to get up and make a retort and a statement as opposed to asking a question.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to bring to the House's attention, and to your attention in particular, this particular incident that just occurred so that it does not become a precedent in future for question period, instead of legitimate questions, as the hon. member for St. John's East was just going to ask and I am taking up his time, so that they can ask them as opposed to abuse of the rules by the member for Fortune - Hermitage and others like him.

MR. WELLS:

On that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, that is obviously a silly comment. What the hon. member for Fortune - Hermitage said was it is clear that the minister does not understand the issue and has not intention of answering the question, so I will not bother to ask any more. It is as simple, straightforward statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! Order, please!

To that point of order, the point of order is well taken.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

This is question time, and if the hon. member had a question to ask he would have been in order. I should have drawn his attention to

that matter.

The hon. member of St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We did not take time to speak to that point of order, and we appreciate the ruling that the Speaker has made because we are here to ask questions and we will continue to do so, day in and day out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister responsible for the Environment, indeed for the protection of the Environment is concerning the publication of a report by the Canadian Forestry Service which alleges, according to recent newspaper reports, that the test spray that was done with Bt in the Province last Summer proved it to be more effective than the application of fenitrothion. So my question to the Minister of the Environment is whether the minister, in response to this report, is giving advice to the Minister of Forestry (Mr. R. Aylward), on this year's spray programme?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of the Environment.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Forest Resources, and I and our officials are working hand in hand in close co-operation with regards to this year's spray programme. The Pesticides Advisory Board, made up of very competent people, are reviewing the matter and hopefully at their upcoming meeting, early next month as I understand it, they will be

putting the finishing touches on the programme and it will be announced in due course.

MR. LONG:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary of the Minister of the Environment. Would he comment on evidence that we received only through newspaper reports - and I hope that the minister would promise to release the report and table it in the House soon - on the suggestion that Bt, by last Summer's programme, was proven to be more effective than fenitrothion, given the proven damage that Fenitrothion causes to songbirds, to fish, to salmon species and, potentially, to humans?

Will the Minister of the Environment recommend to the Department of Forestry that the application of fenitrothion in this Province be curtailed and that we have significant expansion of the application of Bt this Summer?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of the Environment.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is perhaps aware the Minister of Forest Resources and I, just last week, received a copy of last year's study which was done on the spray programme. We are currently reviewing it and in conjunction with the Pesticide Advisory Board we will be making recommendations. I am optimistic

that very shortly that report will be made public and be available for anybody who wants to see it. I would caution the hon. member not to believe everything that he reads in newspapers.

MR. LONG:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary.

MR. LONG:

My supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Forest Resources. I would just say that the public of this Province is very thankful for the work that newspapers are doing in getting ahold of reports and making available to the public what should already be public information.

My final supplementary to the Minister of Forest Resources on the same issue, is given that the Minister of Forest Resources has said that twenty years ago he stood in an area where fenitrothion was being sprayed and that might have caused his baldness, and made light of what is a very serious issue, will the minister not today, in light of the evidence that is in this report compiled by officials of his own department and the Canadian Forestry Service last Summer, give an undertaking to reverse the proportions and do an application of 2/3 Bt this Summer and 1/3 fenitrothion, a reversal of what the department seems to be intending to do?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Forest Resources.

MR. R. AYLWARD:

Mr. Speaker, I do thank the hon.

member for his question. I would first like to coment that the hon. member for Torngat Mountains (Mr. Warren) was not with me at the time we got sprayed, so there could be other factors involved in my nice shiny head, Mr. Speaker, probably hereditary rather than any spray.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to say I am very sorry to see, and I believe it is the first time this happened, that the socialists in this end of the House are now using The Sunday Express as their researcher. Mr. Speaker, I think that is a bad move on their part. They usually have better researchers than that.

Mr. Speaker, the experimental Bt spray programme, that we had last year in areas of the Northern Peninsula was done under very controlled conditions. We used different formulations of Bt and we found one, through the experiments, that was very effective. It is called diapel-176, Mr. Speaker. That was only learned last season. We have applied to Agriculture Canada, the group that will permit the sprays that we use. Fenitrothion is the only spray that is licensed to use on the hemlock looper and that is why we are using it in this Province.

The Bt that we experimented with last year turned out to be very successful, Mr. Speaker, and we asked for registration and we are waiting for that registration. While we are waiting that registration we will continue with an experiment to try to take the controlled circumstances that were used last year and transfer them into a commerical spray programme. And, Mr. Speaker, this government has agreed this year to

use up to 25 per cent of our spray programme with Bt and hope that it will work, Mr. Speaker, because there is a lot at risk for this Province if our spray programme does not work with the Bt, Mr. Speaker. That is why we still have to use some fenitrothion in our spray programme this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Waterford - Kenmount.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Housing (Mr. Peach). Given the statement by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing that its primary mandate is the provision of social housing for seniors and the disadvantaged as a priority, would the minister explain why Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is continuing to be involved in providing land for the private sector? And I speak specifically of the Pearlgate Development and the recent announcement that a British Columbia firm is interested in developing that site, and a major department store, Eaton's, has been spoken of. Why, in fact, does Newfoundland and Labrador Housing seem to be straying away from its mandate to provide housing to the three sectors I mentioned, and is, in fact, developing land outside of its mandate for the private sector?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Housing.

MR. PEACH:

Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and

Labrador Corporation is not varying from its mandate. The mandate of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is to provide suitable housing to people in the Province in greatest need. But in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Housing Corporation does have the responsibility, and it is part of their mandate, to see that industrial land is developed in a proper way throughout this Province. We do need to ensure that developers and industrialists can locate in various parts of the Province, and for that reason we do from time to time acquire land so that it can be available to municipalities and it can be available to developers who wish to situate themselves in various areas of the Province so that they can carry on proper business operations. So, Mr. Speaker, that is not at all outside of our mandate. I do not know if the member for Waterford - Kenmount supports the views and the thoughts of his leader, who would consider, of course, the City of St. John's to be a parasitic city.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Waterford - Kenmount.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker, I heard the comment over there from someone that it was sold for profit. We can say the same thing of the Sprung land. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing sold \$1 million worth of land for \$150,000. Was that for profit?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. GULLAGE:

Was that a profit?

Mr. Minister, could I ask whether Newfoundland and Labrador Housing plans to be a major shareholder in this proposed development when it does take place, or is it just simply selling the land? I ask that question because of the risk, as we all know, of shopping center development anyway right now given that the St. John's - Mount Pearl region as a whole has more per capita shopping space than any other area of Canada. So, given the risk involved, does this government plan to be a shareholder or partner in any way in this particular development, or is it simply selling the land for profit, as you did with Sprung?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MR. PEACH:

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I say to the member for Waterford - Kenmount, I am not sure if he is speaking now as a member of this House or a member of City Council. He obviously has a conflict as to whether he is going to represent the City of Mount Pearl or the City of St. John's. He should get that matter straightened out first.

Also, Mr. Speaker, he made reference to the parcel of land Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation made available to Newfoundland Enviroponics at a cost of \$150,000 for 11.9 hectares of property that was zoned for agricultural development in that particular area. It was a sod farm, as a point of interest, Mr.

Speaker, for the Housing Corporation. I say to the member for Waterford - Kenmount that parcel of land, the 11.9 hectares I think it was, made available to Newfoundland Enviroponics, an agricultural piece of property, for a recovery cost of \$150,000 to attract a technology to the Province that we have, and it was to make a profit, was a much greater investment, Mr. Speaker, than the \$150,000 that the party is paying for their leader's salary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

It is now four o'clock and it is Private Member's Day. So I will call on the hon. the member for Naskaupi.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Naskaupi.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. KELLAND:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like the government side of the House to pay close attention to what will be said in the debate on my Private Members' motion, because I think it not only affects those of us in the Opposition, but it will have an affect on those currently in government as their tenure is drawing to a rapid close.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. KELLAND:

What applies to us today, as the official Opposition, will in short order be applying to those of them who are successful in re-election and will form part of the official Opposition next time around.

MR. TULK:
Five.

MR. KELLAND:

When you consider preparing a Private Members' motion you think about, perhaps, a regional issue - by regional I mean Labrador as a region - or a district issue as it might relate to my own district of Naskaupi.

I felt that this particular subject, access to information in order for us to adequately carry out our functions as Opposition members, was more important because it affects all districts in the Province, not just my district or not just the region of Labrador, but indeed every aspect of our function here.

In order for us to discharge our duties as an official Opposition we must have access to information about government operations and government spending, and hence the reason for this particular motion.

I have had an indication that the hon. the President of the Council (Mr. Simms) will speak first for the government side on this particular motion. As an acquaintance of mine for a great number of years, I recognize him as an honourable gentleman, as no doubt his colleagues are, and I would not want to see this particular debate deteriorate into an excuse to get onto subjects that really have nothing to do with the motion itself.

Having witnessed the performance of government on debate in the House in recent days and weeks, it would seem to me that they would use any excuse to enter into a level of personal attack so that if we are talking about access to information, as we are in this case, freedom of information, this may provide an opportunity, perhaps, for those of less character than the Government House Leader to enter into comments about a supplemented salary, for example, for the Leader of the Opposition, which has been discussed in detail in the House and adequately explained to everyone in the Province, with the possible exception of the members of the government.

So I know that the hon. the President of the Council is far too honourable a gentleman to use that excuse, and that his comments will be confined to the context of my Private Members' motion.

In advance I commend him for taking that sort of an approach and an attitude towards it. Let us not use it as an excuse to lower the level of debate and let us try to pay attention to what I am after here, as a member of the House of Assembly, in raising this motion in the first place.

It has been said in correspondence and it has been said through the media that there is no universal method whereby freedom of information legislation is applied in a number of different provinces in our country. There are some differences. Some provinces, I understand, do not have freedom of information legislation in place, but a number of others do, at least five, of which we are one.

The difference in at least a

couple of these jurisdictions is that when the Government of Ontario, which has the legislation, and the federal government, which has some legislation governing freedom of information - both of these charge fees - accepts a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act, the minister is not the person who either decides to grant or deny the request for information. That is a significant difference from the way we do it in this Province.

In this Province, I believe Section 7 of the act says, within thirty days, the head, the minister, may decide to either grant or deny the request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. That allows the minister, if he so wishes, to protect himself from legitimate and reasonable questions by the Opposition, for whatever his or her reasons may be.

The federal government and the Ontario government handled it a little differently in that they have independent commissioners who decide on the level of fees which will be charged when information is dug out and provided to the questioner. I think that that is much more reasonable because it takes that kind of power out of the hands of the ministers who can protect themselves and maintain a shield or a wall of secrecy around their operations and expenditures.

It seems in the three years I have been here as a member of the House of Assembly it is extremely difficult and becoming increasingly difficult to get information on government operations.

As the tide changes, I do not

think there is any question at all in anyone's mind that the political tide is changing in this Province as it is in many parts of Canada, as people and politicians on the government side realize that the tide is changing, a tide that no one can stop it - it is changing - when they realize the ship they sail on that floats on that tide is becoming leaky, the first evidences of it starting to sink is now become well known everywhere you look.

They have that realization on that side. You can tell by their performance in the House. When they realize that, they become more secretive, they lock more doors, they become less accessible to us as their critics in the House and they have that realization deep in their soul.

So it seems that over the three years I mentioned it is becoming increasingly difficult to get information from government members, from ministers, in particular.

It is recognized that an Opposition plays just an important a role in the parliamentary system as does government, but in order for us to carry out our function, we must have access to information on government operations and government spending. We must have access.

What is there to hide if the government is performing and carrying out their operations and their expenditures in an honorable, legitimate proper manner? Making access to information difficult for the Opposition tends to create an impression in the minds of just about everybody that the government may just have something

to hide.

There are many examples, I can give you some, of how difficult it is to get information from the government. We have a number of different methods. We can write letters to ministers, we can ask them verbally in meetings, we can use the Question Period which, as we have seen today and other days, often becomes a farce. Or we can put written questions on the Order Paper in which certain regulations ask that certain information is given in certain time limits. None of these have been very effective.

I recall meeting with a minister some time ago and asking him something like, I suppose, twenty-five or thirty questions, matters of concern to me, the district and my region. I do not really have many answers yet, although I think I have a couple of short letters from him promising that information would be forthcoming. I do not have the information.

Another example is found with my colleague for Port de Grave (Mr. Efford) who in his role, as is his responsibility as a critic, as a member of the Opposition who examines operation of government's expenditures, filed a request with the Premier invoking The Freedom Of Information Act and saying he required a number of pieces of information to do with government spending, government operations and the purposes for travel and a variety of things related to that.

The Premier then, using Section (7) of The Freedom Of Information Act, decided to grant that request for information, and keep in mind, as I said earlier, that he can

either grant or deny.

Sometimes you question whether or not The Freedom of Information Act should be there in the first place if a minister can deny your request anyway. Anyway, the Premier decided to grant in writing this information.

However, they have just recently made some change in regulation whereby a greatly increased fee for services was applied, \$15.00 an hour if it is not stored in a computer and whatever the costs are if it is stored in a computer. My colleague for Port de Grave (Mr. Efford) was advised in writing, after a series of pieces of correspondence, that in order to get information that he required to carry out his job as a member of the official Opposition, it would cost him \$445 to get the information he is entitled to. Now, that is unbelievable.

I can understand, perhaps, when requests come from the media or from citizens, that they would like to have certain pieces of information that would cause certain work within the bureaucracy and therefore incur a cost, but my colleague, and all of my colleagues, and our colleagues from the third party, are here to do a job and there is absolutely no reason on the face of this earth that any member of the House of Assembly in the role of Opposition should have to pay for information that is his by right, as a member of the Opposition, and is absolutely necessary for him in order to carry out the functions of his job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. KELLAND:

There is no question about that in my mind.

This I use and take as another example of government trying to increase the difficulty for the official Opposition to obtain information.

MR. FUREY:

The great ministerial muzzle.

MR. KELLAND:

Again I have to ask, what the government is afraid of and what are the ministers afraid of other than the sinking ship syndrome which they are now aware of, as is everybody else in the Province? What are they really afraid of really?

If, to pick because he is visible, the Minister of Environment and Lands (Mr. Russell) carries out a certain function, a certain operation and incurs certain expenses, what would he possibly have to hide from me, as an Opposition member who may be curious about it, who may, in representing the people that I do represent, want to know that the money is being spent properly, wisely and legitimately? What would he have to hide if the operation was clear and above board and done in an honourable manner?

I would suggest he would have nothing to hide. I apologize to the minister because I happened to be looking at him and used him as an example with no particular personal reference to him as a minister, but the whole thing is there. There seems to be a very strong attempt by whatever means possible to prevent the Opposition from carrying out their functions in the role of examining what government is doing and assuring

ourselves and the people we represent that government is being run properly. There are many, many questions about that last comment that have been in the minds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for quite some time, quite a number of years in fact.

I have another example I can give you which indicates how difficult it is for Opposition members to get information. At a recent Resource Estimates Committee I attended, my colleague for Fortune - Hermitage (Mr. Simmons) gave an example to the minister we were questioning at the time. He had made a verbal request for information to a particular minister and was told that he must put that in writing and must do all kinds of other things, and he never did get the information. It was never given to him directly.

However, he had his secretary call the same individual for the same information as a citizen of the Province and the information was readily given to that individual. The minister, who was being questioned about that at the time, said he would investigate. He apparently did and could find no one who would admit to having performed in that manner. But this is the sort of thing that happens to us all the time.

We could even go to the written questions on the Order Paper, and that is all governed by our regulations and whatever. We have placed something like 120 or 130, I guess, written questions on the Order Paper. We only probably have six or seven answers.

AN HON. MEMBER:
They were silly.

MR. KELLAND:

The minister to my left suggests that the questions were silly, and I would have to say there, 'What gives you the right, Mr. Minister, to sit in judgement in that manner?'

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible) public figures.

MR. KELLAND:
Whatever! Whatever!

We have placed the questions on the Order Paper and they have not been answered. Five or six have been answered.

When we do get an answer, and I have another example here, the answer has absolutely no relationship to the question asked in the first place.

If you would look, if you wish, at Question 15 on the Order Paper, which was dated March 15, I asked a number of different questions to a minister and there were quite a few sections to the question. The answer that came back, which was tabled by that minister, has no relationship whatsoever to the question asked. So you have to question the quality of the answers, let alone the lack of them. The few answers we do get have no substance and no quality and do not relate to the information we require.

When we talk about The Freedom of Information Act, we do not believe that members of the Opposition parties should have to invoke The Freedom of Information Act. That Freedom of Information Act, in our opinion, is there for anyone other than an elected representative of this House to get information they may require for any number of reasons. That is what it is there for.

We are here, as elected representatives of a number of districts, and our job and part of our function is to examine what government is doing to make sure they are doing it properly and to try to keep them on a straight track. We cannot do that unless we have the information from the ministers on what they are doing, how they are spending their money, what they are spending their time at, and things of this nature. We should not have to use The Freedom of Information Act. But if we are forced to use The Freedom of Information Act because of the way government tries to hamper and hinder our operations and our functions, then I am asking, in my motion, that any charges which might normally apply to agencies outside the House of Assembly be waived for members of the House of Assembly, every member of the House of Assembly.

I can ask the government this particular question: If a backbench member of the government required information of any minister at any given time through the course of the year, and whether he does it verbally or whether he does it in writing, has any member of the government side ever been charged one penny for any piece of information required of a minister? I doubt it very much. Are we not all subject to the same regulations in the House of Assembly? Has any backbencher or, let us say, non-ministerial member of government, ever made an enquiry for information and been charged as much as one penny for it? I doubt it. But we have already given you an example of my colleague for Port de Grave who was about to be charged \$445 for information that he required in order to carry out his job.

So, having asked that question, has any government member ever paid for information from one of his colleagues, which I doubt and everybody else would doubt, I would ask that the members of the government put themselves in our position and, perhaps a little facetiously, I can say that the members of the citizenry of our Province are going to put you in our position next time anyway, and say to yourself, 'I require information from a minister and I am an elected representative of a district in this Province, I should not have to pay for that information because I require it as part of the information I need to carry out my job.'

This seems to be applicable moreso when the House is not in session, because when the House is not in session, we do not have access to Oral Question Period, we do not have access to the Order Paper on which to pose questions, and if we do, when the House is sitting, we do not seem to get the same charges for the same pieces of information. Why would it apply when the House is not sitting?

Keep in mind, government decides when we sit, not us. So, put yourselves in our position, members of the government, and visualize six months, three months, ten months, five years, no, not five years, a year down the road when you were sitting over here and require information, and you ask the member for Naskaupi, whoever happens to be in the Cabinet, for information, whether in Oral Question Period, or on the Order paper, or through a letter when the House is not in session. How will you feel if I and my colleagues treat you as government treats Opposition? You will not like it. You will rise

in your place and you will complain just as I am complaining.

I suggest to you, members of government, that is no way to run government. That is no way to run government, to deny the official Opposition access to information about your operations and expenditures that we require in order to provide good critical comment on what to do.

Without an Opposition, you have a free hand; with the numbers you have, you have a free hand; with your attitude towards legitimate questions from the Opposition, you have a free hand, and that is arrogance in its most profound form. I do not believe clear-minded, good thinking members of the House of Assembly, no matter where they sit can countenance that continuing.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

The hon. member's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
By leave, by leave!

MR. KELLAND:
I will clue up in just one brief second. I do ask you to give good consideration to my motion. There is nothing there to hurt any member of the House of the Assembly in the performance of his duties, it is there to help every member of the House of Assembly.

Government would have a better image in this Province if they are more open with the people they represent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the President of Council.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for recognizing me, even though I had some doubt. I thought the hon. Speaker was looking at one of the members of the Opposition. The Speaker, as always, is a great man and can see all things at all times, whenever he wishes to.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to what the member for Naskaupi (Mr. Kelland) had to say in this particular debate, and I must say, I was not impressed, as the member for Twillingate said today about the Minister of Fisheries. I was not at all impressed with what the member for Naskaupi had to say in defense of his own resolution.

It is unfortunate that throughout his twenty-minute address he did not, in all fairness, put the issue in its total perspective. He dealt with one specific, tiny, minute little point, and not very well at that.

He started off by patronizing me. 'What a fine man I was. I was not going to be nasty, or anything like that. I was not going to talk about the Leader of the Opposition's salary. I hope we did not use this debate for that purpose.'

DR. COLLINS:
He was not even accurate.

MR. SIMMS:
He himself is the person who

raised it! I do not know why, unless they are paranoid over there about it or something. I have no intention of talking about that. I am going to try to deal with some facts here, but that is not to say that other members may not.

It may very well be within the realm of debate, and that will be up to the Speaker to determine, not for the hon. member to lecture us as to how we might approach this particular debate. Although, I do wonder, Mr. Speaker, since we are talking about freedom of information, whether or not, not whether or not, I would love to see the response that the Leader of the Opposition might provide if that question were able to be posed under The Freedom of Information Act, but, of course, it does not apply to him anyway, so he will not have to answer that question.

The member did say in passing though, and I did think this was interesting, he understood when there was a lot of work associated with putting together answers and he understood why, perhaps there should be fees and costs. Well, if he understands it, I do not know why he would even bother to put forth the resolution that he puts forth today asking that there be no fees. He is contradicting himself right away.

He asks, 'What are we afraid of?' The answer is rather obvious because in all the examples he has given, we have indicated that we would provide the information. That has never been the question, never been the question.

Then he talks about the questions that were on the Order Paper. This is just dealing with a few of

the hon. member's comments. He said, 'We had 100 questions or 125 questions on the Order Paper.' The actual fact is, of course, there were only about six or seven questions on the Order Paper, asked of twenty ministers. That was the full extent of their effort, six or seven questions, all the same, asked of twenty ministers or eighteen ministers giving the impression to the public and to the press, 'Oh, they put a whole 100 or 125 questions on the Order Paper.'

If that is not a bit misleading I do not know what is. Talk about sneaky, using the hon. member for Gander's favorite adjective.

The other point is, Mr. Speaker, he did not give credit to the fact that there have been a considerable number of answers. He did say, 'Many of the answers are the same.' Well, of course they are because the questions are all the same. There were only about six or seven questions.

I know I have personally answered three, I think, of the maybe four given to me, about travel, about cars, about staff, and it is no big deal. There are lots of answers. In fact, I am told there have been 15 responses, as a matter of fact, in the last couple of weeks, 15 answers to questions and the hon. member said there were hardly any.

Mr. Speaker, let us get down to the nitty-gritty in this particular debate. Let us talk about The Freedom of Information Act, the legislation itself and its purpose, just so everybody understands it. In Newfoundland, of course, we do not have to take a backseat to any other jurisdiction in Canada.

In fact, we were one of the leaders in introducing freedom of information legislation; one of the forerunners; a personal commitment by the Premier to bring in freedom of information legislation contained in this particular Act, and it was to enforce the basic principle that we all are familiar with, that is the right of access of any Canadian citizen living in this Province, in our case, to information contained in the records of government departments.

There are certain restrictions. Everybody is familiar with the restrictions. I did not hear the hon. member address any concerns about the restrictions that are placed on freedom of information so I presume he has no problem with the restrictions that are placed. That is the exemptions to the Act and there are two types the non-discretionary ones and the discretionary ones. He has no problem with any of those so I do not even need to go through any of that information.

He did say that other provinces do have similar pieces of legislation and that is accurate. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and the federal government, there are six jurisdictions that have access to information legislation. Manitoba also has it, but it has not yet been proclaimed and, of course, after the events of yesterday, it is not likely to be proclaimed for another while yet.

AN HON. MEMBER:

The socialists did not declare that.

MR. SIMMS:

No, they did not. The socialists in Manitoba, while they passed the

legislation and approved it, never did proclaim their Freedom of Information legislation which is rather interesting coming from a socialist government. They did not.

MR. TULK:

When did they pass it?

MR. SIMMS:

Oh, I do not know. They passed it quite sometime ago. They never did proclaim it.

MR. TULK:

They had lots of time.

MR. SIMMS:

Oh, they had plenty of time, plenty of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. DINN:

(Inaudible) auto pact.

MR. SIMMS:

Yes, they might have been worried about some questions about the auto pact or auto insurance or whatever it was up there.

Mr. Speaker, what was brought in with that legislation here in Newfoundland provided for fees and the member did not address any concerns about the normal fees that are charged for anybody who wants to obtain information under The Freedom of Information Act, that is to charge people a basic \$5 fee for all requests that are processed.

The first two hours of information gathering, and this is very important, by any provincial employee or any person or individual, is free. Two hours of information gathering is free. If the question takes less than two

hours to put together in terms of a response, there is no charge or no additional fee.

If there is additional time used in putting the information together, then there will be an additional charge of \$15 per hour, and of course, anybody seeking information, if they wish to have reproduced photocopies, they are expected to pay the cost. In our case, we have estimated it at twenty-five cents a copy, which is not an unreasonable cost, and nobody really ever complains about it, I do not believe.

Just as an example, if I might just digress, yesterday the NDP asked a question of the Premier and I will table the response, or this document which explains the answer very much in detail, with respect to some individual who applied to the Workers' Compensation Board for some information. The policy has been in place there since 1983, and their policy is the same basically as we have here, under our own legislation, a basic charge of \$5, plus twenty-five cents a page. In 1987, they had 349 requests for copies of various files. In all cases, copies were made available; the average charge per file copy was \$16.30.

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible).

MR. SIMMS:
He understood a question was asked about a possible charge of \$80.00. While that is highly unusual, it is possible if somebody wants all those copies. But it was not additional fees, it was for copies of files. The answer there is very clear, Mr. Speaker. They are quite fair. In fact, if a claimant asks for

information and the file is rather thick, they will take the time to call that particular questioner and explain to him, 'You have a very thick file. Do you still want us to proceed? Because you have to pay for the copies.' It is then up to them whether they wish to or not.

The other point is, if you want to come in and sit down with an employee of the Workers' Compensation Board and look through your files, there is no charge. So, I mean, there is nothing unreasonable or unfair. But I will table this on behalf of the Premier in response to a question asked yesterday by the member for Menihek, I think it was.

Mr. Speaker, that is basically some of the background. Now let me just get to what has happened over the last six months or so in Newfoundland. First of all, with respect to the criticism, and it was repeated by the member for Naskaupi, and the perception that somehow people have to pay for all information under The Freedom Of Information Act - that is certainly the perception, and it is being perpetrated, I think, by members opposite and some media - those criticisms are not accurate nor are they fair.

Just as an example: The individual for whom this legislation was introduced in the first place, John Q. Public, would not have to pay any additional fees for personal requests for information. Ninety-nine per cent of the requests we have from the general public are all addressed very normally, no additional charge.

What has happened in recent months is that we have been receiving

unreasonable requests for information, and there are some examples I can cite here. The Sunday Express requested travel information: Copies of travel receipts, travel claims for all ministers and staff who accompanied ministers, and any other staff. If a staff person from another department, Justice or Intergovernmental Affairs accompanied a minister to a conference or something, they wanted all of those travel claims, all the copies of all of the receipts, all the information on all of these people for one full year.

MR. R. AYLWARD:
Ridiculous!

MR. SIMMS:
One year.

MR. YOUNG:
The hon. the member for Port de Grave wants you to repeat it.

MR. SIMMS:
I will table it afterwards. I do not have enough time to repeat it.

CBC wrote a four page letter - four pages - asking I do not know how many questions, umpteen questions of a very, very technical nature concerning the Sprung Project. It would have taken weeks and weeks and weeks to find the people to put all the answers together. Michael Harris, himself, at The Sunday Express, example number three, not only wanted to know about the Premier's travel, but he wanted all the information on all those who have travelled with him, all those staff from all of the various departments I just alluded to, Justice and IGA, who would frequently accompany the Premier. He wanted copies of all receipts,

all travel claims, all information, details on all these people for a period of five or six months.

MR. J. CARTER:
It is ridiculous.

MR. SIMMS:
For a period of five or six months!

MR. J. CARTER:
Stupid! Stupid!

MR. SIMMS:
Opposition requests, and I am not certain who it was, but I seem to recollect a question, it might have been from the member for St. Barbe, and if I am wrong I am sure he will correct me, but certainly there was a question from Opposition members asking for the same type of information, travel information and so on, for the period since 1985, since the last provincial general election; they wanted information and details covering the last three fiscal years. Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask you! And many of these unreasonable requests, by the way, were being used by certain print media, one in particular, to simply fill up the newspapers. And I say, why should the taxpayers of this Province pay for this material to fill up a newspaper? Why should they?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the point is these kinds of requests and examples that I gave were not reasonable because it was taking a lot of the time of provincial public servants to try to accumulate all of this information, much of which was difficult to put together, by the way, because there are several different bits of information located in different places. For example, the department files are

not kept by people, by names, they are filed by dates for accounting purposes. That is one example. Also, I understand, receipts are kept in the vault in the Department of Finance, not kept in the department itself. Travel claims are kept in the government department, and so on. So, I mean, it is not an easy and simple task, as members might expect.

So the reason for bringing in the fees, then, was that in order to be responsible to the taxpayers, we must recover all of those exorbitant costs associated with these unreasonable and exorbitant requests.

Other jurisdictions have, as the member for Naskaupi mentioned, similar legislation. Ontario charges fees, and the federal government charge fees. So we are not breaking new ground. We are not doing anything different or unusual in our particular situation.

God, how time flies! I only have four or five minutes left.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to get to a couple of things. I did take the opportunity to check other jurisdictions, and in the case of the federal government I made an enquiry, for example, to see what it would cost to get information on MPs. I was told that information related to the MPs offices you cannot get under the federal government's Freedom of Information Act. An MPs office, the \$50,000 or \$60,000 he gets to run his office, that is not applicable under Freedom of Information.

So, I said, 'What about a member of Parliament who was involved as a parliamentary secretary,' as one

case? 'Oh, yes.' But if you wanted information for a two or three year period, it would cost you roughly \$300, not unlike our situation. Well I said, 'What about if I wanted it for just one month?' He said, 'We can give you an estimate.' I said, 'Well, the member for Fortune - Hermitage used to be a parliamentary secretary. Could you check it out for me?' January of 1982, I found out. 'Yes, we can get that information for you, no charge.'

The interesting thing, by the way, is that when I did get the information, I found that on the authorization form it simply says, 'To accompany minister on business trip.' It does not say anything more than that. It was not very specific. When I read the receipts and documents of his trip, I found that it was January 5 to January 11 of 1982, a nice cool time of the year, and the member for Fortune - Hermitage accompanied the minister on a business trip to Honolulu, Hawaii. I thought that was pretty interesting. So that kind of information is available.

Mr. Speaker, I only have two minutes left. I want to conclude by saying this: Some startling information, if hon. members wonder why we brought in this pay schedule. The first quarter of last year, 1987, there were ten requests under Freedom of Information in four months. Four from private individuals, which would include MHAs. So they never bothered last year. Four from them, six from the media - five from The Sunday Express. The first quarter of this year, six from private individuals - this is since the fees went up - more than there were last year when there were no fees, and there were

sixteen from the media, which is three times as much as was there last year when there were no fees. So it has not been a deterrent to them.

Here is the interesting statistic: Last year, all told, sixty-six requests under the Freedom of Information legislation, twenty-four from the private sector, and so on. The interesting thing is that of the sixty-six, thirty-four were from The Sunday Express, in the whole of last year. Now, Mr. Speaker, that tells me something. It may not strike home to the hon. members opposite, but I will tell you that if we are going to be responsible as a government to the taxpayers of this Province, if we are going to be responsible and ensure that we protect the public trough as best we can, then when you get exorbitant requests, unreasonable requests, it is not unexpected that those people should pay. But in the case of most of the questions members opposite might have, they can simply ask questions and if it does not take an excessive amount of time to get the answers, we will give them to them. We have done it on numerous occasions, and they really cannot accuse us of that. If they want information for a three year period, they must be expected to pay.

And the Minister of Fisheries will give a glowing example of it when he speaks in this particular debate, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the first two years after I was elected to this House of Assembly, my main objective was to try to discredit the government on the other side and expose them for what they really are, so that we could prove to the people of this Province that we are the alternative, that we are the party that should be in power. That was my objective for the first two years.

After listening to the President of Treasury Board and President of the Council for the last twenty minutes, I am now convinced that we do not have to do that anymore, because they are doing quite a capable job themselves. He stood on his feet and never once mentioned the resolution. He totally misled what the resolution is all about, what the objectives of the Opposition are, and the reason why they should ask questions.

The resolution very clearly states: 'BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the regulation be amended to provide that any charges, which might normally apply to agents or agencies outside of the House of Assembly, be waived for Members of the House of Assembly who require the information for the normal pursuit of their duties.'

There is nothing irregular about that. There is nothing to say that that is a ridiculous resolution, or that nobody should vote for it. As elected members of the House of Assembly, as members of a party representing the people of this Province, we

have a right to ask questions and to get information that the people of this Province should know.

The President of the Council asked, 'Why would the taxpayers of this Province want to know the answers to the questions we are asking?' I am going to give you an example, and my colleague and friend for Naskaupi read out an example of what we are talking about. I refer you back to 4 December. This is where I requested information on two parliamentary secretaries to the Premier. The information I requested was just simply the cost of travel.

Why would an MHA require information on the cost of travel? Because we want to know. Were there costs entailed? What was the travel for? If there was none, it is just as easy to say no as to say yes. That is all we ask. We do not know the answers to the questions, so we just write a letter and ask for the information.

On 4 December, I received a letter from the Chief of Staff: 'On behalf of Premier Peckford I acknowledge receipt of your letter of November 24 requesting information. Please be assured that your correspondence will be brought to the Premier's attention at which time a more a detailed response will be forthcoming.' The Premier's Chief of Staff says very clearly in the letter of December 4 that they will give us the information requested.

Somewhere between December 4 and December 16, they started to take this very seriously. 'Now, gentlemen, we are going to let the people of the Province know how much money we are wasting in

travelling around the world, going to Norway, going to Japan and going to China. We had better cut this off.'

He comes back and writes, 'We are going to have to charge you for this.' I received a bill with the letter totalling \$445. Obviously, in the week I asked the question, they changed the Freedom of Information guidelines to insert the charge for only one reason, because of the exorbitant amount of travel incurred by the ministers. I am going to give proof that we know for a fact that this travel has been incurred.

We all know about the limousines. That is public knowledge. The press themselves picked that up, the \$1500 limousines, the \$1200 hotel rooms and the \$200 tip given to the driver. Now, we really can afford to do that in light of the release that came forth in the press today, from the National Council on Welfare, in which they very clearly stated that 24 per cent of the children in Newfoundland are living below the poverty line, are living in poverty! We can afford to give our \$200 tips! We can afford to live in \$1200 hotel rooms or use \$1500 limousines when something like this is happening!

This is the reason why we, as an Opposition Party, have a duty and a job to ask questions. The only reason why the charge was put there is to try and stop us. Where am I going to get \$445 every time I need information from the government? Every time I require information, I have got to come up with \$400 to \$500.

It is absolutely absurd to expect any MHA or any backbencher on the government side or on the

Opposition side or from the little party down in the corner down there to have to come up with that kind of money. They know full well that we cannot do it and, therefore, they implemented the charge to stop it, because they know what they are doing is absolutely wrong.

Let me just relay some figures, as my colleague from Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir related yesterday in his speech, of the cost of travel this Province is encountering from the different minister's offices. Let me give you an example. In 1987 - 1988, the Premier's Office travel was \$98,000, in the Premier's office alone, the Premier himself! The Department of Finance, Public Works, for example, \$40,000; Development and Tourism, estimated \$60,000. Just listen! The Estimates Committees, which it is a disgrace to have Estimates Committees, estimated and approved \$60,000 and he spent \$119,000! What is the point of sitting down in this House of Assembly and approving in Committees a budget for 1987 - 1988 of \$60,000 and a minister can go off and travel the world and spend \$119,000?

Let me go a little further. Energy, \$60,000; Environment, \$40,000; Transportation - here is another good one - we approved \$60,000 for a minister to travel and he spent \$80,000.

Let me relate back again to what came up in Question Period today, what was on the provincial news and, I guess, on the national news again today, 27 per cent of our children are living in hunger and in poverty without food, without clothing, without proper heating, and we can spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year in

the minister's office and the minister alone, we are not talking about the executive support, we are not talking about all the assistance, we are just talking about the minister's office alone and I can go on and on. These are facts. These are not figures of an alarmist. This is not an alarmist standing up and dreaming up figures. It is information we have.

Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development, approved, \$60,000 and spent \$76,000. Now, the President of the Council asked the question, 'Why would the taxpayers of this Province want to know answers to questions like that?'

I can tell you why they want to know. It is very, very simple, basic information and knowledge. When you sit down in the morning for breakfast and you have two children sitting around the table and the best thing you can put on that table is to share a slice of bread for breakfast with yourself and your children, that is why they want to know the answers to those questions.

The member for Carbonear should not stand in the doorway and make fun because he knows full well he and I and all other members of this House can go out and sit down in a restaurant and enjoy a good breakfast. Twenty-seven per cent of the children in this Province cannot even afford the luxury of a slice of bread for breakfast.

If you want to stand up in that doorway and tell me what I am saying is wrong, and make fun of it, then I suggest to you -

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the member for Placentia.

MR. PATTERSON:

This is beginning to be joke, listening to the hon. member there.

In the last session of this House, I introduced a resolution that would help solve the problem. I know that there is poverty. I know there is poverty out there. I introduced the resolution on universality and every one to a man voted against that. You voted against the poor people of Newfoundland, and you are being a hypocrite standing there. Dig out the papers and you will see you voted against my resolution -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. PATTERSON:

- that will help alleviate the problem that exists in Newfoundland and Canada today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:

To that point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

I do not mind the hon. gentleman getting up and making mini-speeches, that is probably as far as his capabilities go, but let me say this to the hon. gentleman, and let me say to you, Mr. Speaker, that this kind of thing that he has been carrying on for the past week cannot go on. He cannot get up on points of order to interrupt another member speaking. Otherwise, this place

would generate again into the bear pit that he would like to see.

MR. PATTERSON:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Placentia.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

He spoke! He spoke!

MR. PATTERSON:

The hon. gentleman, who was House Leader for the Opposition, you voted against the poor people in Newfoundland, and you people professed to be the leaders of the toiling masses, you people are scoundrels and hypocrites.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

There is no point of order, it was just a disagreement and a difference of opinion between two hon. gentlemen.

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the display that just came out of the member for Placentia (Mr. Patterson) is typical and shows exactly the problem we are having in this Province.

We have a government in power who are elected by a clear majority, no argument, by a clear majority of the population of this province to administer and provide a decent living for the people of this Province. No question, no argument, until the next election that stands in place. That will change after the next election, make no mistake about it. If anybody wishes to argue, drop the

writ, issue the writ, we are ready to go.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, what we are dealing with is why would the people of the Province want to know. I can give you many, many examples of why the people of this Province would want to know.

Let us stay away from the hungry children, and if any member on the Opposite side think that I am fantasizing and I am trying to be an alarmist, I will take them personally to homes and families, children and parents, who are sitting down and sharing a bowl full of rice, or a slice of bread for breakfast, or whatever. I will show them very clearly. We are not dreaming this up. We can take them and show them the people.

Let us get to the situation about why should the people know where the tax dollars are being spent in another situation. Let us take our hospitals, for example, -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, would you protect me from the idiotic things coming down from the backbench because I have some points to make. My time is elapsing and there is no way you can put your ideas forth in this House with people sitting in the back like that.

We have a situation in hospitals where our health care is in a desperation situation. Words cannot describe the desperate situation. I cannot come up with

a word to describe it. There is no question about that. Let me give you an example of why we need information on the spending by the government and the waste over travel.

When we go into our hospitals, we have a situation in our hospitals where people are actually dying because they cannot get proper care by our doctors and by our nurses. It is not that the doctors or nurses are not capable of doing their job.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. EFFORD:

That is a statement -

MR. SIMMS:

Irresponsible.

MR. EFFORD:

Go to your hospitals and ask them. Let us go together, let us get a Select Committee of this House and go to any one hospital, any one hospital. Two weeks ago at the Health Sciences Hospital we had fourteen people who needed by-pass surgery, who waited for ten days in critical condition to get into the operating room. Why could they not get into the operating room? The money is not there to provide the beds that needed to get those people the proper health care. Not enough people -

AN HON. MEMBER:

Not true.

MR. EFFORD:

It is true. Not enough people, not enough money to provide the proper nursing care.

MR. DINN:

You are really careless with the

truth.

MR. EFFORD:

Let us go down to the Hoyles Home and Escasoni, now let us give you some more truth, where the manager herself came on public radio -

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, in all fairness and reasonableness, the hon. member - I did not catch his whole speech - but I did hear him attack me and say as I left that I did not once mention the resolution, and I talked about everything else.

I would like the hon. member to tell us what is he doing now.

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there is no point of order.

MR. SIMMS:

It is a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is a legitimate point of order, it is totally relevant to the resolution.

He is talking about health care and everything. The resolution talks about freedom of information, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member should try to contain his remarks to the appropriate topic.

MR. SPEAKER:

There is no point of order. There is just a difference of opinion between hon. gentlemen.

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

Let me inform the President of the Council, the Deputy Premier, the President of Treasury Board, whatever titles are on top of his little head, he asked the question why would the taxpayers of this Province want to know the answers to the questions put forth? You said it is in Hansard, this question by the Opposition.

I am very clearly pointing out why the taxpayers would want to know the answers to the question. We need the answers to the question because of the expenditure and the wastefulness of money.

We had a parliamentary assistant last year, a back bencher, let me give you an idea of what a back bencher of the government does. Last year the back bencher spent \$57,000 in travel and we turn around and we will tell the people of this Province that we cannot give them a decent living, and we will tell the people of this Province that when we ask questions about how much money did the Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier spend last year, he will send me back a bill for \$445.

I know now why they are sending me back the bill for \$445, because what they are doing -

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. EFFORD:

I will deal with that in a second.

- what they are doing is they need to travel a little bit more and they will try to accumulate a few more dollars to travel, so they put the bill and hopefully we will pay the bill. Fifteen times \$445 for all the questions, we could get another \$100,000 to waste over in London doing some of the

scurrilous things that you did last year over there.

Now, what was the question you just asked?

MR. SIMMS:

We did not say we would not give you the information and that was your whole point, is it not?

MR. EFFORD:

Okay, let me answer the question. Since I received the bill of \$445, since that time the House of Assembly opened and we put on the Order Paper a written question, the same identical question that we requested and we got the bill back for \$445. This was back in January. Today is April and we have absolutely no reference or no answer to the question to date.

MR. SIMMS:

(Inaudible) to put that together, a full year.

MR. EFFORD:

The Premier said very clearly in a copy of his letter that the information is available and we will give it to you tomorrow.

MR. SIMMS:

Absolutely.

MR. EFFORD:

That was back on December 14.

MR. SIMMS:

(Inaudible) pay tomorrow.

MR. EFFORD:

This is now April 27 and we have not received any information yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Table the letter.

MR. EFFORD:

This is a copy of the Premier's letter. Go to the files, is that

going to cost you money?

MR. SIMMS:

Let us see if what you said he said is what he actually said -

MR. EFFORD:

Read the Premier's own mail.

MR. SIMMS:

- or did you fabricate that too?

MR. EFFORD:

Did I fabricate that the Minister of Development and Tourism (Mr. Barrett) spent last year, \$119,000 in travel? Is that fabrication when a statement like that is made?

MR. SIMMS:

Who said it was fabrication?

MR. EFFORD:

Well, you were accusing me of fabrication, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:

(Inaudible).

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there is no question about it.

MR. TULK:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Parsons):

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

MR. TULK:

The hon. gentleman should know better. He has been shouting across the House the word 'fabrication' and I refer Your Honour to page 106 of Beauchesne and the listing there. I would ask the hon. gentleman to be the leader that he should be and withdraw the word 'fabrication'.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, to that point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:

To the point of order, the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. SIMMS:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, to the point of order. Let me also say that further on in Beauchesne, starting on page 110, there is a list of items that since 1958 have been ruled parliamentary and in the same connotation it talks about 'false, falsehoods,' all those kinds of things being perfectly acceptable in terms of parliamentary wording. So the hon. member opposite, if he thinks I have offended him or something, I will withdraw. But I just point out that he should read all of Beauchesne, not one specific page that he referred to, Mr. Speaker. There is no point of order there.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. TULK:

Are you going to ask him to withdraw?

MR. EFFORD:

He did withdraw.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is very obvious that we have hit a nerve. It is very obvious that we hit a sore point today in the House because the hon. member for Naskaupi (Mr. Kelland) put forth a resolution to exempt the M.H.As from this part of the House from the cost of seeking information -

MR. SIMMS:

No, extra.

MR. EFFORD:

- because we have a duty as Opposition members to give information to the taxpayers.

It is their dollars that the people on that side of the House are wasting. It is not your own dollars, it is the taxpayers' dollars. They have a right to know where the money is being spent. You can put all of the obstacles in the way that you wish. There is no question about it, every individual in this Province knows full well why the charge is put in.

Really it does not matter that we bring out the number of dollars that you have wasted in travel. The fact that you charged us and the fact that the people of the Province know full well why it is done is enough for the Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The hon. member's time is elapsed.

MR. EFFORD:

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

By leave! By leave!

MR. EFFORD:

It is enough for the people of this Province to know that after the next election they will not have to contend with waste of the taxpayers' dollars. One or two members will be sitting on this side and fifty members will be sitting on that side.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker, I suppose a sign of how full of oneself one is is that as one is resuming one's seat one claps for oneself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. RIDEOUT:

It is not very often you will see that in legislatures or parliaments, I would think. But I thought it was interesting, Mr. Speaker,

MR. EFFORD:

Wait until the next election.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker, it does not happen very often.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was kind of funny, actually, listening to the hon. gentleman kind of bursting at the seams with self-righteousness, really almost puffed up in his self-righteousness, talking about freedom of information and the public's right to know, and in the same breath saying, now before you accuse me of being an alarmist, because the hon. gentleman has such a reputation of being an alarmist and raising false fears and anxieties, and so on, here in the House, and after the next two or three words that so eloquently flowed from the hon. gentleman was the following statement: 'Hundreds of millions of dollars spent on ministers offices.' Do not accuse me of being an alarmist, but 'hundreds of millions of dollars spent on ministers offices.' That was his quote, 'Hundreds of millions,' talking about the present estimates, by the way, Mr.

Speaker, that are before the committees now.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman looking very seriously at the Government House Leader, something along the lines that I spoke about in this House a couple of weeks ago when I spoke about the perception becomes reality if you can get the press to pick up the right buzz word, and then that night in Ming's Bight, that is what gets reported. It was the hon. gentleman I was talking directly to through you, Sir, that particular day. Then today he does it again, Mr. Speaker. Today he does it again. After he said, do not accuse me of being an alarmist or anything like that, he looks -

MR. EFFORD:

(Inaudible) you yet.

MR. RIDEOUT:

I am not worried now, Mr. Speaker, if I speak about the hon. gentleman. I am not too worried about the hon. gentleman. Those threats are not going to frighten me, Mr. Speaker. If he has something we will deal with it. If he does not have anything, it is not going to bother me.

He looks across at the Government House Leader (Mr. Simms) then, Mr. Speaker, and -

MR. EFFORD:

(Inaudible) shaking, 'Tom'.

MR. RIDEOUT:

At least I can be understood, Mr. Speaker, whether I am shaking or not.

MR. EFFORD:

That was unbelievable.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Well, so was the remark.

The hon. gentleman then looked across at the Government House Leader and made quoted something about a scurrilous trip to London - staring right at the Government House Leader - this gentleman who does not want to be branded as an alarmist, this gentleman who, in all self-righteousness, wanted the facts to go out as they should to the public.

So, you see, Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed, he just keeps coming on with the same old rubbish, the same old stuff, the same old innuendo. Not one thing has changed.

Now, let me talk for a few minutes about this particular resolution. This resolution, Mr. Speaker, has absolutely nothing to do with the public's right to know. This resolution, Mr. Speaker, has nothing to do with the government's obligation to provide information. The regulations that were introduced as part of The Freedom Of Information Act has nothing to do or not to do with barring the public from knowing how the taxpayers' dollars were expended. It has nothing to do with that whatsoever.

Those regulations, Mr. Speaker, had nothing to do whatsoever with the obligation and the responsibility of those elected to the treasury benches providing that information to the public. Whether it came from the hon. gentleman or whether it came from The Sunday Express or whether it came from CBC, or whomever it came from, that is not the principle that is embodied in this particular resolution, nor is it the principle that is embodied in the regulations that government

brought in under the Freedom of Information Act several months ago. The principle, Mr. Speaker, is that the information is available; the information must be made available. But is it right and proper and is it prudent? Are you prudent managers of the taxpayers' money to allow a loophole, to allow technicalities to account for a significant further expenditure of taxpayers' money in order to research that information? That is what it is all about, Mr. Speaker. That is what the regulations were all about. You can have what you want, you can open up any files you want, you can spend the next six months with civil servants down in the vaults in the bowels of Confederation Building if you want, photocopying and digging out information, but is it right and proper and a legitimate and prudent use of taxpayers' money to have that go on ad nauseum and the taxpayer pay for it? That is the question that obviously has to be answered.

It is not a question of not providing the information, it is not a question of saying you are not allowed to ask for the information, it is a question that if you believe, you being anybody out there - it does not apply to individual information on yourself, on your own person, but if you are The Sunday Express, or if you are the CBC, or if you are a member of the House of Assembly, is it right and proper to expect that you can tie up hours upon hours, days upon days, if the questions are detailed enough, at the public's expense to get that particular information? There is nobody saying you should not have it. Nobody saying that it will not be provided.

Mr. Speaker, members of a Parliament, members of a Legislature must use their discretion. Whether they are on this side or that side, they have to use discretion. They have to say to themselves, Is this particular series of questions justified in my opinion? Do I have sufficient reason to believe that I should go after this information? I have a right to get it. Do I have reason to believe I should go after it? Or is it just a frivolous approach across the board like was done on the Order Paper, by the way, on Opening Day, five or six of the same questions to everybody and the answers are invariably going to be the same? So members have responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, as does anybody else, to be as protective of the taxpayer that they get up and croak and moan and groan about, as they legitimately should, and not, on the other hand, be prepared to gouge the taxpayers in a useless, frivolous exercise in seeking a piece of information.

Now, if you want it under reasonable circumstances, within reasonable cost, fine. But if it is an abnormal, an unusual expenditure of taxpayers' money to get that information, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, and other parliaments have suggested, the Liberal Parliament of Ontario, for example, the great reform government that is now the Government of Ontario - Freedom of Information in the Government of Canada was brought in by the previous administration. The Socialist Government of Manitoba, who never got around to proclaiming their legislation but brought it in, all have rates similar to what we have in this Province. All of them do. So it

is not a question of rates, Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of the public's right to know or the Opposition's right to ask and the government's responsibility to respond, that is not the question, the question that they are indirectly trying to attack here, that is not what it is, the real question is whether there should be a reasonable charge over and above a set limit to reasonably provide information. I say, Mr. Speaker, yes, there should be. Not to stymie the flow of information, not to stymie the flow of answers, but to make all of us equally responsible to the taxpayers who are paying our bills to be here. I say, yes, there should be.

Mr. Speaker, I have responded to information under The Freedom of Information Act on a number of occasions before the new regulations on cost were brought in, and since that time. Sometimes it is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, what happens to the particular information that you are asked to provide. I will give you a couple of examples from my own experience: Last Spring I was asked, under The Freedom of Information Act by, The Sunday Express to provide information on my travel, entertainment, and all that kind of thing, legitimately, up to and including the end of June, I believe it was; it was for a six or seven month period leading up to the end of June; for all the senior executives in the department, and any of the political staff who are on the minister's staff, a whole range of pretty detailed questions. I had the staff of the department research the information, provide it within the thirty days required by the Act, and sent it off, of course, free of charge, because

there was only a flat rate then, whatever it was - \$5.00 - to The Sunday Express. I anxiously waited for Sunday to come, Mr. Speaker, because I had no doubt it was going to form part of a story - I think the total bill for my own, at that time, was only \$15,000 or \$20,000 or something, because it was only for four or five months, and with all the senior executives included it was something over \$150,000 for the whole department for a five or six month period - and I see this great big headline, "Fisheries Minister Rideout spends \$159,000." I went to pains, Mr. Speaker, to provide the answer, to say to them here is what I have spent, or any of my political staff, executive assistant or whatever. I did not have a press secretary at that time. Here is what I have spent. Here is what that amounts to, \$15,000 or \$16,000. Here is what the senior executive of the department have spent in their legitimate duties. There are several of them: The Loan Board, the Fishing Industry Advisory Board, three or four ADMs, directors and so on. This amounts to one hundred and something thousand dollars. It was all separated out very nice, very decent, very clean for them, and out comes the big headline, "Fisheries Minister Rideout spends \$159,000 on travel and entertainment.

I had another example, Mr. Speaker, just briefly. The member for Eagle River was here in the Estimates Committee last Thursday night and he asked me to provide information from the Fisheries Loan Board, which was legitimate, on how many loans were approved in his district; in what communities they were; what the outstanding amount was; how many were in

arrears; and all that kind of thing. No, problem! I had the Fisheries Loan Board people research it over the weekend. We came back to Committee on Tuesday and I still have the information here; the gentleman was not here and I have not been able to give him the information. But that information cost the taxpayers of this Province in excess of \$1,000 for fees to Computer Services. It is right, but I use it as an example. If this thing were to mushroom in an uncontrollable way through members of the House on either side, members of the media, or members of the community at large, it will be a significant burden on the taxpayers. And that is fine, too. If you want it, you should be expected to pay a reasonable part of the cost for getting it.

The hon. gentleman, the Minister Responsible for Northern Development, I think the member for Port de Grave was referring to him again this evening. In his self-righteous way, not being an alarmist or anything he says, 'A backbencher, who happened to be a parliamentary secretary at the time' - I have to quote here, and this was the quote - 'A backbencher spent \$57,000 last year on travel.' Do you see, Mr. Speaker, the insidiousness in that kind of a statement, hoping that it might get picked up? That is a Sunday Express kind of headline. 'The hon. gentleman spent \$57,000 last year.' What was the fact, Mr. Speaker? The total was for three years. That was the information that was provided under The Freedom of Information Act, just like the information I gave The Sunday Express, and rightly so. I am not complaining. I separated it out nice for them, mine versus the

executive of the department. The hon. gentleman's was the same, separated out nice and neat and tidy over the three years because that was what was asked for, three years information. But the headline story was, "\$57,000 in a year".

I also understand, in that particular case, that the request, under The Freedom of Information Act, came from the official Opposition, and two days after it was provided under the Freedom of Information Act, it appeared in The Sunday Express. That is my understanding. So, I say, is the Opposition, or the Socialist Opposition, or somebody over here supposed to be a vehicle to further gouge the taxpayer for the benefit of selling papers for somebody? Is that our role, Mr. Speaker? That is fine, if you want to do that with the information. I have no objection if you want to do that with the information. It is public information. You can have it. You can have it with 1001 welcomes. But the point, Mr. Speaker, of the regulations under The Freedom of Information Act is to ensure that the taxpayer is not further gouged and the taxpayer's pocket is not further picked by the unscrupulous who might be in our society for other reasons. Have it! You are entitled to it. Provide it, government. You have a responsibility to provide it. But, Mr. Speaker, it has to be paid for. There has to be some legitimate return to the Treasury, not an onerous burden, not a financial cost that is so extreme that Rockefeller would not be able to get his hands on the information, not a cost that is so onerous and so out of whack that you would have to be among the top ten richest people in Newfoundland

to get your hands on the information, that is not the case, but some reasonable cost to cover the cost of accessing the information should be welcomed. It should be welcomed, Mr. Speaker, by all those in this Province who are responsible, who are fiscally prudent, who want us as their elected representatives to be fiscally responsible in looking out to the dollars that they pour into the public treasury. It should be welcomed. That is not onerous, Mr. Speaker. That is not dictatorship, Mr. Speaker. That is not covering up information, Mr. Speaker. That is being fiscally and prudently responsible for taxpayers' money. That is all that has happened under The Freedom of Information Act, Mr. Speaker, that is all that has happened under the regulations, and this resolution, Mr. Speaker, is puffery, it is not worth the piece of paper it is written on, and I hope my colleagues will, with due diligence, dispose of it as it should be disposed of. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FUREY:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. Barbe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FUREY:

Mr. Speaker, I guess that after listening to the Minister of Fisheries we can assume he will voting for our resolution on this particular matter.

It is interesting to see that the

Minister of Fisheries has been making quite a number of speeches in the House recently. I can only reason one of two things: Either there are no other speakers on the other side, particularly those who do not sit in Cabinet, that handful that do not sit in Cabinet, or the minister is getting a head start on the leadership race.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, the resolution presented by the member for Naskaupi is pretty straightforward. He tells me that he intentionally made it simple and straightforward so that people could not be distracted or deterred, or could not wander off track.

He essentially only put two recitals there, two recitals. How you can meander and wander like some of the speakers previous from those recitals to talk about what they talked about is beyond me, Mr. Speaker. It is pretty straightforward.

He says, "WHEREAS the access to information relating to government operations is an essential element for the performance of the duties of all members of the House of Assembly, particularly the official Opposition; and

"WHEREAS this information should be readily available to all members of the House of Assembly and reasonable notice, whether the House is in session or not."

Now, those are the two recitals, pretty straightforward.

"BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the regulations be amended to provide that any charges, which might normally apply to agents or agencies outside the House,"

newspapers and the like that the minister has referred to, "be waived for members of the House of Assembly, who require this information for the normal pursuit of their duties."

All that is saying is that all fifty-two people in this Chamber have the right as elected officials, as people who represent various people in various districts throughout the Province, have a fundamental right to ask for and receive information which they request.

Mr. Speaker, just put it in perspective, forgetting the backbenchers just for a moment. If you just look at this particular side, the Opposition side, both the official Opposition and the other party, there are seventeen members sitting on this side who have an average of 10,000 constituents, which is 170,000 people.

So basically, 170,000 people on this side, through these seventeen members, request certain pieces of information, and what do we get, Mr. Speaker? We get regulations and rules thrown back at us, at the people, all 170,000 people, that you must pay to receive information where you were duly elected to ask certain questions.

They may or not be embarrassing, that is not the issue, Mr. Speaker. It is not the issue of whether the minister's answers will be embarrassing to that minister or to that government. That is not the issue. It is a fundamental issue that goes right to the heart of democracy. That is why I say, Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that the whole concept of freedom of information almost seems to be a paradox. A

paradox is something with seemingly contradictory qualities or phrases. It is a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense. The whole concept of freedom of information seems to be opposed to the very basic tenant of common sense.

The public pay all of us. We deal in information. It is public information. The public pay our salaries. We owe it to the public to give them that information. That is my own personal belief on this Mr. Speaker.

However, we do see that there is a Freedom of Information Act. Well, why is it that each department, if you want to save money, does not instruct their press secretaries or one of their various Order-In-Council appointees to become an information officer? The information officer can deal with each department's various requests.

The minister said there were not very many requests to each department but government as a whole had a lot of requests to deal with. Why do they not have an information officer, one of the civil servants or one of the Order-In-Council appointees? If I asked the Minister of Public Works (Dr. Twomey), for example, the question that I write to him under the Freedom of Information, he just passes it to his information officer. That information officer has thirty days by statute to gather that information and send it back to me. There are no worries about the global aspect of the government or all those problems that the Minister alluded to.

The Minister of Fisheries (Mr.

Rideout) made a comparison. He said, 'What is so different about Newfoundland, Ottawa, and Ontario and all those other places?' Yes, they have imposed fees. Yes, they have brought in these Acts. Yes, they brought in regulations. But, what he failed to talk about, I suppose in an elliptical sense, was that he did not talk about the other half of the statement.

While there are fees imposed in Ontario, while there are fees imposed in other places, for example, Nova Scotia, and the House Leader alluded to this, they have fees but they wave it for members for the House of Assembly there I think, or they do not have fees.

What he failed to talk about was that while there are fees in place, who puts the fees in place? An independent freedom of information commissioner, that is who puts the fees in place, not a cabinet that sits around and says, 'We are going to put the following fees in place.'

MR. SIMMS:

That is incorrect.

MR. FUREY:

That is incorrect? Correct me.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the House Leader.

MR. SIMMS:

For the benefit of the hon. member, the estimated costs or fees that would be imposed for a request of a large nature and so on are estimated by the officials of the department, not by the Cabinet. The officials of the relevant department will say, 'Do you want this information. We estimate it will cost \$300' or whatever. Then, if it does not

cost \$300, the member will get a refund incidentally, that is another point.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. Barbe.

MR. FUREY:

I am sorry, I did not mean to mislead the hon. member. I was not talking about the estimates for the total compilation of the information. I was talking about the set rates. Who sets the rates, for example, in our regulations now, you have added sections (d) and (e) which say that beyond two hours, it will be \$15 an hour.

I am saying to you that the Cabinet of this Province determines what that would be. It is not problem to estimate. Anybody can do an estimate, but you have to base the estimate on what the Cabinet has decided that the standard fee will be.

I am saying to you that in other provinces they have freedom of information officers who set those certain rates, as in Ottawa, as in Ontario, and other places. We are saying that that removes any suspicion or any doubt at all, otherwise people are going to say that Cabinet just sits around and sets the rates. It is foolishness.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about certain information coming out. Whether it is embarrassing to the government or not, is not the relevant point. The relevant point is that the public clearly has a right to know how all public dollars are being spent. We are saying that the elected officials of this Assembly, the members of this House of Assembly should not be burdened with this punitive

price tag when they have already faced a general election and have been elected to do just that, to come in and ask certain questions, to perform the duties that are assigned to her Majesty's loyal Opposition, and to ask these questions.

How else would we have know, Mr. Speaker, and held the government accountable for some of the expenditures we saw from, forget Cabinet ministers, lets look at parliamentary secretaries. The minister brushed it off pretty quickly, but \$56,000 is spent by a parliamentary secretary. That is quite a handsome chunk of change, Mr. Speaker, in this time of restraint, when hospital beds are being threatened, when drinking water in a school in my riding that houses kindergarten to grade three is not fit to drink, when these kinds of very serious human problems are at stake. What do we see? We see a parliamentary secretary go to Halifax; we see him go to London three times; we see him go to Moscow, Dublin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Cologne, Bremen, Amsterdam, Victoria, Reykjavik, Bergen, Trondheim, Addlestone, Aberdeen, Augusta, Boston.

Mr. Speaker, that is not bad so bad to have that kind of globe trotting event happen for the \$56,000, but it is indeed our duty, as responsible members of this House, to say, 'Why was the money spent, how many jobs did you bring home, and how did Newfoundland benefit?' Those are perfectly honest questions. So, whether it is embarrassing because it is a one-time headline or whatever, that is not the relevant issue. The relevant issue is, do we, as members of this House of Assembly, have the right to ask

for information and receive it free in the time limitation put on us, the thirty days, or do we not?

I refer to the hon. member for Port de Grave. He is a good, hard-working, and honourable member. He wrote the Premier last year, on November 24, 1987, and, not being sneaky or anything, he laid out the facts. He said, 'Mr. Premier, I would like the following information on the travel of other parliamentary secretaries.' The Premier wrote him back and said, 'You can have it as soon as you go down to the Central Cashier's Office and put down \$445.'

Mr. Speaker, that is an insult to every single member of this Legislature, an absolute insult.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. FUREY:
Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that the member asked for this information on November 24, 1987 and the guidelines were not changed until December 11, 1987 and yet this gets swept into the new guidelines retroactively.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly does hang a cloud of suspicion over this government. Nobody wants to imply that there is something wrong or anything like that, but we are saying, 'Look, in fairness, this letter was written before the regulations -

MR. SIMMS:
We can simply give it to now.

MR. FUREY:
Well, give it to us.

MR. SIMMS:
What is the problem?

MR. FUREY:

We have asked again on the Order Paper. We did not have an Order Paper prior to the House opening, so we were forced to use the Freedom of Information Act. So what happened was, we put the same question, the hon. the member for Port de Grave, on the Order Paper, March 15, 1988. He asked it in November of 1987. 'Pay \$445 and we will give it to you.' Insult! Slap in the face to 170,000 people who are represented by the seventeen members of this Opposition! He puts it on the Order Paper three weeks ago. The Premier says the information was compiled back in December, it is there, pay for it, it is yours. We wait now until March 15. He asks for it on the Order Paper. Do we have an answer? No. Is it compiled? Yes. Is it over there? Yes. Can they give it to us? Yes. Have we asked for it on the Order Paper? Yes. Have we got it? No. Mr. Speaker, something is not right over on that side.

Mr. Speaker, let me say a couple of other things. There was an interesting article in one of the paper recently where a gentleman wrote in and said the following: "Freedom of Information, denial of information, delay of information, cost of information: Of the above, freedom seems least appropriate, Freedom of Information." He is saying that denial is more important with this government, delay makes more sense with this government and cost is the order of the day with this government. Not freedom, there is no such thing as freedom.

Mr. Speaker, let me put another telling question to this Assembly. The regulations for Freedom of Information were

gazetted on October 23, 1981. Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that these regulations, which were gazetted in 1981, were amended in December of 1987. Now, that gives rise to a most interesting question.

Why was there no fee structure in place from October 1981 to December 1987? In other words, why did they wake up overnight and all of a sudden say, 'We better get some fees in place here quick?' Why did it take six years from the initial point of gazetting these regulations to December 11, 1987, the six years in between, why were there not fees imposed? Why did they magically appear all of a sudden, overnight when the heat starting getting on the government? They had to start supplying information that was embarrassing to the point of almost being incriminating. So the heat was on and they decided, 'Here is how we will deflect this. It will not be much of an issue and it will be all over in a few days.' But what they failed to realize, Mr. Speaker, is that the general public are not being fooled by this absolute mugs game and shell game they are playing.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to be a game of hide and seek for this government. How many times have members come into this Assembly, day after day, seeking legitimate and honest and straightforward information about that great big white elephant that glows in the dark, the Sprung greenhouse? How many times have we come in and asked straightforward questions?

Where are the market studies? How did we get involved in this? Where is the feasibility study? How much are we into it at this point in time? How much more are

we going to be into it? etc., etc. A litany of questions went on and on, Mr. Speaker. Did we get an answer? No, we did not get answers, not at all.

The hon. House Leader (Mr. Simms) referred to somebody writing under Freedom of Information, CBC or something, about technical questions for the Sprung greenhouse and not giving the answers. You have to wonder whether they have the answers. You cannot give what you do not got. They must not have answers on that particular mega financial malestrom that they have got themselves spiraling down into.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that what my hon. friend for Naskaupi (Mr. Kelland) has put forward is a very good, a very simple, very straightforward, and I put emphasis on the word 'simple.' He made it simple for the government to understand. He made it very straightforward so that they could not dance all around the issue. The issue is plain.

Will you waive the fees you have imposed on seventeen members of Her Majesty's Opposition, both the Official Opposition and the corner party down there in the corner? Will you waive those fees and deal properly with people who have been elected by 170,000 people out there basically? Stop muzzling the Opposition. It is a very straightforward request. "BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the regulations be amended to provide that any charges, which might normally apply to" members of the House of Assembly, be waived "who require the information for their normal pursuit of duties."

Now look, hon. members have to ask themselves a question. If they

vote against this resolution, they are really saying that duly elected members of this House ought to be muzzled, should be muzzled and have no right to this information. Mr. Speaker, where are we going to get the exorbitant amounts of money for the simple questions and the simple answers that we ask? Where is the hon. member for Port de Grave (Mr. Efford) going to get \$450 every time he wants a simple piece of information from a request that he has put in? Where is he going to get it? Where is the hon. member for Bellevue (Mr. Callan) going to get money when he puts in freedom of information? He too may want some answers to questions which may deeply affect his district, Mr. Speaker, if he starts being treated unfairly over there in the backbench.

Mr. Speaker, these are legitimate questions raised by the hon. the member for Naskaupi. The answers may be very embarrassing, and the Minister of Fisheries eluded to that, that yes, sometimes you will put information out and it will catch a headline and it may be embarrassing for a moment, but that is the nature of democracy.

If you are going to spend money, you must be accountable for that expenditure, and the Minister of Fisheries knows, because he is a good and decent person, that in his heart of hearts, this global little tirade from one of the parliamentary secretaries visiting Halifax, and London, and Moscow, and Dublin, and the list goes on for \$56,000, he knows in his heart of hearts because he is a decent and dignified human being - and I know him to be that - that Newfoundland did not get a very good bang for those \$56,000. They did not create one job.

How many jobs were brought home by the minister and the parliamentary secretary? How many jobs were brought home.? How many jobs were brought home? How many jobs were brought home? Nobody seems to know. It was just a wonderful, highfalutin, galavanting trot across Europe. That is all it was. Nobody else can pin-point what had been done.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. FUREY:
Mr. Speaker, to conclude, I want to congratulate the member for Naskaupi on behalf of all members of this legislative assembly for having the foresight and the courage to stand up and say to this assembly, all of us, to vote not just for members, now, but for future members, that none of these punitive measures be applied to the fifty-two members assembled here to do the people's business.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. WARREN:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. Minister of Northern Development.

MR. WARREN:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought, Mr. Speaker, it would be an appropriate time seeing the resolution was brought forward by the member for Naskaupi, that I would take a few minutes to address the resolution. I would like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by tabling a letter, and I will read the contents of the letter, Mr.

Speaker, as I am going to table it. It was written on the January 15, 1988. It was addressed to Mr. Chuck Furey, MHA, St. Barbe District, House of the Assembly, Confederation Building, St. John's, Newfoundland. Dear Mr. Furey: This will refer to your letters of October 13, 1987 and December 8, 1987 addressed to the hon. Robert J. Aylward, former Minister of the Department of Rural, Agricultural, and Northern Development, enclosed are copies of documents relating to travel and entertainment expenses for the hon. Garfield Warren, from April 1, 1985 to September 30, 1987, totalling \$53,483.36. Yours truly, Harold Stone, Deputy Minister.

Mr. Speaker, that letter was only sent to one member of this particular House of the Assembly, one particular member to this House of the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, two weeks later, The Sunday Express carried the headlines of my travel expenses. Now, Mr. Speaker, and who, Mr. Speaker, were making all of the comments in The Sunday Express, the hon. member for Naskaupi, the hon. member for Naskaupi. So, Mr. Speaker, I think both gentlemen are very hypocritical. They have concocted, they have concocted a sleazy, a sleazy means of Mr. Furey, or the member for St. Barbe, asking for information on behalf of The Sunday Express, on behalf of The Sunday Express.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

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

MR. TULK:

It was about seven or eight days ago, I believe, that Your Honour

asked somebody on this side of the House to withdraw the word, 'hypocritical'. I would ask that the same rule be applied to the Minister responsible for Northern Development.

MR. SIMMS:

To that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, the hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Just to assist Your Honour in his ruling. Obviously these kinds of words sometimes are parliamentary and sometimes they are not. If Your Honour would look at Beuchesne, Page 110, near the bottom of the page, it says, "Since 1958, it has been ruled parliamentary to use the following expressions:" Then move over to Page 112, up near the top, and Your Honour will see that it has been accepted since 1958 to use the words, 'hypocrites' and 'hypocrisy'. There are several examples, December of 1975; October of 1966. So, I mean, obviously the word is not necessarily absolutely unparliamentary.

MR. TULK:

Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. TULK:

If Your Honour would go back to Page 107 he would also see that 'hypocrite' has been ruled unparliamentary, and last week in this House Your Honour ruled it unparliamentary.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order. I see the reference here on page 107, and then a contradictory one here on 112. I do not know if the Chair is supposed to toss a coin to decide which one to accept, but I do not think the word 'hypocritical' is a particularly acceptable word and I would ask the hon. member to withdraw it.

MR. WARREN:

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem at all with withdrawing the comment, but if the shoe fits, let him wear it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

What?

MR. WARREN:

I said, if the shoe fits, let him wear it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us go back to what happened. Just to show you, Mr. Speaker, what was given to the hon. member for St. Barbe, it was a copy of all this right here, everything, right from the first day he asked for it up to the last day. Everything was duplicated for him and everything else, itemized right down to a tee.

Mr. Speaker, one of the comments from the hon. gentleman from Naskaupi, who brings in this famous resolution, had to do with a particular jacket I wore at the Governor-General's residence in Ottawa, where I was representing the Province at an Order of Canada Investiture for one of the most outstanding ladies in Labrador, Dora Saunders. I was there, Mr. Speaker, representing the Province, and the dress code was that you had to wear a tuxedo.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had three choices, as I told one of the

media who interviewed me afterwards. My first choice was to go and buy one, which would cost \$300 to \$500, and which I would use very seldom. I said, 'No, I am not going to buy it.' The other choice was to go and rent one, and I thought that over for some considerable length of time. My third choice, which gave me reason to accept the second choice, was I could have borrowed one from the member for Naskaupi. But that was way too big for me, so I went and rented one. That was the reason I finally rented one.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What was your fourth choice?

MR. WARREN:

Anyway, I would have to say if there are, Mr. Speaker, any members in this particular House who are sneaky and sleazy - I do not know if I am allowed to use those words, Mr. Speaker. If I am not, I withdraw them - and trying to be smart, I think they are the Bobbsey Twins; they sit next to each other down there, the member for St. Barbe and the member for Naskaupi. Mr. Speaker, for him to say that on reasonable notice information should be given.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem, as I said in my letter to the member for St. Barbe. They asked for the information and they got the information. It cost hours and hours of staff time to gather up all the information for the past two and a half years.

Mr. Speaker, this House has been open now for the past month and a half, and what really gets to me is here he is asking for freedom of information and he has a leader over there who will not tell anybody where the extra money is

coming from that he is being paid.

Now, Mr. Speaker, surely goodness every member in this House should get information if he wants it. At the time the election was called in 1985, that hon. gentleman was in a particular house in Goose Bay on election night and said to this particular person, 'I am a Liberal today. I do not know if I will be tomorrow or not.' That same person did not know whether he was elected to the Liberal Party or not on that particular night and he said, and I think hon. gentlemen opposite will know who it was said to, who was present at the time, and here he is now supporting a leader who will not give information to the House. Why not give information to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Once in a while I get the opportunity to look WWF wrestling, when I have time to spare. There is a person on there called the Million Dollar Man. I forget what his name is, Ted DeBiasa or something like that. I think the Leader of the Opposition is something like him, so we can call him the second Ted DeBiasa.

Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the hon. member for St. Barbe would make such remarks. He has asked if there were any jobs created by ministers or parliamentary secretaries travelling. Let me tell the hon. gentleman, and again I should remind him that his colleague sitting next to him, who represents one of the fastest growing towns in his district, Happy Valley - Goose Bay, one of my trips which I found so interesting, that hon. gentleman never even picked up on, or never even discussed with The Sunday

Express. It was my trip to Cold Lake, Alberta. He never mentioned one thing about it. Why? Because I was in Cold Lake, Alberta, with the Minister of Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development, the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth, at the time, and the Minister of Environment and Lands.

Mr. Speaker, I should advise the hon. gentleman that I was not doing in Cold Lake, Alberta, what his leader was doing in Davis Inlet last July. I was in Cold Lake, Alberta, trying to promote Happy Valley - Goose Bay, where in the past year alone there were in excess of 280 jobs. Now, Mr. Speaker, can the hon. gentleman honestly get up and say we never brought in any work through our trip to Cold Lake, Alberta? There were 280 extra jobs last year in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, in the hon. gentleman's district.

The hon. gentleman should look more carefully at some of the reasons why we are travelling. Naturally it is to promote business in the Province.

The hon. gentleman made the comment, what a simple resolution. Yes, Mr. Speaker, a very simple resolution from a very simple individual. I am now going to go through the resolution to see if there is any way that I can support it:

'WHEREAS the access to information relating to Government operation is an essential element for the performance of duties of Members of the House of Assembly, particularly the Official Opposition.'

Mr. Speaker, I would not say 'particularly the Official

Opposition,' I would say it is for all members of the Opposition. And not only for members of the Opposition, but for members of Government. All members in this House are here to perform their duties to the best of their ability.

'AND WHEREAS this information should be readily available to Members of the House of Assembly, on reasonable notice, whether the House is in session or not.'

Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with that. The hon. gentleman wanted information, which I gave to him in all sincerity, and in seven days, Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman packaged it all up and passed it on to Russell, I think his name is, of The Sunday Express.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Russell Wangersky.

MR. WARREN:
I do not know what his last name is. I know his first name is Russell. So one day Russell called me and began asking me all kinds of questions for The Sunday Express. Here are the exact words this guy, Russell, said. He said, 'I guess you know...' - now Russell is a reporter with The Sunday Express.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Russell Wangersky.

MR. WARREN:
Honestly, it is a name that I never heard around very many bays around Newfoundland and Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER:
I think he is from Nain, is he not?

MR. WARREN:
I do not think he is from Nain, no.

The gentleman said to me, 'I guess you know the Liberal Opposition has sent this over to us.' I said, 'What?' 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'The Liberal Opposition did up a big package and sent it over to us.' Now, Mr. Speaker, here is a member of the Opposition who wants some information.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Because Wangersky is not allowed.

MR. WARREN:
Yes, Mr. Speaker, he is allowed. Meanwhile, the hon. member was not asking for it for his own purpose, because he did not do anything with it, he just took the package and passed it over to The Sunday Express. Therefore, it is very, very difficult to try to support his resolution. And not only that, instead of researching the questions himself, he referred it to another member who did all the investigation into it.

'BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the regulations be amended to provide that any charges, which might normally apply to agents or agencies outside the House of Assembly.'

Now, this is what is wrong, Mr. Speaker: - I think the hon. gentleman is missing in his resolution when he says, 'might normally apply to agents or agencies outside the House of Assembly.' In what they are doing, they are agents for The Sunday Express.

Mr. Speaker, how can you support a resolution that has -

MR. RIDEOUT:
(Inaudible) today, either.

MR. WARREN:
That is right.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would not be surprised if the hon. leader does not get a few perks from the owners of The Sunday Express. I would not at all be surprised. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, those gentlemen opposite are not considered members under this resolution, they are considered agents. And that is exactly what they are, agents for Harry Steel and his buddies. That is what the hon. gentlemen opposite are. Unfortunately, because they have indicated that, not only to me but to other members here - they have indicated they are just in here as agents - I have no alternative but to join with my colleagues and definitely not support this kind of motion.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I adjourn the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. minister has adjourned the debate.

Is it agreed to call it six o'clock?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

It is now six o'clock. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 3:00 p.m.

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