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Speaker: Honourable P.J. McNicholas

Thursday

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

O O O

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

MR. SIMMS:
I just want to give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I intend to present a point of privilege in the House at the earliest opportunity, as soon as I have had occasion to do some research and get tapes of some comments made by the Leader of the Opposition which, I understand, reflected not only on your Honour but certainly, therefore, reflected on all members of this hon. House. Personally, I find that distasteful and distressful, but, in all fairness, I will not present the case until I have an opportunity to do some research on the matter. But I do want to give notice of it, so that I can raise it at the earliest opportunity.

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, a point of privilege.

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

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, you may recall that yesterday I gave notice so as not to be in any way accused of sitting on my rights, that I would rise on a point of privilege after I had had a chance to do a certain amount of necessary investigation.

So I do that now. Your Honour, I would like to state my point of privilege and then not debate the

point of privilege, which would be out of order, that can only be done after Your Honour makes another ruling, but then go on to say why I feel Your Honour should accept the point of privilege so that the House can debate the matter, and in doing so I do have to give a bit of background information. I will keep it as brief as I possibly can, but to make the point, for I think this is an important matter and worthy of Your Honour's attention, I do have to go into a bit of background and I do hope Your Honour will give me that leeway.

Mr. Speaker, the point of privilege is really in three parts and involves the Leader of the Opposition in each case.

The Leader of the Opposition has violated my privileges by reflecting on my conduct as a member of this House; he has indicated, in no uncertain terms, that my conduct is improper and that improper conduct comes from alleged violations of certain guidelines to the Conflict of Interest Act. That is the first part of my point of privilege.

The second part is that despite authoritative denials of the allegations, and when I say authoritative, I mean authoritative by the Premier who undertook to investigate - the hon. the member for St. Barbe (Mr. Furey) smirks at the Premier, but I look on the Premier as an authority and I think the people of this Province look upon the Premier as an authority, a man who served his Province through thick and thin for nine years or more. On the basis of an authoritative denial by the Premier, and on the basis of denial by others who are in a position to know the facts,

they have denied the substance of those allegations, despite that, the hon. member in a totally non-parliamentary, honourable way has persisted with his allegations and his charges and has gone so far as to call for punishment. By punishment I mean that I should either relinquish or be asked to relinquish my ministerial post.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order!

DR. COLLINS:

The third point of my point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, is that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition alleged that I violated a non-existing guideline in the Conflict of Interest Guidelines, and despite the patent nonsense of that, the patent nonsense of violating a non-existing guideline - the patent nonsense of that - he continues to press that point in this House and in the press, but in this House. Now, Mr. Speaker, the basis for my point of privilege: I would like to call to your attention to Beauchesne, Edition IV, Page 98, Section 108, Subsection (3).

AN HON. MEMBER:

Would you repeat that?

DR. COLLINS:

Edition IV, Page 98, Section 108. I think it is the same section in most editions. I do not know if my edition is up-to-date, quite honestly. Section 108, subsection (3). I will read that. It is short. "Libels on members have also been constantly punished: but to constitute a breach of privilege they must concern the character or conduct of members in that capacity, and the libel must

be based on matters arising in the actual transaction of the business of the House." Well, now, the last point is self-evident. In this whole matter the accusations came up during the business of the House and, as I have stated in my point of privilege, my conduct as a member has been impugned.

Mr. Speaker, I also draw to your attention Erskine May. Mine again is the Eighteenth Edition, Page 148. I will go back to Beauchesne. I am sorry! I have not quite finished with Beauchesne. This is Beauchesne, Section 112, Page 101 in my edition of Beauchesne.

MR. WELLS:

Where is it?

DR. COLLINS:

Page 112.

MR. SIMMS:

The Fourth Edition.

DR. COLLINS:

The Fourth Edition, Page 101, Section 112. Sub-section (1) of 112 reads: "Parliament is not concerned whether or not a libel uttered against it is liable to be tried by a court of law, either of civil or criminal jurisdiction. May says: "Both Houses will punish not only contempts arising out of facts which the ordinary courts will take cognizance, but those of which they cannot, such as contemptuous insults, gross calumny," - that is the clause I am referring to - "gross calumny or foul epithets by word of mouth not within the category of actionable slander or threat of bodily injury." It is the 'gross calumny' part there.

I would also draw your attention to Beauchesne, but I will not read

this, Section 113 . Perhaps I could just read one sentence in it, but the whole paragraph is applicable here. This one sentence says: "Libels upon members and aspersions upon them in relation to Parliament and interference of any kind with their official duties, are breaches of the privileges of the members." Of course, the suggestion and call for resignation is certainly an interference with their official duties.

Mr. Speaker, as I began a little while ago there on Erskine May, the Eighteenth Edition, Page 148: "Analogous to molestation of Members on account of their behaviour in Parliament are speeches and writings reflecting upon their conduct as Members." It goes on to say that these are 'high violations of the rights and privileges of the House.'

"Written imputations, as affecting a Member of Parliament, may amount to a breach of privilege, without, perhaps, being libels at common law, but to constitute a breach of privilege a libel upon a Member must concern the character or conduct of the Member in that capacity."

Mr. Speaker, I think an analysis of those references, and I do not pretend that I have done an exhaustive review of Beauchesne and of Erskine May, but I think those alone, and I suggest there may be other sections, will also show that you cannot bring allegations against the conduct of a member as a member of this House, and that is what has been done and has been persisted in, despite denials by authoritative statements and by presentation of facts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we in this House know that we cannot get into this matter unless a prima facie case is established. And I would just like to suggest to Your Honour, and I am sure Your Honour knows this, that a prima facie case is not to say that there is an indubitable case of privilege present. If that was the case, the debate would be over. Prima facie case means there is a reasonable possibility of breach of privilege. In other words, the point of privilege brought forward is not a frivolous matter, it is a matter where there is a reasonable possibility that the actual privileges of a member or of the House have been impugned.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to do that, as I mentioned earlier, I do have to give a brief outline of the facts of this matter, which I will do shortly. But just before I do that, I would like to be sure that when I say 'conduct as a member' I am aware of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition says that I broke the guidelines as a Minister of the Crown not as a member of this House. But I do have to point out that the guidelines themselves are not the law. The guidelines relate to the act and the law, and if you break the guidelines, whether a minister or not and that is substantiated, you are in violation of the act and the law, and the act and the law has punishments which apply to someone because he is a member of the House, quite apart from being a minister.

So the fact that if I broke the guidelines as a minister, which has been alleged on unfounded facts, if I broke the law as a minister I am in violation of the act and the act says that my conduct as a member was improper.

Therefore, that is why I make that point.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just the bare facts of the matter at hand. I had an ownership interest, an investor interest, a part-time ownership interest, 25 per cent interest latterly, for fifteen years in a company called Terra Nova Enterprises - that was its latter name. Its original name was Medical Arts Limited - for fifteen years, before my first election to this hon. House. Fact one.

Fact two: When I became a member of this House I laid out that information in my statement, my statement that was required by The Conflict of Interest Act, but continued to be involved actively in the business, which was quite proper under the Act. I laid out that information, that I was a part owner of this company and was involved in the business of this company, I laid that out in my annual statements repeatedly, to this very date. Fact two.

Fact three: When I was invited by the hon. the Premier to become a member of his administration and became a minister, I did a number of things. Firstly, I determined to cease my active role in the business, that is the business, the commercial business, the rental activities, those sorts of things that the company did as a business. That is the first thing I did. The second thing, I informed the other directors - there were four directors in the company, of which I was one - I informed them that I was doing this and I withdrew my permission that the company should regard me as a director. And the third thing I did, to get away from any doubt in my own mind, for that

matter, but certainly in anyone else's mind that I had anything to do with the company, I put my ownership share in trust. The trustee turned out to be - in actual fact this was the sensible thing to do, in my view anyway - another director of the company, who was a lawyer, Mr. Don Mercer - the name has been mentioned before, I believe - Mr. Don Mercer, Q.C., and he became my trustee and was therefore given full rights to vote and exercise my ownership share.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in 1981 guidelines were brought in for the first time in regard to the Conflict of Interest Act. There were no guidelines before or, if there were, they were sort of informal. But in mid-1981 the hon. the Premier made a Ministerial Statement in this House where he laid out guidelines, including guidelines for ministers. Shortly after that, as the guidelines required, I wrote the Premier. I had not written him prior to this, because the Act did not require it. Although, I believe, and I cannot vouch for this nor can I prove this, that in conversation prior to that I had informed him about my lack of business activities, when he invited me into the Cabinet, but that is immaterial, I guess. In actual fact, the 1981 guidelines required that a minister in those circumstances write to the Premier, which I proceeded to do, and the hon. the Premier tabled a copy of that letter in this hon. House the other day. Anyway, the letter pointed out the fact of my ownership, my share ownership.

Thirdly, it pointed out that the company rents to government, rents space to government, has done so

for fifteen years and continues to do so. Fourthly, it pointed out my non-activity in the business affairs of the company. If it has not been tabled, my information is that it has, I am quite prepared to table a copy of it. But the hon. the Premier, I believe, tabled it the other day when he tabled other information. The letter pointed out my non-activity, including the fact that I put my shares in trust, and it pointed out that I continued to share in the profits of the company. All that was laid out to the Premier.

The Premier replied approximately one month later and he said in his judgement, and the guidelines laid this responsibility quite clearly on the Premier, the Premier replied about a month later saying that 'in my judgement the circumstances you relate to me', and I am not quoting his exact words, 'indicate you are not in a conflict of interest. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is fact four.

Fact five is that since 1979, when I became a minister, I have taken no part in any decisions or discussions regarding the affairs of the company, the commercial affairs. The company rents space essentially. That is what it does. It owns buildings and rents space to both the private sector and to the public sector; it rents it on the basis that people will take up space in the buildings. I have taken no part in the decisions or discussions either at government level, departmental level, Cabinet level, Cabinet Committee level, ministerial level, or, indeed, any discussion with the trustee on these matters.

The only conversations I have had with the trustee related to

matters like remittances to me, which I had indicated to the Premier were happening, and which, of course, are not in any way improper, and secondly, certain personal things like personal guarantees to banks, those sorts of matters, no other matters. That is fact five.

Fact six is that I was unaware of any dealings, since 1979, departments of government or agencies of government or quasi agencies of government might have had with this company, except that information that ultimately became public knowledge. I had no other knowledge nor did I want to have knowledge, and that was the purpose of putting my shares in trust. I had no knowledge or wanted to have knowledge of any dealings that the company was carrying on with government, whether it was renewal of leases, whether it was new leases, whether it was the surrender of leases, whatever it was.

And the final fact: At no time did I withdraw my permission that I not be a director. And, Mr. Speaker, that is important. No one can be a director of a company against his will or wish or permission. At no time did I reinstate my permission that I should be a director.

Now, Mr. Speaker, all those facts, those seven facts which I think are quite clear, quite simple, quite straightforward, can be understood by anyone, all those facts have been stated both by the Premier and also in the letter that the Premier tabled on my behalf, and also in questions that the Premier answered during Question Period and at other times - the Premier answered all those points, even in public.

The point about it, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been non-acceptance of those matters by the Leader of the Opposition, and that is where the violation of privilege comes in. I have no quarrel with the Leader of the Opposition making an allegation. But if the allegation proves unfounded, and I suggest that allegations should only be made after some investigation so as not to cause embarrassment and confusion and distress - there is nothing wrong with making allegations, I suppose, but it is unparliamentary and, in my view, a breach of my privileges if, when those allegations have been adequately responded to and answered to, the facts are not then accepted and that is the end of it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think Hansard of May 26, page R2356 and Hansard May 30, page R2418 - I do not have a copy of Hansard June 1, yesterday, but yesterday Tape 1987, IB-4, that is the reference, if you will look at those you will find that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition states unequivocally that he retains his allegations and he retains his charges, despite the facts the Premier has laid out in a number of forms. That is where the point of privilege comes in.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make two final remarks, I think. Firstly, you can only bring in a point of privilege if you do it at the earliest time. I gave notice yesterday and today was the earliest time I could do it, because I said I had to do certain investigation. Secondly, yesterday was the earliest time I could entertain a point of privilege, because it was still possible for the hon. Leader of

the Opposition, having heard yesterday's Ministerial Statement by the hon. the Premier, to have totally withdrawn his charges and, if he was an hon. gentleman, offer an apology. He did not do that, so yesterday was the first time that I finally had to say and accept that he was not going to do it no matter what evidence was presented; I could only make my mind up then that he was not going to do it and, therefore, I had to get up on this point of privilege.

Now, my final point, Mr. Speaker: I have been in this House thirteen years and I have been a minister for nine years. I have seen, I think, six Leaders of the Opposition, at least six, and some of these Leaders of the Opposition dealt in bare-knuckle politics, and God bless them for it, but this is the first time I have ever had to rise on a point of privilege where I was personally involved.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not say that that says much about me, but I think it says a lot about the present Leader of the Opposition, the sixth Leader of the Opposition. After thirteen years, nine years as a minister, and knowing the vitality with which the previous Leaders of the Opposition pursued their course, to have this come up at this stage, I think says a lot about the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

DR. COLLINS:
Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to finally point out that I have always declared my business interests scrupulously, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition, has he always declared his interests?

Mr. Speaker, I say that I have always fully declared my interests and I ask the Leader of the Opposition, has he fully declared his interests? Mr. Speaker, I have no secret income. My income is known to everyone, where its source is; it is from the government and it is from my business interests, which are laid out in letters.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, I ask the hon. the Leader of the Opposition: Does he have a secret income?

Finally, Mr. Speaker I do not want to intrude on your good graces - I do take it hard, these allegations coming from the Leader of the Opposition who lectures us on decorum here and, nevertheless, proceeds by innuendo, insinuation and less than full exposition of the facts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I am going to ask the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Tulk) to deal with the references to Beauchesne because I was making notes on the factual matters which I wanted to address specifically. I will ask the Opposition House Leader to do that and I will not deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, what I have said in this House with respect to this matter is clear and in the record. Neither I nor the hon. gentleman opposite can argue about what in fact was said. But I have not had much opportunity to say anything because I have not had much opportunity, when I stand to speak, to be heard, so on occasion I have said things outside of the House, and I accept responsibility for that too because it relates to this matter.

One of the things that I have said outside the House that has not received very much publicity but I should mention because it bears on the matter, is that I have said in at least two interviews with the media - I do not recall seeing it published because you do ten or fifteen minutes with the media and they take a minute and fifteen seconds, and you never have control over what is going to be published - but one of the things that I said to the media, amongst other things, is that based on what I see here now I contended there was a clear conflict of interest. But I said clearly to the media that I did not blame the Minister of Health, I blamed the Premier. If the Premier says that is okay, then what I complain about is that that standard is unacceptable.

Now, let me deal with the specific facts as raised by the hon. the minister. He says I was reflecting on his conduct as a member of the House, and he referred to my comments being in relation to his position as a minister, and that is quite correct. I agree with him, it does reflect on his conduct as a member of the House if I address remarks in relation to his position as a minister. He is a

member, and he is only a minister by reason of being a member of this House. He could not retain the position as a minister for very long without being a member. So I do not quarrel with that position. But, I emphasize, the standard that is set by the Premier. I read the standard in the Conflict of Interest Guidelines. The minister says I referred to a Conflict of Interest Guideline that did not exist. Well, I am quoting now from **The Newfoundland Gazette** of December 31, 1982, and here is the Conflict of Interest Guideline to which I was referring. It is No. 3 of those guidelines, which were dated on the 21 December 1982, and indicated as having been approved by the Executive Council. "While holding office and for one year after ceasing to hold office, a Minister, his spouse or minor children or a body or organization in which any of them have a financial interest" - nothing about management, or involved in management or not - "shall not, without first obtaining approval of the Premier, be eligible to receive the following benefits from the Province or a department or agency listed in the Schedule to The Conflict of Interest...Regulations (i) a contract for the supply of goods or services." A lease of premises from an owner to a government is a contract for the supply of such goods or services. That is the basis of my contention, that the involvement that has taken place results in a conflict of interest. So I will tell the hon. gentleman clearly, if that is not a guideline any longer, somebody had better tell me because I am operating under the assumption that it is.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the bare facts

that the hon. minister referred to, let me deal with them. I will indicate seriatim, because I made notes, what I accept and if there is anything I do not accept. That he has 25 per cent interest in Terra Noûa Investments, no question; I accept what he says totally. That he laid that out clearly in his Conflict of Interest Statement in the beginning, and continued to lay it out clearly in his Conflict of Interest Statement, I accept unquestionably. I do not suggest otherwise. That he is no longer active in the company, I accept the minister's statement that he is no longer active in the company, and not only that he is no longer active in it but that he has not been active in the company since 1981, I think he said.

MR. TULK:
1979.

MR. WELLS:
Since 1979. I accept that without question. I have never said otherwise, incidentally. Nowhere in Hansard will anybody see it otherwise.

That he put his ownership share in trust, yes, I have no doubt about that. But that did nothing, it is not a blind trust situation. If the minister had a sum of money that he gave a trustee and said, 'You go and invest it in whatever you want and do not tell me anything about it,' that is a blind trust. This has nothing to do with blindness. The minister knew where the investment was, he knew he continued to hold it and, as he said, he received remittances from the company. So I accept that. I do not challenge the minister's statement in that regard.

The other one he said, as part of No. 3, was that he ceased to be a director. I accept the minister's statement with respect to that.

Now, if I can find the reference, when the Premier stood in the House and indicated that he had received an indication from the hon. minister that he had nothing to do with the company, was no longer involved in the management of the company - that was on May 26 - I drew to the Premier's attention the fact that in three successive years in a row the share list said that the hon. minister was a director, and simply asked the Premier to check that out.

I also pointed out that there was an indication that he was a shareholder one year, and expressed my view that that was an error. I originated the thought that it was an error. So I asked only that it be checked out. That is all. I said nothing more than that.

Now it has been checked out. Notwithstanding that those share lists were filed and signed by a vice-president or a director of the company, as they were - each of them was signed by the minister's own trustee, Mr. Mercer signed the share list, and if anybody knew he should have known - nevertheless, if Donald Mercer says that that was a typographical error and the minister says it was a typographical error, I accept that. I do not question it. And if they say the minister was not a director, I have no quarrel with it. I accept that, and I have not said otherwise.

Then the fourth fact to which the hon. minister referred refers to the letter that he wrote to the

Premier shortly after the guidelines came into effect, I presume sometime in 1982 because they came into effect in December 1982, or it may be 1981 to which he was referring. He said he wrote a letter and he disclosed the share ownership. He disclosed the fact that he continued to share in the profits and that the Premier replied that in his judgement it was not a conflict of interest.

Now he also says the letter was tabled. I do not recall seeing it and, to the best of my knowledge, I can inform the hon. minister now that the Clerks have advised us it was not tabled. But the hon. minister has undertaken to do it, so I have no quarrel with that.

Now, I do not know what the letter said, but from that point in time, or at that point in time, perhaps the minister was not in conflict. I have not seen the letter. I may be prepared to accept, when I see that letter, that the minister was not in conflict; as a result of having seen that letter he was not in breach of the letter.

MR. TULK:

The guidelines.

MR. WELLS:

In breach of the guidelines.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he said - fact number five - he had no part in any discussions at a governmental level or at any other level as to the business that the government was doing with that company. I have no cause to question that. I have no basis for questioning it. If the minister says that I accept his word, I do not question it.

The other fact he mentioned was that were remittances to the

minister from the company and that he may have occasionally signed a guarantee to the company's lenders or bankers. If that is what the minister says, I accept it, I do not question it.

The sixth item that he said is that he was unaware of any dealings that any agents on behalf of the company or the company might have had with the government. I accept that, I do not question it.

The seventh item that he said was at no time did he withdraw his permission that he would cease to be a director of the company. If that is what the minister says, I accept it. I do not question any one of those seven facts that the minister has laid out.

Now, the minister just said that there has been a non-acceptance by me of those matters. That is not correct. If the minister had that impression before, let me disabuse him of that impression now. There has been a total acceptance by me of those facts claimed by the minister.

MR. PATTERSON:

Too late. You have already done the damage.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that in light of all those facts, and in light of the Premier's statements to this House in the last few days that he did not give the hon. member any letter when these new leases were signed and when the old leases were renewed he did not give a specific letter in that respect, based on the Premier's statements and assurance

to this House that he did not, I say that the minister continuing to have that financial interest in that company, and that company continuing to benefit from those lease contracts with the government, creates a conflict of interest. And it is my submission, Mr. Speaker, that that conflict of interest still exists. Now, throughout this, I have said nothing more than that.

Now, nothing the hon. member has said today has caused me to change that. I should say to him, sincerely, I say this to him with utmost sincerity, I could only have wished that he delivered .

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

I could only have wished that he would have put forward some facts, some basis, on which I could withdraw my opinion that there was a conflict of interest in the present circumstances. Unfortunately, I cannot, and I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that that does not constitute the kind of libel or improper statement to which the minister referred and on which the minister is basing his point of privilege. Because I, as Opposition Leader, or any other member of this House but the Opposition in particular, must have the right to comment on public issues. This is a public man, a minister of this government, who has that interest in that company with which the government is dealing on a regular basis every year and to which the government is paying nearly \$500,000 in rental.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on that basis, unless we are going to destroy democracy, eliminate the role of the Opposition, prevent government from ever being criticized for improper behaviour, there is no breach of privilege and can be no breach of privilege based on what I have just said. That is the basis for it. What I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, its sole and only basis - I have accepted all of the other facts - is the fact that the minister continues to have the financial interest described in Guideline No. 3, the government continues to do business with the company and enter into lease contracts with the company, and the hon. the Premier has not given letters specifically excepting that. In those circumstances I say, and this is the sole basis of it, the minister is in breach of the guidelines. If letters had been given by the Premier I would instead be saying, as I did substantially outside the House, that I do not really blame the minister; if the Premier takes the position that this is okay, and particularly when he takes the position that the blanket letter he gave the minister in the beginning continues forever and he can enter into all the contracts he wants, that that is a blanket exemption, then it is the Premier who has sole responsibility for it.

But in circumstances where the minister should have gotten a letter, I say also, Mr. Speaker,

based on that circumstance alone, I suggest that the minister is in breach of the guidelines. That is the sole basis for it. I say, Mr. Speaker, that that cannot possibly constitute a breach of privilege.

Now, the final comments of the hon. minister were that he has been in this House for thirteen years, he has been a minister for nine years, he is used to bareknuckle politics, that there were six Opposition Leaders beforehand and he never had any problem before except with this disgusting behaviour that he attributes to me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

He then condemns me, Mr. Speaker, for making these statements which I did in the discharge of my duty as Leader of the Opposition, which was my responsibility to do and continues to be my responsibility. That responsibility is not diminished by reason of my being attacked. He then claims -

MR. MATTHEWS:

Expose your own conflict.

MR. WELLS:

You can hear the hon. member for Grand Bank (Mr. Matthews) the minister -

MR. MATTHEWS:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

We are dealing with a point of privilege at the moment.

MR. WELLS:

Now, Mr. Speaker, he then makes

the false statements that I failed to meet the requirements of The Conflict of Interest Act, that I failed to disclose. And that, Mr. Speaker, is totally wrong and totally false.

The simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, I have disclosed perhaps more fully than any other single member of this House in my Conflict of Interest statement. That is the truth of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

That is the truth of it.

MR. DINN:

It is what you left out that is interesting.

MR. WELLS:

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am going to table my Conflict Interest statement on which I have written exactly what was referred to when I said: "There are other financial interests, but none that has done, does or might do business with the government."

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

In your opinion,

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

On it I have written exactly what was in contemplation when I wrote, "There are other interests but none in respect of which there is a possibility of conflict of interest."

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Tell us about your salary.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, I remind Your Honour that the whole of this side of the House sat quietly while the minister made those statements and stated his position, and I would like the same courtesy. After that hon. members can say what they like, and I am prepared to let the electorate of this Province judge.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is what the hon. the President of the Council wanted to hear and asked me to read out.

"There are other interests but none in respect of which there is a possibility of conflict of interest." I wrote that when I could have simply said no, as every other hon. member in this House did. I could have said there was none.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have a retirement savings plan. A Registered Retirement Savings Plan, that is what I have. And that is another interest.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

But there is no possibility of conflict. What the guideline asks is to report "any other interest, not specifically referred to in this preceding instruction, which you, your spouse or any of your minor children has or will acquire as a result of which there is a possibility of conflict of interest."

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no possibility of conflict of interest with my Retirement Savings Plan. It is a Registered Retirement Savings Plan. Every member of this House, or virtually every member of this House, Mr. Speaker, has a Registered Retirement Savings Plan. But there is not one of them listed it on the Conflict of Interest statement.

MR. SIMMS:

Now, you are wrong again there.

MR. WELLS:

Well, there may be one.

MR. DAWE:

Everything is qualified.

MR. WELLS:

It is not qualified. That is all that was in contemplation, and the answer is still totally correct, was more correct than most members', because, Mr. Speaker, it is spelled out clearly that other interests did exist.

That is what the hon. members were talking about. And there were, Mr. Speaker, three other things, and here they are. This is what was in the first one. They do not amount, in total, to \$25,000, but I will tell you what they are.

Over the last three or four years I have participated with nine other people, who got together and pretended we knew something about the market, and each one of us put in \$100 a month for a while and invested in an investment club. That is what it was. And we thought we knew something about the market, and all of us have lost money consistently over the three years. So that is one of the other items.

There were two other items, Mr. Speaker. A 2 per cent interest in a partnership that owns a MERB. I invested in a MERB and I invested in a flow-through share.

MR. WINDSOR:

Nothing to do with government, MERB!

MR. WELLS:

No, it has nothing to do with government. There is no problem with that. It has no possibility of conflict. But I did disclose the fact that they were there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is all there is. There is nothing else. There are no deep, dark secrets that the hon. gentlemen want. I have never heard the hon. lady opposite express an opinion, so I exempt her from it. But at least for many of the hon. gentlemen opposite, who have been making these unfounded allegations that I have not been reporting fully and properly like other members have, it is too bad, Mr. Speaker, that it is as simple as it is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. SIMMS:

It has nothing to do with government!

MR. WELLS:

It has nothing whatsoever to do with government. There are no dealings with government. There is no possibility of conflict.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Most of these companies deal with mining. There has to be a possibility.

MR. WELLS:

I have no problem with it, but it has no possibility of a conflict of interest. I do not have shares in any mining company. I have shares in a partnership that invests in these mining companies. That is it, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman, before he sat down, also made some scurrilous remarks about what he claimed was impropriety on my part, and my unfounded allegations, and how wrong it was for me to make these statements. Now I refer the hon. gentlemen to his statement in this House on April 22, when he was talking about my being paid a salary, which incidentally, Mr. Speaker, is also disclosed in The Conflict of Interest Statement, while the Premier's is not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

While the Premier's is not mentioned, mine is.

MR. SIMMS:

Your statement, will you read it for us?

MR. WELLS:

Where is what?

MR. SIMMS:

Your salary disclosed in your statement.

MR. WELLS:

If you got it there, read it, because it is there.

MR. SIMMS:

It just says you had a financial interest in the Liberal Party.

MR. WELLS:

It says that I am an employee of the Liberal Party.

MR. SIMMS:

An employer.

MR. WELLS:

There is an employer/employee relationship. It is there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

The hon. the minister who just spoke, Mr. Speaker, said this -

MR. MORGAN:

Call Revenue Canada.

MR. WELLS:

- "There is a term of that; the term is called 'laundering'. You can launder money." And he made other scurrilous statements.

Now if hon. members do not know what laundering means, it means, for example, drug pushers in the United States may get money illegitimately and they want to use some of the money to pay off police officers. These were the statements made by the hon. minister, who stood with such self-righteous indignation a few moments ago and made those allegations. That hon. minister! They are totally false. Totally false statements.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. WELLS:

Now, Mr. Speaker, I submit clearly that there has been no breach of

privilege and no prima facie cause for privilege has been made out. As I stated at the outset, I will ask the House Leader to deal with the references to Beauchesne.

Thank you.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker,

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

This is a very interesting piece of business, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Yes, indeed.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

It is somehow in the Leader of the Opposition's mind that he can decide upon the kind of rules and then decide upon how one is to interpret them. All I say to the Leader of the Opposition on the point of privilege is that in the view of this side of the House, he has infringed upon the privileges of the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health (Dr. Collins). There is no question about it! The innuendo that has been going across this House over the last number of weeks has impinged upon the privileges of the hon. the Deputy Premier.

Let me say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The Leader of the Opposition cannot get up in this House and start making innuendo at one member on this side of the House and not expect us to then -

MR. MORGAN:

Not give it to him.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. Here he is now in the House telling us about what other financial interests he has that he would not put on his Conflict of Interest Statement; he decides what can be put in his Conflict of Interest Statement; he decides what cannot be put in his Conflict of Interest Statement; he defines what laundering means, and then goes on from there to accuse the Deputy Premier.

I have not seen anything like it since I have been in the House, Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy that this hon. gentleman is showing to the people of Newfoundland.

I said in this House one afternoon a few weeks ago, if he is going to start spreading innuendo across the House at the hon. the minister and Deputy Premier, table your - you cannot go halfway, Mr. Speaker. You cannot go halfway in this matter. If the Leader of the Opposition is going to continue to attack the Deputy Premier and other ministers here who have put shares in trust and who have disclosed that in a Conflict of Interest Statement, who have written me on it to meet the guidelines that were there, if he is going to take that attack in this House or outside this House, then he has to be squeaky clean, so let him table his income tax returns for last year and I will table mine. You cannot go half way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER PECKFORD:

My point, Mr. Speaker, on the point of privilege is you cannot suddenly narrow it to what you want to define as an irregular act by somebody in this House.

MR. SIMMS:

Unless you are God.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Unless you are omnipotent, you cannot. It brings into question the whole integrity of all members of this House. You just cannot selectively try to weasel your way in to bring discredit upon one member of the House and then the whole government. When you do that, Mr. Speaker, you have to be willing, the Leader of the Opposition has to be willing, to come totally clean himself. That is the nature of the way this process works, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health put his shares in trust when the guidelines came in. Who brought the guidelines in, Mr. Speaker? Were there any guidelines when the hon. the Leader of the Opposition was around years ago?

MR. SIMMS:

No, sir. There were not.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Were there guidelines around then, Mr. Speaker, when he was around? Did the hon. Leader of the Opposition, when he was Minister of Labour, say to the Premier of the day 'We have to bring in Conflict of Interest Guidelines for me and our other ministers, because I cannot stay in this kind of a government unless we have all of these Conflict of Interest and Ministers' Guidelines?'

MR. SIMMS:

No. Not a chance.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, suddenly now he resurrects himself as a renaissance, in the hon. member's mind, he is reborn again to be

something different than he was fifteen or twenty years ago. What a display, Mr. Speaker! The Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier, followed all the guidelines, and in the same way as the Leader of the Opposition used a technicality not to disclose all of his interests in the Conflict of Interest Statement, he is using a technicality on the Deputy Premier.

MR. SIMMS:

Exactly!

PREMIER PECKFORD:

It is a very tidy, slick way, Mr. Speaker, to try to discredit somebody who is beyond reproach as it relates to his honesty and his integrity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, let us just review what the Leader of the Opposition said and just show how slick it is. Here is the slickness of it, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of the Opposition cannot get away with it, the slickness of it all. The Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier - he was not Deputy Premier then, he was Minister of Finance, I guess - disclosed every year he had this interest in the company. He disclosed it, unlike the Leader of the Opposition who did not disclose his MERB. The Minister of Finance, or the member for St. John's South, every year disclosed it. All the people of Newfoundland could see it was disclosed for public consumption. Then, when I brought in new guidelines for ministers, he wrote me - here is the letter, and I will table my response to him - and put it in trust.

Now, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that that is not good enough, because each time that company went out to rent space, he did not write a letter every time. But when the Minister of Finance, then the member for St. John's South put it in trust, he had no more to do with the company so, therefore, how could he write me a letter on each one when he did not know anything about it? That is the slickness! That is the slickness!

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

PREMIER PECKFORD:

That is the slickness! The same way, Mr. Speaker, that he used that slickness on his own conflict of interest disclosure. He used it. He would decide! There is a Provision in the Conflict of Interest - oh, yes, he is technically, legally correct, Mr. Speaker. Oh, yes, there is no question about that. You cannot take him to court. He is technically, legally correct, but the whole spirit and intent of the Conflict of Interest legislation was full disclosure, and all members of the House know that. So it is through this very slick, technical way - the member for St. John's South could not write any more letters because he had put his money, his shares in trust and somebody else looked after them for him. He did not know what the company was doing, so how could he write any more letters? It is because he was so darn honest in the beginning, to get out of the company and give the shares to somebody else to look after for him, that he is in trouble today, according to the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. SIMMS:

That is right. He is too honest.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

So it is a slick, conniving way by the Leader of the Opposition to try to discredit the minister and Deputy Premier and this government, and it does infringe upon, therefore, the privileges of one hon. member of this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, if I could, I would like to start off by saying that methinks the hon. gentleman doth protest too much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. TULK:

To be quite frank with you, Mr. Speaker, I am -

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible) looking for you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. TULK:

If the hon. gentleman can control himself now.

Mr. Speaker, methinks the hon. gentleman doth protest too much, and I say to Your Honour that I am surprised that we have gone on this long, an hour, this evening on this point of privilege. I would refer Your Honour to Section

19 of Beauchesne, No. 1, which rules this whole point of privilege raised by the hon. gentleman for St. John's South, as is his right to do, out of order immediately, and I would suggest to Your Honour that perhaps we might take a look at it. "A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege." Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is alleging that he is not in a conflict of interest. The Leader of the Opposition, so the hon. gentleman says, has alleged that he is in a conflict of interest. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is an allegation as to the facts and, therefore, there is no point of privilege. But let me deal with it on a factual basis. What is this point of privilege about? What is this point of privilege about that the minister has raised this evening? What are all the members down there pounding their desks for? What is the whole purpose behind the point of privilege? Do you see what is happening? They have been taking an awful drubbing in this legislature because of their own behaviour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:
They have been taking an awful drubbing in this legislature because of the very kind of behaviour we see them exhibiting right now.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Ask the member for Port de Grave (Mr. Efford) to apologize publicly.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. TULK:
How can we get off this hook? Well, we can discredit the Leader of the Opposition. That is the point of privilege. That is what the point of privilege is all about, How can we discredit the Leader of the Opposition? How can we put him in his place? Well, first of all, we will talk about his salary. That has been laid to rest.

AN HON. MEMBER:
You hope it has been laid to rest.

MR. TULK:
You would like to be able to raise it.

Then we will talk about his Conflict of Interest Statement; he did not declare a RRSP. Well, in actual fact the hon. gentleman followed the Conflict of Interest Guidelines right to the letter. Right to the letter.

Hold it up all you wish. I can read as well as the hon. gentleman. Apparently, he cannot.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the guidelines in the Conflict of Interest Statements that we are supposed to prepare ask for those which have the possibility of conflict, and they thought, because the Leader of the Opposition said I have other interests but there is no possibility of conflict, they had something on him, they had the goods. Last week they realized that was not the case. So when the Leader of the Opposition stood in his place and started to question, as is his right to do, as is his duty to do, whether a minister of the Crown is in a conflict of interest position, they said, 'If we can only turn that into something where the Leader of the Opposition is trying

to make John Collins look like a crook, we will have her made.'

Now, I say to hon. gentlemen that the Leader of the Opposition has never said that the hon. gentleman is a crook or a launderer of money. He has never said that either. What he has questioned, Your Honour,-

MR. MORGAN:

He did not go far from it.

MR. TULK:

How do you know? Where you here?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. MORGAN:

Two weeks ago your dirty member for Port de Grave tried to get the dirt on me, and now it is Dr. Collins.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. BAKER:

Name him, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition has done, and not only the Leader of the Opposition but all of us on this side - and we still have some questions yet we want some answers to from the Minister of Labour (Mr. Blanchard) - is question, which is the reason this is not a point of privilege - we have not libeled the minister in any way -

MR. MORGAN:

First it was Morgan, now it is Collins. There is no end to it. Smear tactics!

MR. TULK:

Listen to the artist.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. TULK:

What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is question whether the Premier of this Province has enforced the guidelines that he set out, I believe it was in 1980. That is what this side has done. The minister, by having financial interests, I say to him - and he admitted this afternoon that he has financial interests, he admitted that he received remittances from the company - in that company, and this is what the guidelines say, you cannot have those financial interests unless they are going to be declared, every contract you get in contact with government on. We say to the minister that he has placed himself, either knowingly or unknowingly, in a conflict of interest position.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. TULK:

Oh, I have no doubt about it.

And the Premier of this Province has allowed that to go on. The Premier talks about setting yourself up as judge and jury, and I believe he used the word 'God'.

Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest Guidelines in this Province are fairly good.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who brought them in?

MR. TULK:

The Premier.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who contravened them?

MR. TULK:

Who has contravened them? How many times has the Premier allowed ministers on that side to carry on behaviour that is less than what you would expect of a member of Parliament, of a member of this Legislature? We have had a minister in this House lie to us. It has been established beyond any shadow of a doubt. We have had a minister in this House, the former Minister of Transportation -

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. TULK:
- use public funds improperly. Now, Mr. Speaker, arbitrator -

MR. PEACH:
Clyde told you to be quiet.

MR. TULK:
It tells the kind of behaviour we can expect from this Premier in enforcing the guidelines he put in place. Mr. Speaker, he has not been doing it. And I say to the hon. gentleman that while he can allege all he likes that the facts as put forward by this side are wrong, as is his right to do, he cannot, on the other hand, say that we do not have the right to allege that the facts he is putting forward are as wrong as well. Therefore, there is no point of privilege. Otherwise, he would have this House and this Parliament, and this has to do with a point of privilege, set in position where we accept less than the facts and, therefore, would be infringing upon our rights as members of Parliament, in that we would not be allowed to ask the kinds of questions that need to be asked.

The hon. gentleman has two choices, Mr. Speaker - and there is no point of him getting up on a

point of privilege - he can sit in this House in a conflict of interest position as a minister of the Crown, or he can get clear of his interests altogether.

AN HON. MEMBER:
I think you are wrong.

MR. TULK:
Those are the only choices he has. And I do not believe the hon. gentleman is a dishonest individual. I do not believe he is a crook.

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible).

MR. TULK:
I do not believe that at all. You said it is not a law, it is a guideline set down by the Premier. You said that in your opening remarks. So either you abide by those guidelines -

DR. COLLINS:
(Inaudible).

MR. TULK:
Oh, you said it had no legal -

DR. COLLINS:
(Inaudible).

MR. TULK:
You made the statement.

MR. TULK:
I agree with you it is a law, but the gentleman, either knowingly or unknowingly, has broken it. But you said there were the guidelines only.

Mr. Speaker, there is no point of privilege, there is only a simple difference of opinion, as to the allegations of facts, between two people. Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, if Your Honour is prepared to hear some more argument.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

I was not quite sure if Your Honour would like to, but since you have recognized me, I will take the occasion to carry on a little.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of points here, first of all, which need to be made, some of which have already been made and I do not intend to belabour those points. I think the minister, himself, has presented a superb case. Obviously, in view of the fact that Your Honour has seen fit to allow the debate to go on as long as it has, then I would assume that Your Honour considers this to be a very serious matter and will likely take the matter under advisement and under consideration. Before you do that, may I offer for Your Honour's edification a couple of other references.

The hon. member made reference to a reference about difference of opinion between two hon. members as to facts. Mr. Speaker, that is not what we are talking about here at all. We are talking about a charge, an allegation made by one member against another member. That is what we are talking about. It is not a difference of opinion between two hon. members. Why did he not read the reference in Paragraph 51 on Page 19? It says, "It is always the responsibility of the House to

decide if reflections on Members are sufficiently serious to justify action." It is the responsibility of the House, not the hon. member for Fogo. There are all kinds of other parliamentary references, Mr. Speaker, such as those the hon. the Minister of Health used in his case, referring to Sir Erskine May's references and Beauchesne's Fourth Edition. They kind of implied that because it is the Fourth Edition it is no good. That is not accurate. Your Honour well knows that, and so do his legal advisors.

There is another reference, Mr. Speaker, on the role of the Speaker in dealing with these matters. That is something that should not be lost in this discussion and this debate. I refer Your Honour to Paragraph 84 on Page 25, subsection (2) which says, "It has often been laid down that the Speaker's function in ruling on a claim of breach of privilege is limited to deciding the formal question" - and that formal question is - "whether or not the case conforms with the conditions which alone entitle it to take precedence over Orders of the Day" - so that we could get on and have a debate about the very serious matter that has been made - "and does not extend to deciding the question of substance." In other words, whether or not there has been a breach of privilege. And the last words the member for Fogo used as he sat down were, 'there is no breach of privilege.' We are arguing about whether or not there should be enough importance placed on this matter to allow the hon. Minister of Health, and others, the opportunity and right to get up and defend against the allegations made by the member for

Windsor - Buchans. That is the point of this particular debate, Mr. Speaker, and Your Honour is the one who makes the decision whether it is important enough to let that kind of discussion take place. I think Your Honour is giving it serious consideration, and I think he should.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have some references, just to retaliate if you want, and I suppose this could go on all day. The member for Mount Scio is now being counselled by the Leader of the Opposition, I suppose to ensure that that kind of retaliation does go on. The point about the member for Windsor - Buchans saying that he accepts the minister's explanation, he tried to make a big thing out of that. He accepts the minister's explanation. Now, clearly, Mr. Speaker, there have been comments made, and they are recorded in Hansard, which would lead one to believe that that is not quite the case, they are contradictory. I refer to Hansard, May 26 edition, page 2356, where the member for Windsor - Buchans, Mr. Wells, says, "The people who have responsibility for the management of all corporations - they have it, they have the responsibility...are the directors. If the minister did not participate as a director, I do not know that." Yet, at the same time, the member for Windsor - Buchans is implying that he accepts the hon. Minister of Health's explanation. But, but, 'I do not know that.' The other reference is the more current one, yesterday. "The Conflict of Interest Rules have been clearly breached," page 2533, June 1. But, Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest Rules have not been breached. That is the point.

AN HON. MEMBER:
In your opinion.

MR. SIMMS:
It is not my opinion, that is the law. The law is clear. The law is there and the law is very clear. Mr. Speaker, those kinds of arguments are simply arguments that the hon. member and his crew - incidentally, that same crowd on the other side there, with one exception, and perhaps the member for Waterford - Kenmount, tried to do a similar thing in this House a couple of years back, I remember - they tried to discredit another very honourable member in this House.

MR. TULK:
They were right then, too.

MR. SIMMS:
They were not right then. The hon. member for Fogo says they were right. You should be ashamed of yourself! You know you were not right, and you can ask a lot of people on the streets whether you were right. It backfired on you and it burned you to pieces, and you know it did.

Mr. Speaker, all I have listened to really is the member for Windsor - Buchans trying to weasel around the accusations he has made and trying to somehow give the impression, on the one hand, Oh, I accept, I understand, and all that kind of stuff, but, on the other hand, he clearly is out to try to destroy and discredit an hon. member of this House, an unwarranted action by a member whom I thought, and most Newfoundlanders, I think, were lead to believe a year or so ago, was going to be the saviour of this entire political process. Mr. Speaker, if anything, he has brought it down below the depths

of anything it ever has been, including the years he sat in the Cabinet.

I say to the hon. member, why does the hon. gentleman not have the intestinal fortitude to get up in this House, apologize to the hon. Minister of Health and be done with it? Why does he not do that? Why does he not have the intestinal fortitude to do that? Is he not man enough to do it? No, Mr. Speaker. The answer is they think they see this as a way of scoring political points; it is for no other reason, Mr. Speaker.

He says, 'I must comment on public issues. I have a responsibility.' Who made the issue public? The hon. member, or members, opposite made the issue public, Mr. Speaker, so certainly they have to comment on it, because it is part of their plan, part of their plot.

I will not get into the hon. Leader of the Opposition's Conflict of Interest Statement at this stage, but I do have plans to comment on it at a later stage, I can tell him, and I have a bit more information than he laid on the Table here today, and a bit more information than is outlined in his Conflict of Interest Statement, which will be of interest to a lot of people, and some of it, Mr. Speaker, goes back twenty years, when the member was a minister in a Cabinet and had several interests as well.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I hope Your Honour will take this matter under serious consideration - it is serious, and obviously you believe it is or it would not have lasted for an hour and fifteen or twenty minutes - and come back and you will see, Mr. Speaker, depending

on Your Honour's ruling, that we do have a substantive motion we are prepared to place before the House for debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

I have heard three members on my left, and I am prepared to hear the hon. the member for Mount Scio - Bell Island (Mr. Barry), but I would ask him to be brief.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. BARRY:
Mr. Speaker, excuse this somewhat sidestepping as I move into the issue, but when you look around the world and you look at the way in which different parts of the world have either progressed or not progressed, you wonder what is the reason. I often think of Haiti, which was one of the first countries of the Americas to fight off the shackles of a foreign power and achieve independence, a very courageous battle by its citizens. But they do not seem to have progressed very far since then, with all due respect to them, and I refer now to statistics relating to infant mortality, per capita income, all the various indicia of so-called material progress, anyhow. They are right down at the bottom of the scale. I do not know if they are the most impoverished country, but I would say they are in the bottom five.

Now, what is it that has prevented that nation from progressing? Well, Mr. Speaker, I am a believer that we have our destiny in our own hands. And, you know, we have

a province here which has tremendous resources - the fish, the forest, the minerals - and, you know, we have not progressed as much as some other parts of the world with equivalent resources, in the same period of time. Do you know why I think that is?

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

I would ask the hon. member to deal with this point of privilege.

MR. BARRY:
I will get right to the point in this statement. Do you know why I think it is, Mr. Speaker? It is because of the way we deal with issues such as are now before this House. And I would submit the same is the problem in certain countries in other parts of the world. I am not too impressed, Mr. Speaker, I am not too proud as a member of the House of Assembly to see what is going on on yet one more occasion in this House. And what is happening here on this point of privilege? What is happening here on this point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, is attack the messenger rather than the message.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. BARRY:
Deal with the one who raises the issue rather than with the issue itself.

Now, I also want to preface my remarks - and I would ask that the member for Bonavista South be kept silent, Mr. Speaker - on this point to say that I have the highest possible regard for the Minister of Health. I have the highest possible regard for his integrity. I believe he is an

honourable man.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. BARRY:
In the time that I have dealt with him in the House, I have seen him act in an honourable fashion. I would have to say almost - well, nothing springs to mind, Mr. Speaker, on any occasion, where I have seen him act in any but an honourable fashion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that that does not settle the matter. Because as have I pointed in this House before, and I have never said anything in this House that I am not prepared to say outside this House, and I believe that every member should proceed on the same basis, which has not always been the case, Mr. Speaker, it has not always been the case, but I would say that just because an individual is of high moral integrity, of high moral character, an honourable person, that does not mean that mistakes cannot be made, that does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that from a knowledge that one's heart is pure one cannot be lulled into a position of complacency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us deal with the issue. I reject out of hand, I reject with the utmost vehemence the Premier's position that we cannot deal with an issue unless we examine in the minutest detail the background going back to twenty years, I believe we now hear from the Government House Leader, of the individual who raises the issue.

We are not going to have very much debate in this House, Mr. Speaker, if that is the case.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. BARRY:
Mr. Speaker, we have an issue before this House and we have to deal with that issue. Now, the Premier may think it is a smart political campaign, but I go back to my introductory remarks, Mr. Speaker, and that is that he does no credit to this House, he does not credit to the position of Premier, and he does nothing to help this Province progress if he draws debate in this House down to the gutter.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. MORGAN:
(Inaudible) brought it on. It was not the Premier.

MR. BARRY:
Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be lead astray, but the member for Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan) said it was brought on.

Mr. Speaker, if any member in the House, the Leader of the Opposition, the Government House Leader, the member for Bonavista South, if anybody does anything that should be questioned in the House, let us deal with that issue separately and directly, but not by innuendo and not to try and discredit an individual.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. BARRY:
Let us deal with the issue and not try to discredit the individual who raises the issue and then we will see progress, then we will see this House doing what it should be doing for the people of this Province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I could just briefly, and I know the Speaker has shown a lot of lenience and I do not want to delay the House in getting on with its work, so let me get to the - regrettably it is a somewhat legalistic series of remarks, but we are dealing with legal matters; we are dealing now with legislation and regulations that flow from legislation.

Now the relevant section of the Conflict of Interest Guidelines, to me, seems to be regulation 3: "While holding office and for year after ceasing to hold office, a Minister, his spouse, or minor children or a body or organization in which any of them has a financial interest shall not... be eligible to receive a contract for the supply of goods or services."

Now, Mr. Speaker, on its face it would seem that there has been a breach of that section. On its face it would seem that there is a conflict of interest. That does not mean - and I go back to what I said when I started my remarks, that I had and I still have at this point in time, the highest regard for the integrity and the honour of the Minister of Health. It is possible, Mr. Speaker, I do not know, that even though the minister knew that the company had held leases from government - I think while he was involved with the company - he was not aware that there were subsequent renewals or subsequent leases. It may be that there is -

DR. COLLINS:
That is factual.

MR. BARRY:
Factual? That the minister did not know that there were renewals or such contracts? I accept the minister's word.

DR. COLLINS:

(Inaudible) a number of times. It is written in the letter to the Premier.

MR. BARRY:

I accept the minister's indication that he was not aware of any subsequent renewals or issuing of new contracts. So what we have at most, in that case, Mr. Speaker - but it may still be there and it may show some deficiency or defect in the guidelines, in the Conflict of Interest regulations - seems to be a technical breach of that section. It may be, Mr. Speaker, that the fault lies not with the minister but with whomever was responsible in that company or organization. Because I think there was a responsibility for informing the minister if there was any contract or lease entered into, because the organization or body clearly has a responsibility under this section as well.

So it comes down, Mr. Speaker, as I look at this and as I read this section, that we still have a problem here. It does not necessarily reflect in a bad fashion on the minister. One may say the minister, maybe, should have followed up from time to time to ensure that there were no government leases or contracts of which he was unaware. I would think it would be more normal or customary for, as everybody is presumed to know the law, that company or organization, whoever is running it, to keep the minister informed so that the proper letters could be obtained, or the proper steps taken to gain approval for that lease or for that contract.

But let us look at that issue, Mr. Speaker. There is a problem here, because on its face a body or

organization in which the minister has a financial interest did become eligible to receive benefits from a contract for the supply of goods or services. That, I would submit, has been established and that, as I understand it, is all that has been alleged by the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BARRY:

Mr. Speaker, if I could just end up with one final point, because again, and this is a red herring, we get this debate, and we have had it in this House before and I have heard it in the course of this issue being discussed, 'Oh, it was not an actual conflict, it was only a potential conflict of interest.' Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have to keep in mind is that a potential benefit coming to a member or a minister, is an actual conflict of interest.

MR. BAIRD:

So was the letter going to the beneficiaries of the Ocean Ranger disaster.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. BARRY:

We see it again, Mr. Speaker, from the member for Humber West. I was wondering how long it would be, Mr. Speaker, before a member opposite would jump up with that type of scurrilous comment. I invite the member for Humber West, I invite him now in a quite fashion, if he has any nerve, if he is a man, if he has anything in terms of integrity or character, to step outside this House and say that I have done anything improper in my capacity as a member, as a

lawyer, or in any other fashion, with respect to the **Ocean Ranger**.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BARRY:

And I will deal with that in the way in which it should be dealt with, and it will not be in this House. That is a direct challenge to find out whether the member has any character, or any integrity or any courage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. BARRY:

If he does not do that, Mr. Speaker, I ask for his apology in this House. Or my respect for the member opposite will sink somewhat, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BAIRD:

I will deal with it (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. BARRY:

I have considered the member somebody with whom I have had friendly relations for a long time, but that sort of comment, Mr. Speaker, I do not appreciate and I want the member to deal with it, either in the House or outside the House.

Why do we have these Conflict of Interest Regulations? Let us see whether it is under the letter of the regulation or not. Let us see what the intent and the spirit of these regulations are and whether the incident now before the House is caught up by it. Mr. Speaker, if we have a minister who is in

Cabinet, and if we have a company, whether or not he is actively involved in running it, from which he derives financial benefit, and if that company is doing business with government, there is a very real fear and risk, Mr. Speaker, that there is information flowing from the minister to the company or from the company to the minister. I accept that in this case that was not the case. Mr. Speaker, I clearly say I accept that this was not the case in this situation. The minister is an honourable man. I believe him to be an honourable man with this incident and the facts which have been laid out for me.

But there are people in this Province who do not know the Minister of Health on a personal basis, and an individual who does not know the Minister of Health looks at the facts and says, 'there is a company that is making a lot of money from contracts with the government, and there is a minister in government who holds a financial interest in that company.' Mr. Speaker, they will ask the question in their minds, is there any potential benefit that might flow to the minister from this situation?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I have heard the points that the hon. member is making. Has he any new points?

MR. BARRY:

I will finish in less than one minute, in thirty seconds, Mr. Speaker.

Is there any potential interest to the minister in the way he performs his duties? I have no fear that the minister would act

in anything other than with the highest integrity, the highest of ethics. But, Mr. Speaker, what we are dealing with, unfortunately or fortunately, when we get into public life we all have to know this is the way we have to handle our affairs. There are strangers out there who insist that we be like Ceasar's wife and that we not only be without blemish, not only be without having our hands actually in the till, but we be never in a position where anyone might say that our hands are in the till.

And that is the problem that is here now, Mr. Speaker. Whether or not the minister is blameless, spotless, without knowledge and so forth, we have a situation where there is a potential benefit that could have gone to the minister and that means there is an actual conflict of interest. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to see the Minister of Health in any way, any more than I want to see the Leader of the Opposition, have his character attacked in this House. I think we have to deal with this in a fashion. It may result in the amendment of these Conflict of Interest Regulations and, if that happens, then we should do that. And I would ask the Government House Leader to consider that possibly you may have to say, and this is the issue, if a member or a minister puts his share in trust, does that then mean he has no responsibility for ensuring that the company in which he holds the share does business with government? Is he then absolved as long as he has an actual trust situation set up? That is an issue, I think, that we could very usefully debate in this House, arising out of this particular situation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

As hon. members know the role of the Speaker is to determine whether a prima facie case has been established. I will certainly take this matter under advisement and report to the House at a later date.

MR. DAWE:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member of Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. DAWE:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give notice that, as soon as I have an opportunity to review the Hansard of today, based on remarks made by the member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk), I will be bringing forward a point of privilege which I think, Mr. Speaker, has a direct bearing to the kind of attitude and the kind of approach being made by the Opposition on the issue we have just debated for an hour and thirty-five minutes.

I would like to give notice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BAIRD:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Humber West.

MR. BAIRD:

With reference to the remarks a minute ago by the member for Mount Scio (Mr. Barry), I would like to repeat what I did say at the

time. I said there was an alleged potential conflict of interest by the member for Mount Scio regarding the Ocean Ranger. I did not say there was any wrongdoing. I said there was a potential one -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. BAIRD:

- in the same vein as the member said there was a potential conflict of interest with the Minister of Health. That is exactly what I said and that is what I meant.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

There is no point of order. The hon. member took the opportunity to explain his point of view.

Statements by Ministers

MR. BARRETT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Development and Tourism.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BARRETT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am reading this Ministerial Statement on behalf of my colleague, the hon. Hugh Twomey, the Minister of Public Works and Services, who cannot be with us this afternoon.

I am pleased to announce that government has taken the initiative to establish a central purchasing authority under the

provisions of the Department of Public Works and Services Act. Our aim is to direct, through greater co-ordination of effort, the procurement expenditures of government departments and government funded bodies to promote greater economic development opportunities within this Province. The collective purchases within the provincial public sector estimated to be some \$650 million annually is a powerful tool to be harnessed toward greater economic development.

Government is in the process of establishing a board to guide the overall development and implementation of the centralized procurement initiatives. The board is to be comprised of officials of the Department of Public Works and Services, the Department of Development and Tourism, Treasury Board, and is to include representation from the hospital sector, school boards, the Federation of Municipalities, Memorial University and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

The board will assemble purchasing data from all government funded bodies. From this, the Department of Development and Tourism will identify large volume products and product classifications which if acquired co-operatively or purchased in bulk would create a market for local entrepreneurs. It is envisaged that through this opportunity identification process and resultant co-operative procurement arrangements, local businesses may be able to expand their product lines, expand their distribution facilities and perhaps even create further manufacturing in the Province.

The approach is to be a

co-operative one requiring the support of all government funded bodies. Government expects that through collective efforts in purchasing two main benefits will be derived. Firstly, the presence of a readily identified market will entice local suppliers and manufacturers to invest in expansion or undertake additional development. Secondly, through joint purchasing, government funded bodies would likely obtain better prices with a resultant savings to their respective organizations.

In an effort to explain the benefits of the centralized purchasing concept, my colleagues the Hon. Len Simms, President of Treasury Board, my colleague the Hon. Hugh Twomey, Minister of Public Works and Services, and myself convened a seminar on May 30 and 31 of this year. Representatives of all government funded bodies attended at which the importance of co-operative procurement as an effective development tool was explained and their support for this initiative was solicited. I might also mention that the assembly of so many officials from the various government departments and government funded bodies for this purpose afforded us an excellent opportunity to discuss the implementation of The Public Tender Act and The Provincial Preference Act and to learn of their experiences with the new legislation.

Government's support of a central purchasing authority reflects our strong desire to seize whatever opportunities there may be available to stimulate economic development within the Province. In this particular case, we feel there is potential for increased

economic activity through co-operative procurement efforts among all government funded bodies rather than the fragmented situation that now exists. With the goodwill and support of all those involved, I feel confident that our provincial public sector procurement can become a more effective tool for economic development.

MR. GILBERT:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. GILBERT:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister. I received a copy of this yesterday really, so I have had some time to have a look at it. I must say we, on this side, are very happy to see this is a policy to be initiated. The Central Purchasing Authority is a really good idea.

As a matter of fact, I would almost think that maybe one of the ministers were at the Holiday Inn on September 23 last year when the Leader of the Opposition recommended it in his speech to the Board of Trade at that time. It was a programme towards self-sufficiency. What he said at that time was developed policies would introduce measures to establish a self-sufficiency programme, promote and provide for a maximum level of self-sufficiency in goods and services within the Province, provide wide support for goods produced within the self-sufficiency programme, financial, marketing, advisory and other assistance, and to help self-sufficiency to be undertaken.

So I would say it is a policy that we, in the Liberal Party, have expounded and it is one of the policies we certainly agree with. Now, I hope, by the government taking the initiative at this time, it will do something with the serious youth unemployment we have in the Province. I hope it will stop the outflow of Newfoundlanders who have to go to the mainland looking for jobs.

I hope it will not be another scheme to save some of their Tory buddies who invested in the offshore rather ill-advisedly seven or eight years ago and are now hanging on trying to stave off bankruptcy for the last five or six years. So I hope it is not going to be used as a panacea for some of their Tory buddies.

MR. BARRETT:
You started off alright, but now (inaudible).

MR. GILBERT:
If it is handled properly, it is a good policy and it will lead to self-sufficiency. If it leads to self-sufficiency, as it supposedly will, then it can only do good for the unemployed and the Newfoundland economy, in general.

I am sure we, seeing as we recommended it and the Leader of our party expounded this at the speech to the Board of Trade on September 23 of last year, we wholeheartedly support this.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, as Leader of a Socialist Party of this Province,

I am glad to see that the member for St. John's West, the Minister of Development and Tourism (Mr. Barrett), and the other ministers are adopting a good socialist perspective on the ways in which we should develop our economy.

MR. LONG:
Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:
One of the basic principles socialists have is government has a managing role to play in the economy and obviously the purchasing power is a good socialist principle for the member to adopt. It is interesting to see that as he matures and as he ages, the members of the Cabinet are now adopting a better socialist perspective on it. And, of course, we welcome the fact that the socialist leader of the Liberal Party is also in a position to endorse those kinds of concepts as well. It is just interesting to see these things occur.

MR. LONG:
Hear, hear! It is very practical.

MR. FENWICK:
The other comment I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, is the central purchasing system and the preferential policy are also the kinds of practices being frowned on very substantially by the Free Trade Agreement. Under those circumstances, Mr. Speaker, -

MR. BARRETT:
Do you like the purchasing policy in Cuba?

MR. FENWICK:
Maybe we should add them to the group that you talked about last week, right, or yesterday.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the point of the matter is that under a free trade agreement, the preferential purchasing policy, the edge given to local companies, could clearly be perceived as a subsidy and it is quite appalling we have the minister getting to the point where he is advocating a policy which he knows and I know and everybody else knows within a year or so is going to be struck down under the maw of free trade we are putting ourselves into.

Mr. Speaker, having seen the government has adopted good socialists policies, endorsed by the good socialist opposition parties, I am pleased to hear that occurring, unfortunately, it looks like it is a bit too late with the Free Trade Agreement coming in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TOBIN:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TOBIN:
Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all say to my hon. colleagues from Port de Grave (Mr. Efford) and St. John's East (Mr. Long) that the statement I was going to make yesterday on day care I have now sent out in the form of a press release.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to inform hon. members that from the past from May 19 to June 1, 1988, the department has approved 37 Community Development Projects for the Province.

The total funding allocated for

this period, Mr. Speaker, is \$2,495,258, creating 520 employment opportunities for social assistant recipients in the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TOBIN:
To date this fiscal year, 4,707 jobs have been created through the Employment Opportunities Division of the Department of Social Services, directly as a result of a provincial contribution of \$16,413,889.

These projects provide clients with valuable work experience required to successfully compete in the open job market.

This program has been acknowledged by many communities of our Province as being extremely helpful and useful to them in the past and I am happy we can continue providing these worthwhile services. Through Employment Opportunities we have assisted many councils by providing them with additional workers to complete many maintenance and beautification activities undertaken.

Just as important, Mr. Speaker, employment for our clients who have found themselves in difficult positions, establishes a sense of pride, of self-esteem and a degree of confidence, all of which are also very necessary for successful job competition.

Mr. Speaker, we have been involved with many beautification activities as I just mentioned, that not only achieves the goal designated by the department but have helped enhance the thriving tourist industry here in our

Province. We have done numerous home repair programs for seniors and have made a special effort to employ the handicapped people on our caseload. There are literally thousands of groups and individuals that have reaped the benefits of the excellent two-fold program of our department which our department administers. By two-fold, Mr. Speaker, I mean that both employer and employees have reaped the many benefits as well as the community at large.

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to update the House on the Federal/Provincial Joint Funded Employment Enhancement Program which is a different program, Mr. Speaker. It is the one refer to as the four corner program. The department is presently participating in this and in the last two weeks, Mr. Speaker, we have approved 7 projects at a cost of \$481,640 that will employ and train 127 people in many sectors of our economy.

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.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad there are some people in the galleries to listen to the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Tobin) stand and say he is proud to give the people of this Province a pride about the only thing they have to depend on, social service jobs. What a shameful way for the Minister of

Social Services to stand up and say he is proud!

Mr. Speaker, 4,707 jobs have been given by the minister's department. Now we only need another 14,307 and the Premier will have his mandate of 20,000 jobs completed, all from social services.

MR. TULK:
He promised forty.

MR. EFFORD:
That is what the minister is standing and saying he is proud of.

The people of this Province, Mr. Speaker, have no sense of pride in working ten weeks for \$200 a week, then being laid off and having to go on UIC for \$125 a week with absolutely no other form of income.

Mr. Speaker, all that has taken place because of this government is they are putting people on unemployment insurance to save money on the backs of the federal government. It is not to provide a better future for the people because, if it was, they would put training programmes in place, they would educate those people, and they would make sure when those people were hired on, and the cost sharing would be helped by the private sector so as to make sure the private sector kept the people on.

But what the people, Mr. Speaker, are reduced to is cleaning up ditches, cleaning up graveyards, and picking up garbage on the side of the road for ten weeks, and then they are forced, Mr. Speaker, to go off social services.

I say to the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Tobin), it is shameful, it is disgusting and it

is time for his party to adopt some new policies to help the people of this Province, get them away from social services and create some long-term jobs which the people of this Province deserve!

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. LONG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we would welcome the statement from the minister in as much as it is an interesting update on how the Community Development Project and the Employment Enhancement Projects are proceeding. But, I would say, as I did with the announcement yesterday from the minister responsible for the private sector programme, we need from the ministers responsible more analysis and more comprehensive data so we can get an assessment of what these programmes look like on a broad scale, especially given that both these programmes are fairly new initiatives by the government, in order to determine whether in next year's estimates the government should proceed and perhaps expand these programmes, or whether they should be doing something else. We are going to need a lot more analysis than what the ministers are bringing forward.

We would also have concerns with the Community Development Projects. What we are doing is having a stated commitment to a programme which gets people off

social services but, in many cases, what the department is inviting them to do is to work for short periods at very low wages and then apply for UIC with not necessarily any training or real work experience having been gained, and then certainly having been left to the very difficult position of joining so many other unemployed people in the Province. So it is not clear many of the individuals on this programme are any better off at the end of the programme than when they began.

We would also say, Mr. Speaker, there is some question about the value of some of the projects in that I know the Womens' Policy Office has produced one report which has a good analysis, and in which it showed some of the programmes we are doing, such as knitting in group homes, did not provide a lot of meaningful work for the people involved. But there were other projects, such as home repair for senior citizens, which were quit useful.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, we are going to need a lot more information and analysis of the kinds of projects being put in place in order to do an adequate assessment.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would say again what we seem to have been given by government is quite an ad hoc approach from department to department to deal with the very real and difficult problems of poverty and unemployment.

We have yet to see a clear, coherent, long-term, comprehensive programme to deal with the very serious needs of the unemployed and the very serious difficulties facing the people who are living

in poverty in this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Before calling for Oral Questions, the time is passing so I want to announce the questions for the Late Show.

The first is to the Minister of Transportation from the hon. member for Burgeo Bay d'Espoir, who is not satisfied with the answer he got about the Ferry Committee.

The second is to the Minister of Fisheries concerning FADA from the hon. member for Fogo.

The third is to the Minister of Fisheries about the shut-down of the St. Lawrence fish plant, and that is from the hon. member for Twillingate.

Oral Questions

MR. WELLS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WELLS:
Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the hon. the Premier, I would ask the President of the Council if he would deal with this matter. In recent months, at the end of every month usually the Premier, and sometimes some other ministers, deals with the unemployment and employment statistics as they are released by Statistics Canada. They have all, in the last few months, been making statements about the great strides and the great improvements that have been

made in our unemployment rates and how much better off we are over the last two or three months. In the last few days there has been a document prepared by the staff of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Blanchard), and recently submitted, which indicates that the actual unemployment rate for the Province in March was 21.9 per cent, which was an increase of 2.3 percentage points, and at the same time the rest of Canada increased by one-tenth of 1 per cent, which means our unemployment rate increased by twenty-three times the increase in the rest of Canada during that three-month period.

Will the President of the Council explain to this House how he and the Premier and other members of government can justify the rosy statements they have been making in light of the information now disclosed through the Department of Labour?

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

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member for Windsor - Buchans that the information we get comes from Statistics Canada based on actual research done by Statistics Canada. The facts are clear. The facts are very clear, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I think it is 177,000 people working in this Province today, the largest number of people ever working in Newfoundland's history in any year, as I understand it. The actual unemployment rate adjusted according to Statistics Canada is down this April from last April, I believe, by 2.5 percentage points, and the list goes on.

So, when the hon. member asks

where we get the information to substantiate the statements we make about the great progress we are making in unemployment, the answer is clear.

With respect to the report that he refers to, put together by the Minister of Labour, I cannot answer the question. I do not know where they get their information or where they get the figures. In fact, the Minister of Labour is a bit surprised at it himself, he said. He is not sure that he had the staff over there to do this kind of research, so obviously it comes from other sources. However, to conclude the answer, let me just say as well that in addition to Stats Canada figures are the economic forecasts by major independent groups, like the Economic Council of Canada and the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, all of whom have acknowledged that there has been economic growth in Newfoundland over the last year or so and predict there will be more economic growth in the future. I do not know why the member for Windsor - Buchans persists in wanting to argue that point and persist in trying to give Newfoundlanders the image that things are worse than they are. It is not a fact.

MR. WELLS:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

The President of the Council now indicates there may be something wrong with this, that this is not an official document. I would like either he or the minister to clarify it.

Now, my supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Will the President of the Council, on behalf of the government, ask the federal government to recognize that when you add to Newfoundland's real unemployment rate the tens of thousands of people who are discouraged workers, we have a real unemployment rate of between 35 and 40 per cent, and will the federal government recognize that as a national catastrophe and take steps to do something about it, like they would if it were Ontario or Quebec?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, with respect to his question about the document itself, the Minister of Labour will respond to that in due course, I guess whenever he gets an opportunity. With respect to the second part of his question, we do not believe that Newfoundland is a catastrophe. That certainly is not the view of this particular government. Newfoundland is not a catastrophe, and I wish the hon. the member for Windsor - Buchans would desist in making those kinds of outlandish statements.

Mr. Speaker, we have made representation to the federal government on many, many matters, and will continue to do so, matters that are of economic interest to this Province, economic importance to this Province. We have had some successes with the federal government. We have signed some of the largest federal/provincial agreements that we have ever signed in this Province's history.

DR. COLLINS:

Very few during the Liberal years, though.

MR. SIMMS:

The hon. member says very few during the Liberal regime, and that may be true. So the fact of the matter is the situation, as the hon. member for Windsor - Buchans tries to portray it, is not the way it is. Now, it may be the way he would like to portray it for political purposes, but it is not a fact. By the way, I would like the hon. member for Windsor - Buchans to see a presentation put together by professional people in Executive Council, who have done a considerable amount of work on this over the last year. In fact, I may even do it for the press one of these days, to give them a perspective that we have probably lost sight of, and have not even looked at ourselves over the years as Newfoundlanders. I am serious about it, quite serious about it. It may not be politically attractive but the point is it will be factual and informative. If the hon. member for Windsor - Buchans would like for that to be arranged, I would be most happy to arrange that. I think it would help, as a matter of fact, and give you a little different outlook on life.

MR. WELLS:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Will the President of the Council advise the House if the government is going to take any action to recognize that while the real unemployment rate in St. John's is

about 14.7 per cent, in rural Newfoundland it is close to 50 per cent, and will he advise the House what steps the government is going to take to correct this regional disparity and prevent thousands and thousands of our people from rural Newfoundland from having to leave this Province to put bread on their tables?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, again the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I think, is trying to portray a situation that really is not the case. Of course, we have difficulty. Of course, we have unemployment. Of course, it is too high. Of course, it is higher than any other Province in Canada, and it has been like that practically all our lives. But, Mr. Speaker, to try to suggest that the government is doing nothing about it, or has not done anything about it over the years is not fair, because the facts are there from Stats Canada. Our unemployment rate this year over last year, April to April, is down 2.5 percentage points. Last year alone, in 1987, the unemployment rate in Newfoundland dropped by 1.5 percentage points, the largest absolute decline of any province in Canada last year, in 1987.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

So, I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition continues to ignore those facts.

Now, with respect to the substance of the question, what are we doing about it, Mr. Speaker, it is

clear, if you read any analysis, that forestry sector employment has increased considerably, mining employment has considerably increased, even the fishery, which has had a rough time over the year, has increased and provided a lot of jobs. The Province's private sector employment programme, which your own colleague, your critic, condemns and criticizes daily in the House, is about to create 3,000 jobs this year. Mr. Speaker, we are doing all kinds of things in every sector. In tourism, we are providing funds to groups. Rural development loans are being provided. Jobs! Jobs! Jobs! We are doing something about it, unlike the hon. member's predecessors.

MR. KELLAND:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KELLAND:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to stick with the cucumber caper for a while. I would have liked to direct the question to the Minister of Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development, (Mr. Power) but I understand he is taking heat of a different kind in Florida. My next choice would have been the Premier, who is probably writing the sequel to the cucumber recipes, the movie. So I go to the President of the Council.

I ask him can he confirm that five truckloads of Sprung cucumbers were dumped over the weekend, and that three of the truckloads were dumped in Robin Hood Bay after regular hours, perhaps in the dark of night? Can he confirm that one

way or the other?

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

MR. SIMMS:
No comment, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KELLAND:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KELLAND:
Can the President of the Council confirm whether or not the other two loads were dumped in Seal Cove, Conception Bay, at an unapproved dumping site?

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

MR. SIMMS:
Why does the hon. member not jump in his car and drive out to Seal Cove, Mr. Speaker? Maybe he can find out. I do not know.

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

MR. SPEAKER:
A final supplementary, the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:
Unlike the minister, I do not have funding to give me extra trips out around the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. KELLAND:
I would have liked to direct my final supplementary to the Minister of Environment (Mr. Russell), but again I will have to

go to the President of the Council.

Would the President of the Council have the Minister responsible for Environment investigate the matter and determine whether or not Sprung cucumbers were indeed dumped at Seal Cove at an unapproved dumping site, and will he be prepared to take the appropriate action if he finds any laws have been contravened?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, obviously I will pass the matter on to the Department of Environment. The minister is out of the Province at the present time. If something improper or illegal has been done, I am sure they will do what they normally would do, and that is follow up on those practices.

On the question of not having transportation, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has a vehicle which certainly I am sure you could use, and he has a credit card to pay for the gas. If that is not working, maybe you could borrow the Leader of the Opposition's Audi. That will take you out there.

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, it is kind of shocking we cannot find any ministers we want to ask questions of today. They are all, I think, hiding behind in the

common room. I wish they would come out and -

MR. SIMMS:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Beauchesne clearly says you cannot refer to members' absences from the House. The hon. member is out of order and should be told so.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order. The hon. member is out of order in making comments such as that.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

In the absence of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Windsor), whom I saw leaving a few moments ago, I will go a little higher and direct my question to the Deputy Premier (Dr. Collins), rather than the Government House Leader. Fortunately he was Minister of Finance.

About six months ago, Mr. Deputy Premier, the Public Accounts Committee decided to ask for an audit of one department in government that does not get audited, that is, the Auditor General's Department. We asked for an audit of the Auditor General's Department, as we felt that we should scrutinize that spending.

Concerns were expressed by the Department of Finance that this

contravened The Financial Administration Act. A request was made that a very slight amendment be made to The Financial Administration Act so that there would be no doubt that we would have a right to audit the Auditor General.

My question is: Why is it that this amendment has not been prepared so we can do that audit of the Auditor General that we want to do?

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

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, I have the impression, but I certainly will not press it, that that question is also out of order. I do not know if you can ask why certain laws are not amended. I suspect that, but anyway I will not press that point. I think it is a sensible issue. I do not see why the Auditor General should not be audited. I do not mean on a 'sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander' sort of thing. But, I mean, it is the expenditure of public funds, and they should be audited as any expenditure of public funds. I am sure that the hon. Minister of Finance has taken the matter seriously and under consideration, but I will inquire as to what he is going to do about it.

MR. BAKER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary.

MR. BAKER:
Thank you.

Maybe it is too bad that the Deputy Premier is not still

Minister of Finance.

DR. COLLINS:
You did not say that when I was minister.

MR. BAKER:
Maybe we would have this by now. I would like to ask would the Deputy Premier check into the progress being made in developing an amendment? If in fact this amendment is going to be developed, it is very, very simple. It can be done in just a couple of lines. I am wondering why it is that it is taking so long? Has there been a decision not to do this so we cannot audit the Auditor General? Or is it simply a matter of dragging feet so that the House will be closed before we can get around to it? It has to be one or other.

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, quite honestly I do not have the information the hon. member is looking for, but I would rather suspect that it is not a dragging of feet. I certainly will enquire as to where that matter lies.

MR. DECKER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:
Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies (Mr. Matthews). The minister will know the information sheet for The

Private Sector Employment Programme says the programme is for companies which would like to hire extra employees, but cannot afford to hire extra employees. I have that information sheet here in my hand.

Now I ask the minister, how does he square this guideline about employers who cannot afford to hire with the fact that Newfoundland Light and Power were awarded sixty-one employees under the programme this year, and last year they were awarded sixty-four employees?

MR. MATTHEWS:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies.

MR. MATTHEWS:
Mr. Speaker, as I said a couple of days ago, the only person who has uttered a negative word about the Private Sector Employment Programme is when the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. MATTHEWS:
This programme has worked extremely well for the past two years, Mr. Speaker. It created thousands of jobs in the Province, and to date 1,769 this year. And we are not going to discriminate against any employer in this Province who wants to create an additional job or an additional ten jobs. Once you start discrimination then that puts the whole programme into jeopardy. And in essence what we are saying is that it has to be an incremental job. The private

sector employers or applicant has to provide 50 per cent of the funds. And we are satisfied that the programme is working very well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. DECKER:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary, the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:
In other words, the guideline is not followed, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I ask the minister, how can the minister, in view of this guideline, justify awarding a programme under this Private Sector Employment Programme to Williams, Harris, Roebothan and McKay, an upstanding St. John's law firm, and Avalon Cablevision? How can he justify it if it is for people who want to hire but cannot afford to hire, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Career Development.

MR. MATTHEWS:
Mr. Speaker, as I said, the hon. gentleman over there is trying to twist around guidelines and truths again, which we have seen a lot of these last couple of weeks, and loopholes and other things.

Mr. Speaker, all I am going to say is that if it is an incremental job for which the applicant, the employer, is willing to pay 50 per cent, then we consider that to be a very positive thing. It is not a giveaway in this Province, Mr. Speaker. We are not just giving 100 per cent of the wages. The

private sector employer is paying 50 per cent. In a number of cases in the Province, the applicant is paying more than 50 per cent, because they are paying more than \$6 an hour, and some as high as \$10 an hour, of which they are putting up \$7. So the programme is working very well, Mr. Speaker, and we make no apologies for the success of the Private Sector Employment Programme.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary.

MR. DECKER:

I take it that the guidelines, Mr. Speaker, are not of very much importance, so I will ditch them. Is the minister satisfied that Fishery Products International could not afford the three people it took on in Bonavista? If it is only for companies who cannot afford to hire, was he satisfied that Fishery Products International could not afford to take on three extra people in Bonavista unless the Government of this Province had to subsidize it?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Career Development.

MR. MATTHEWS:

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that Fishery Products International created three jobs in Bonavista and are putting up 50 per cent of the wages. I am very pleased with that. That is the intent of the whole programme. Just about 2000 jobs last year, Mr. Speaker, 1769 jobs to date this year, paid at least 50 per cent by the private sector, in some cases more, and the hon. gentleman finds fault with that.

On one side of the coin, Mr. Speaker, they are up criticizing the government for not creating employment, jobs in this Province, they just asked about a report given by a department, and now he is up criticizing the government for creating employment, not 100 per cent paid by the Province, Mr. Speaker, but 50 per cent, and we are very proud of it.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihek.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour, who I believe is in the precincts. So I will start the question, assuming that he will be there to answer it. If he is still not here, then somebody else from government will answer.

It concerns a number of initiatives taken by his department, and the government in general over the last couple of years.

I am glad to see the minister is back.

My first question is to the minister about the study that was done on the brewing industry and the use of aluminum cans.

My question to him, since this is Environment Week and we thought we would ask a question appropriate to the environment, is: Does the minister have the results of that study? Is the study, then, available? And is the government ready now to make some recommendations with regard to the use of aluminum beer cans in this Province?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Labour.

MR. BLANCHARD:

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to advise the hon. member I am not the Minister of Environment. From the very beginning, when we agreed to establish the Industrial Enquiry relating to the 1985 strike in the breweries, we made it very, very clear that the enquiry that we were making was related to issues involved in the strike, nothing to do with environment. I made it very clear to the trade unions involved that there was a study going on at the same time by the Department of Environment, so there are two separate issues. If there is any question with respect to the labour aspects of it, we are prepared to answer it, but other questions should go to the Minister of Environment.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

I do not think we got an answer as to where the Industrial Enquiry is, but I will try a couple of others then.

Would the Minister of Labour tell us where the promised study of the St. Lawrence dust levels, that was supposed to be tabled in this House before the end of May, is, and, furthermore, where the minimum wage report is that was also supposed to be tabled by the minister, who mentioned it a couple of weeks ago? Where are those two particular reports, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Labour.

MR. BLANCHARD:

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question relating to St. Lawrence, we are continually monitoring the situation down there. I provided answers, Mr. Speaker, to the questions that were asked, that were relevant at the time. If there is a specific question now with respect to it, the hon. member can ask it, but I will inform him that we are monitoring on a weekly basis down there, continuously monitoring.

With respect to the second question of the tabling in the House of the reports, my promise was to make the report public when it was ready for publication, Mr. Speaker. It is not quite ready for publication yet. There were some questions which are getting close to be answered.

MR. FENWICK:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. FENWICK:

My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is: Over two years ago we had a very intense labour dispute in this Province. At the time the government committed itself to revising The Public Service Collective Bargaining Act.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. FENWICK:

My question to the minister is this: Since The Public Service Collective Bargaining Act regulates negotiations in this Province, would the minister tell

us where the Committee, that has been doing work on Bill 59, is and if the Committee is not reporting at this point, could the minister tell us, since there are at least four reports and replies that are due us in the House here, what exactly the minister has been doing all this time, since we have not been receiving these?

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. FENWICK:
I am finished, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. member was on a final supplementary. The first supplementary was in no way related to his main question, and this is certainly not related to either one. So I am going to recognize the hon. member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies, and he is not here.

AN HON. MEMBER:
He is on the way.

MR. TULK:
He is on the way.

I want to ask the question to the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies, who is coming.

It arises from the question put by the member for the Strait of Belle Isle. It springs from a concern that I have about small business people who are really the people who provide jobs. I would ask the minister, in view of his answers, and in view of the fact that Newfoundland Light and Power and several other large companies got 50 per cent of the funding for

jobs from the minister's programme, is the minister now saying to us that there were not smaller companies which could have used those funds better than those other companies that he has funded, thereby strengthening small businesses, and we would hope, private enterprise in this Province? I am concerned about how the programme is being administered.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies.

MR. MATTHEWS:
Mr. Speaker, it is a Private Sector Employment Programme. Now, we are very, very concerned about small business in this Province, and we are very concerned about big business in this Province. It is a Private Sector Employment Programme and anyone who is in the private sector is eligible to apply. If it is an incremental job they are eligible to receive 50 per cent of the salary up to a maximum of \$3.00 an hour from the Province. The applications are scrutinized, gone through by a committee consisting of three departments of government, which recommends either rejection or approval. The programme has been run excellently the past two years and has been tremendously received by the private sector. And, by the way, from the thousands of people who have found jobs under the programme, letters are coming in by the hundreds, and phone calls every day. People are very, very pleased and excited about the programme. In spite of the negativity of certain members of the Opposition, the only negative factors to the Private Sector Employment Programme in this Province, it is going to continue, approvals are going to be done or

a weekly basis, and we are going to employ upwards to 3000 people this year under the programme.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo, a supplementary.

MR. TULK:

I ask the hon. gentleman to tell the House how many of those smaller type businesses that would normally take over one or two of those jobs, have applied -

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hundreds and hundreds.

MR. TULK:

Let me finish the question now.

- and not been accepted?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies.

MR. MATTHEWS:

Mr. Speaker, there has been somewhere around 1800 applications to date. I am safe in saying that in excess of 90 per cent of 1800, however many that is, are from small businesses which have applied for one, two, five, or ten positions. There are some from bigger businesses, corporations, but by far they are the small minority of applications that have applied to employ people. We have not discriminated with the programme. We believe that every job is important to the Province. There have been some rejections to the programme for different reasons; some where the jobs were not incremental, some for other

reasons, where there were inaccuracies or inadequacies in the application, and then because of follow-up by a project officer there were other problems that were not corrected, but by far the majority have been approved. Most of those approved are from people who have applied to the programme for the first time. There have been applications approved for those who have applied for the second year in succession, but the majority are from new applicants, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, does the hon. minister mean that 'incremental' here means jobs that otherwise would not have been there? I take it that is what he means. Is that correct? Is he saying that all of the jobs that he has approved to this point would not have been there unless he had given 50 per cent of the cost of the wages up to, I believe, he said three dollars? Is that what he is saying?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies.

MR. MATTHEWS:

Mr. Speaker, we have been saying that for two years. Two years that has been said, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the hon. gentleman is a bit slow catching on, but for two years that has been said.

Now, to create the additional jobs, I guess the catalyst or the

incentive for a lot of the private sector people has been that government is providing 50 per cent, but, as well, they are providing at least 50 per cent, and in a number of cases are providing more.

I just have a question to ask the hon. gentleman. What is wrong with creating 3,000 jobs in this Province?

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. It is of great concern to the health care system, and that is the reason why I ask this question. It was reported in the press yesterday that twenty-five jobs were going to be terminated at the Health Sciences Complex. Now this was reported in the press. I ask the Minister of Health: Is this indeed a fact? Can he confirm or deny that these jobs are going to be terminated?

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

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, we have been informed by the Health Sciences Complex management that, as a result of their planning and under the authority of their board, they are, indeed, terminating a certain number of jobs in the organization there. They are spread over a number of areas. They are not nursing staff, I understand. I think I am correct in saying there

is no nursing staff involved. They are in the support staff area. They are a small percentage of the total employment at the Health Sciences Complex. I do not know what the total employment is, but it is quite large, I would say it is in the thousands, or at least a thousand, anyway. So it is a small percentage.

Granted, any loss of jobs is hard on the individual and is something that we do not condone or look for in this Province. But, nevertheless, a large organization like that, every once in a while, has to adjust its work force, and they felt that these particular individuals were redundant to their needs, and they felt that they had to carry through with the termination.

MR. EFFORD:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary, the hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health, given the state of our health care system, especially at the Health Sciences, because all the heavy case loads seem to come to the Health Sciences, does he not see it necessary to step in there and to help the administration - it is obviously being done because of its budget - to make sure that these twenty-five jobs are not lost, jobs that cannot afford to be lost, to the sick people and the people at the Health Sciences Centre?

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

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, I think there is an implication in the hon. member's question there that we are not dealing with the Health Sciences Complex. I can assure the hon. member that we have repeated meeting with the Health Science Complex, as we do with other hospital boards. I have had meetings, for instance, with the Clarendville Hospital Board. I have had meetings with the Grand Falls Hospital Board. I have had meetings with the new Salt Pond Hospital Board. I have had meetings with St. Clare's, the Grace and so on. And we have had meetings with the Board and management of the Health Sciences Complex. They present to us concerns and we present to them our concerns, and we try to get a meeting that we can both satisfactorily handle. And I can assure the hon. member that these particular terminations were determined by the management to be redundant to their needs at this point in time. It did not have anything to do, for instance, with the difficulty that was experienced at the Health Sciences Complex a little while ago over the ICU and so on and so forth.

There was a determination that the efficient running of the hospital there did not require these individuals.

MR. SPEAKER:

The time for oral questions has now elapsed.

MR. TULK:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I could have raised

this in Question Period, but I do not think it was the proper time or place to do it. The hon. the President of the Council (Mr. Simms) rose on a point of order and pointed out that the member for Gander (Mr. Baker) was out of order because Beauchesne states, and it does - there is no argument about what Beauchesne states - besides the prohibitions contained in Standing Order 35, 'it has been sanctioned by usage that a member while speaking must not refer to the presence or absence of specific members.'

Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman was perfectly right in saying you cannot do that, according to Beauchesne. I think Your Honour ruled he should not, but I would remind Your Honour once again in this Legislature it is our own Standing Orders which take precedent in this House and then Beauchesne, in that order, when either is used to make decisions. Your Honour will find, if he looks it up, that it has often been the precedent in this House that members have referred to the absence of ministers or indeed members. I would ask Your Honour to take some time and do a bit of research on that.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

If I could just add a point to that.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, there is another reference in Beauchesne which you will find. I am afraid I cannot quickly find it, but there is a reference in Beauchesne, which is a parliamentary reference well used by Speakers in this Legislature and every Legislature in Canada, which says, if I could only find it, but it is to the effect, in any event, that what was a precedent yesterday is not necessarily a precedent today. So the argument the hon. the member for Fogo tries to make about always following your precedents is not necessarily a totally accurate one. There is a reference that says, a precedent yesterday is not necessarily a precedent today. That is clear and binding. But it is not worth wasting the time of the House to argue about it. Your Honour will look into it anyway. The hon. member for Fogo can carry on if he wishes.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
Just one point.

MR. TULK:
I think Your Honour what he is referring to is what is unparliamentary yesterday is not unparliamentary today.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

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

Notices of Motion

MS VERGE:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MS VERGE:
Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce the following bills: "An Act Respecting Companies Validation", and "An Act To Remove Anomalies and Errors In The Statute Law."

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Tobin), I give notice I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled "An Act To Amend The Child Welfare Act, 1972."

AN HON. MEMBER:
Call it 4:30.

MR. SPEAKER:
Will we call it 4:30?

Debate on the Adjournment [Late Show]

MR. SPEAKER:
I now call on the hon. member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir.

MR. GILBERT:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. GILBERT:
I had occasion on Tuesday of this week to ask a question to the Minister of Transportation (Mr.

Doyle) concerning the resignation of three members of the Ramea Ferry Commission, and I was not satisfied with the answer.

He said they had resigned for personal reasons. I took the trouble, when I received a copy of the letter, which they had sent to the minister, to phone these gentlemen and I found that indeed it was not personal reasons, but they wanted to be nice. If the minister had taken the time to phone them he would have found out exactly what the problem was and why they resigned.

Mr. Speaker, the resignations were offered because these three gentlemen felt they were being made scapegoats for the Department of Transportation. The government would not listen to the recommendations the Ferry Commission made. That was the reason, they would not listen.

The Commission had, time and time again, pointed out that the continued increase in rates on the ferry between Grey River, Ramea, and Burgeo was causing them extreme hardship, as the members there representing the department on the Commission in Ramea. They pointed out the people that were suffering, really, I suppose, the first ones, the individuals that were really suffering were those who had to go to Burgeo for medical care, the sick, the infirm and the people on low incomes. It now costs eleven dollars for those people to go nine miles to the hospital. there are no facilities in Ramea for X-rays and blood work and, as there are a lot of the elderly people who have to have this on a regular basis as a sort of treatment and service, they have to use the ferry on weekly basis. They were very concerned

about the increase in rates.

Then, of course, the people who live in Ramea, the people who are working in Ramea, they can look across on a clear day, Mr. Speaker, and they can see Sand Banks Park. It is a beautiful provincial park in Burgeo. The only thing about it, Mr. Speaker, is it is eleven miles away and for a man, his wife, and three children, to take advantage of the Sand Banks Park in Burgeo, it means they have to get their car on the ferry, go over, spend the day, and it costs them fifty-five dollars, or for the weekend, fifty-five dollars. They have to go on Friday and come back on Sunday. So that is a pretty heavy bill to pay just to get off the island for a weekend.

When the Burgeo road was opened, there were great expectations it would be paved at some time and people then took trailers and built cabins along the Burgeo Road so they could get away for the weekend. So the people of Ramea and Grey River wanted to take advantage of this, and they have, but it has just reached the stage now where it is becoming too expensive for them.

Those people on the Ferry Commission were taking the flak and they had passed this information on to the government, but they were not getting any results. So, for that reason firstly, in frustration, they were forced to resign.

The second reason is this Spring the department sent out two Schedules, A and B. Here is what we want the Ferry Commission to put in. You are either going to go on Schedule A or Schedule B. Both those schedules were

circulated to the people of Grey River and Ramea and they were found wanting, Mr. Speaker.

The people were not satisfied either one of them would provide the service they wanted. So this Ferry Commission and the three members from Ramea sent in to the department a schedule which they called the peoples' schedule. It was one recommended by the people served by this ferry and could have been done without increasing any staff or asking for any extra vessels to be put on this run.

What they wanted, Mr. Speaker, was the ferry to go to Grey River on Saturday to pick up people who wanted to get out for the weekend and to go back to Grey River on Sunday to bring people in. This would have been via Ramea.

The second thing they wanted, Mr. Speaker, was another run on that ferry on Monday to let people do business.

MR. SPEAKER (Parsons):
Order, please!

The hon. member's time has elapsed.

MR. GILBERT:
In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, they are not happy with the situation and this is why they resigned. I ask the minister to respond to that.

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is going to respond to the question.

There was a notice the Minister of Finance was supposed to have given. I wonder if I can take ten seconds to give the notice. It will only take ten seconds.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:
On behalf of the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, I will on tomorrow move that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider certain resolutions relating to the imposition of a tax on warranty and maintenance agreements and contracts under The Retail Sales Tax Act, 1978. (Bill No. 48)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the House for the time.

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

MR. DAWE:
Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, I think it was just an opportunity for him to highlight, and I am sure that piece of information from Hansard will go down to his constituents in that particular area.

I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is opportune to do so whenever we have the occasion, in 1978 when the provincial government took over and negotiated an arrangement to take over the interprovincial ferry system around the coast, it picked up what was finally determined, and what everyone knew through a consultant study, was a service which was completely inadequate. The vessels that were being used were old and they were never maintained properly. The cost of someone travelling from the islands to the mainland of the Province were inconsistent. Each service cropped up with its own rates.

The system of providing the

services was through a kind of a system prevalent of an age gone by and it was almost like a cost plus system in that people were given an opportunity to buy a vessel and given long-term contracts to carry out the service and at the end of the service - and we found that out and the Auditor General pointed it out on a number of occasions - when we came to the end of those services, what we wound up with was a vessel that was fully paid for by the taxpayers through subsidies and by the people using this service through their fees, fully paid for by the people of the Province and by the people of Canada. At the end of the contract, the owner actually wound up with a vessel which did not cost him a cent, and at the same time, made a profit through the system. That is not in any way to take away from the fact these people were operating a business, and that was fine for the time.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the study done and as a result of certain public comments that that was not an acceptable way to proceed, the Province decided to go in essentially three directions to try and come up with the best compromise for providing services. One: Obviously we had to continue with existing contracts, and to finish them out and to evaluate those, as compared to government-owned vessels which would be used in the service and contracted to an operator. The third option was government-owned vessels operated by the Department of Transportation on behalf of the people in those areas.

Through the records kept over a two-year period, it was ultimately decided the best and most economic option and the one which provided

the best service and the most flexible service to people being served by the ferry system was to go with the option where the Province bought and operated, through the department, its ferry systems. This is the option we have gone with.

In the process of looking at that, as I mentioned in the beginning, there was a tremendous inconsistency in the fares charged and the various services. There was no way of equating the fares charged on the Bell Island - Portugal Cove run to the ones from Farewell to the mainland, or vice versa. There was just no consistency. So what we decided to do over a five-year period was to try and use certain services as a base and to make sure each of the services at the end of a five-year period would be paying fares comparable to the distance they travel and the kind of service.

Just in closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out as well, in that period of time since we have taken over the services, I think in excess of \$40 million has been spent, about \$23 million of that in acquisition of new vessels and the building of ferry terminals and other facilities and that has tremendously improved service. There is not one service in the Province which has not improved very dramatically over what was in existence when the Provincial Government took over the service.

Included in that was the opportunity for communities to participate in the planning, the scheduling, the fare structures and other activities concerning their economic and social life with regard to going to and from

the Islands, carrying out business and other health opportunities and so on around the Province.

This has been a very valuable exercise. Committees have carried out their mandate very conscientiously and have provided a very valuable service with regard to that kind of an operation.

I have no idea why the individuals resigned. The member explained why they resigned, but other committees are functioning very effectively around the Province and I think for the betterment of the ferry services and for the betterment of the people of this Province, and a real credit to the Department of Transportation and how they have improved the inter-provincial ferry system in this Province since 1978.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

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

He is not satisfied with the answer given by the Minister of Fisheries concerning FADA.

MR. TULK:
Where is the minister I wonder, Mr. Speaker?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. TULK:
Gone to kick off his leadership campaign, I suppose.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked a question to the Minister of Fisheries concerning the Fish Aid Development Agency. Specifically, the question had to do with why funding has not been

forthcoming from the Federal government to help this agency which seems to all of us in this Legislature to have the right aims. It seems to me it is the kind of organization that all of us could support. It has the aim of providing food to a Third World country or to a developing country, and it has the aim of buying fish from Newfoundlanders. Now surely those two things go hand in hand in Newfoundland.

I understand from the Minister of Fisheries that, indeed, he believes that himself and I believe he does. He believes the Fish Aid Development Agency should be allowed to grow and prosper. He believes, as I do, it is a good organization.

But there are no funds coming from the Federal government. We hear complaints that this group, the Fish Aid Development Agency, is having problems getting the type of funding it requires to at least cure fish or supply fish to through that agency.

His final answer to me, Mr. Speaker, and Hansard will show this, is when I asked him if there was somebody in Ottawa who was blocking the funding or if there was somebody here with some interest that might cause the funding to be blocked, his final answer to me was, 'Go ask Brendan Foley.' As everybody knows, I believe, Brendan Foley is the president of that organization. Is that correct?

Mr. Foley applied for that funding. But, of course, Mr. Foley can very well be kept in the dark far more easily than can the Minister of Fisheries here as to why he is not getting the funding he requires for his organization.

I find the minister's answer to go ask Brendan Foley, besides being a little bit saucy, which I do not mind, I expect that once in a while from ministers on the other side, but I find it a little bit saucy, to use a good old Newfoundland -

MR. SIMMS:

listen to the pot calling the kettle black.

MR. TULK:

The hon. gentleman must know I admit that, on times I am saucy myself and that is the reason I expect it from the other side.

But I find it somewhat confusing to have a minister stand up, a Minister of Fisheries, responsible for the development of the fisheries in this Province and who surely must be able to talk to the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Siddon) in Ottawa and find out what is happening, far better than Brendan Foley can, and who, by the way, was part of a government in 1985 which went around this Province on a prosperity crusade, I believe, they called it, so Mr. Mulroney could get elected, who helped elect a government that was going to inflict prosperity on this Province.

MR. SIMMONS:

You will need more than one crusade the next time.

MR. TULK:

Yes.

Who help elected a government where we were suppose to have no more problems as they had with the Trudeau government. The Minister of Forestry, as he was the Minister of Forestry then, he is now the President of the Council, the Government House Leader, he

went up and tea and crumpets about a forestry centre and that got nowhere. It seems that the days of tea and crumpets must be over in Ottawa. The Minister of Fisheries says, 'Now, if you want information, do not ask me to find it out from my federal buddies in Ottawa. You go ask Brendan Foley.'

But I have a bigger concern than that, and that is that I am wondering, Mr. Speaker - I have a suspicion and, I suppose, that is allowed. I suppose it is. I am doubtful these days, but I suppose it is allowed.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Be my guest.

MR. TULK:

Yes, I intend to be.

Mr. Speaker, I have a suspicion as to whether in fact there is somebody around with some interest themselves in seeing that this organization does not prosper. Now, I suppose that would not be the case. That is the reason that I ask the Minister of Fisheries the question: Would he investigate the matter to see if, indeed, the fact a certain couple of gentlemen resigned from the Board of Directors of FADA on September 24, 1987, just after the Minister of Fisheries in this Province announced a herring and mackerel subsidy programme -

AN HON. MEMBER:

What?

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, there are two hon. gentlemen who resigned from that board, the member for Bonavista South and the MP for Bonavista - Trinity - Conception. I am just wondering. Is this all

coincidence? Is this a coincidence, the fact that the Minister of Fisheries agrees with a certain organization being set up in Newfoundland and, yet, that same organization cannot get funding from the federal government.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Your time is up.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, I believe I gave away some time to the hon. gentleman.

So, Mr. Speaker, that was the intent of my question.

How much time do I have?

MR. SPEAKER:
One minute.

MR. TULK:
One minute. Good ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that was the intent of the question. The saucy little answer that I got back from the Minister of Fisheries was, 'Go ask Brendan Foley.'

I suspect that Mr. Foley does not know, but I suspect that the Minister of Fisheries in this Province does know, as to what is happening in Ottawa with regard to this very important organization in Newfoundland. I would like for him to be here in the House now to answer the question.

I would like for him to be able to tell us if there is anything other than normal procedure, if there is something wrong, indeed, with the programme that the hon. gentleman has put forward from FADA or if there is somebody in Ottawa blocking it.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. member's time now has elapsed. We still have another question and there is twelve minutes left. The time is up.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, where is the Minister of Fisheries? Is he going to answer my question?

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, if I get what the hon. Opposition House Leader is getting at, he is asking, 'Was this aid programme discontinued on the basis that someone else would be able to get a benefit from the need in Africa?'

MR. DINN:
A member of the House.

DR. COLLINS:
He did not refer to who would get the benefit, but I suppose there could be certain names people might conjure up. You know, without any evidence or anything of that order, people might just sort of say, 'Oh, he must be referring to so and so.' That is how rumors start. I am sure the hon. member really does not mean to start rumors. So I think it is unfortunate he phrased his question the way he did.

The think the facts of the matter are these:

MR. TULK:
I want my answer. Why has that organization not been supported?

DR. COLLINS:
Well, I have to give a little

background to it. The organization was trying to break into a new field for the fishing industry.

Traditionally, aid to the less wealthy countries were things like wheat, barley and perhaps dried milk and perhaps dried eggs, that sort of stuff. In other words, the agricultural industry almost had a hammer lock on the aid industry. The agricultural industry did quite well out of aid. I am sure they would prefer to sell their produce on the open market, in the private market, in the paying market, but if you have a surplus and those other markets are available to you and you can only get at them through aid funds, it is not a bad idea.

So, FADA tried to break into that market, and I think it was a very, very good approach on their part. Fish, as we know, especially male caplin, have a very high protein content and a very nutritional effect. I think we saw some pictures in the paper the other day about what it can do to children who are undernourished and so on. So it was a very, very good programme and I think the people involved with FADA, Mr. Foley and others, are to be complimented for their humanity, for their drive and for their farsightedness.

Unfortunately they did not seem to be able, somehow or other, to make the connection on the federal scene, that connection having been taken up for years and years and traditionally by the agricultural industry.

In an attempt to give them time to do that, our Department of Fisheries, our Minister of Fisheries, helped them out with

funding. It was not our responsibility. As a Province, we are not supposed to be dealing with foreign aid. That is supposed to be a national effort. But our Minister of Fisheries, rationalizing on the basis, I am sure, that he was helping out the fishery, as opposed to helping foreign aid - I think that is a rationalization that was reasonable in the context - that he would support the FADA effort. But our means, in this Province, are fairly limited, so we could not go on forever with the thing.

Unfortunately, by the time our funds could no longer be expended in that way, the federal connection had still not been established. I do not think the issue is dead yet. I would hope every one who can bring pressure to bear or bring advocacy to bear on the federal government to, in actual fact, help out FADA and similar organizations like that, to bring fish products to the needy world - I am sure they are every bit as good and even better than agricultural products - will make every effort to do so.

I assure you, Mr. Speaker, our government will do so.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Twillingate. He has a question to the Minister of Fisheries concerning the shutdown of the fish plant in St. Lawrence. He is not satisfied with the answer from the minister.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, back in the latter half of the 1970s, a great disaster overlook the community of St. Lawrence. In fact, I suppose, it happened before that time, but certainly in the latter half of

the 1970s. The government of the day decided to try and do something to help alleviate some of the suffering caused by the phaseout of the mines in that community. It was decided, Mr. Speaker - I might give credit here where credit is due - largely on the recommendation and urging of the Fishery Products company - Mr. Gus Etchegary, who was a native son of St. Lawrence, had a feeling that maybe a fish plant would work in the community and would help to fill the void created by what happened to the mines. In their wisdom, it was decided that the fish plant would be built. That was, I believe, around 1977.

Fishery Products International operated the plant until the time just prior to when they were privatized. Mr. Speaker, in their anxiety to get rid of some of these plants, some of the so-called money losers within their system, Fishery Products, in a very unhealthy haste, rid itself of the St. Lawrence plants, the one in Lawn too, only under different circumstances, to a company headed by Mrs. Rose Ting, who came into the Province without any proven track record, to the best of my knowledge. They sold that plant to Mrs. Ting's company and gave her a free title to the property for a stated sum of money. I believe, the amount, I am not sure, but I believe it was somewhere between \$40,000 and \$60,000.

Mr. Speaker, that was a tragic mistake and, of course, the people of St. Lawrence are now paying for that mistake. Mrs. Ting should never have been given clear title or outright ownership of that plant.

If the government were so

impressed with Mrs. Ting they saw in her the potential of being a good operator, then I think they should have leased the plant to her for a stated period to give her a chance to prove her metal and then, of course, with an option to buy it at some time in the future. Obviously, in their haste to get rid of that plant, they made a very rather tragic blunder. Like I said, the people are now paying for that blunder.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, it was more than a blunder. I suggest to you, given the fact this government owned 26 per cent of Fisheries Products International with the federal government and the Bank of Montreal owning the balance, the remainder, then I consider what happened in the transaction is a betrayal of the people of St. Lawrence.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly the government has a responsibility. For the minister now to stand in his place and to wash his hands and say, 'It is a private company and we have no control over it, there are no levers that we can use,' that, Mr. Speaker, I think is the height of hypocrisy and again the abdication of their responsibility to the people of St. Lawrence and Lawn.

Mr. Speaker, there are altogether in the St. Lawrence and Lawn and Rose Blanche and Port aux Basques operations, by actual count, 1,485 people.

MR. SPEAKER (Parsons):

The hon. the member's time is up because we only have three minutes left and we are running about two minutes over. I am sure he would want the minister to reply and we are going to give him a couple of minutes to reply.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, can we stop the clock at 5:00? I see no reason why I should be denied my full seven minutes.

MR. SIMMS:

Has the hon. member had five minutes?

MR. W. CARTER:

We accommodated the hon. minister.

Do I have five minutes?

MR. SPEAKER:

You have about another minute left on the five.

MR. W. CARTER:

Well, we accommodated the House Leader.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat my charge of a moment ago: What the government has done in St. Lawrence is an outright betrayal of the people of that community. I think the same thing now is shaping up in the district of the hon. the member for LaPoile (Mr. Mitchell), where 1,485 people are seeing their livelihoods go down the drain by virtue of this government's actions. That is why I think they have a responsibility to do something and to do something and do it now.

It is no good to say we have to wait until we can negotiate a willing buyer, a willing seller type of scenario. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, they can acquire possession of that plant now. If they cannot do it on a willing basis, then introduce the legislation where the use of it can be expropriated for a stated period and then sit down later and negotiate a proper purchase from Mrs. Ting, without jeopardizing the rights of creditors who now have

mortgages and liens on that plant.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's time has now elapsed.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I am concluding.

MR. DINN:

Your time is up.

MR. W. CARTER:

The government has a responsibility.

MR. DINN:

You have had your five minutes, now sit down.

MR. W. CARTER:

Why do they not act on it instead of hiding behind the fact that they have no rights to do anything with the plant except sit back and allow it to deteriorate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies.

MR. SIMMS:

It is agreed the clock will stop at 5:00 in order to give the minister time.

MR. SPEAKER:

It is so agreed.

MR. MATTHEWS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to say, on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries, he is presently on his way to the Burin Peninsula for a function there this evening. I just want to correct the hon. gentleman on a few statements.

When this deal was struck back during the restructuring, Mr. Ting's was the only proposal submitted to purchase the St. Lawrence fish plant. She had overwhelming support from the community of St. Lawrence to the degree, on one occasion, where a large number of residents went to the Town Hall to show support for her and her proposal. The official position of the Town Council of St. Lawrence was to support Mr. Ting's proposal. I know that because I asked about it in the chambers of the Town Council office in St. Lawrence because I only wanted to support what the council and the people of the town wanted to support. There was overwhelming support for Mrs Ting at the time, Mr. Speaker.

It is wonderful to be able to look back two years into the past, but the situation is, if Mrs Ting had not operated the plant for the last two years, there would have been a lovely blue building on the point in St. Lawrence with no one employed.

What has happened, of course, is very, very unfortunate and we have have been trying to deal with it, the government and particularly the Cabinet committee headed by the Minister of Fisheries. It has not been an easy situation. Mrs Ting left the Province again Monday evening to go back to Ontario. I talked to her on three occasions yesterday, as late as ten o'clock last night, to try and negotiate an arrangement with her whereby we could open the plant in St. Lawrence within the next number of days.

When I finished talking to her last night, she agreed to send correspondence to me today, by noon actually, with conditions we

would scrutinize and see if there was a possibility to get another operator in under a lease arrangement. She told me she would put all the conditions in correspondence. I received the correspondence about four-thirty, but there are no conditions. That is the kind of thing we have been dealing with since 21 April. It has been totally impossible to deal with.

You are told one thing on one hand, and then when you get what you thought you were getting, it is not there. That is what we are trying to deal with, a very difficult problem.

I thought last night, when I finished talking to the lady in Ontario, we would have conditions today government could consider and maybe would allow us to have someone else in operating probably early next week.

That has not transpired and I have got to get on to her again after the House closes to see if I can reach her in Ontario and see if she will put on paper the conditions she stated verbally because, as you all know, when you are talking to someone, you need something on paper in order to wrap yourself around it and get on with the business. It has been very, very frustrating for government.

I just want to reiterate, there was overwhelming support in St. Lawrence for Mrs. Ting back a couple of years ago when she bought the plant. The official position of the people and the Town Council was support for Mrs. Ting, Evergreen Investments at the time, and the provincial government and the federal government, who are able to speak

for themselves, only supported what the people wanted.

For two years, things were great; up to last September and October, things were great. We saw more people employed in St. Lawrence than we had seen at that plant, even under the ownership of Fisheries Products, and for longer periods of time.

We are doing the best we can, Mr. Speaker, under very difficult circumstances. The people, of course, have shown great patience to date. We are in constant dialogue with members of the union and the council and other interested citizens of the town.

I really thought today we would have something we could probably get some agreement on within a matter of hours, but that has not transacted, once again, because of the reluctance or the blocking of Mrs. Ting in this whole affair.

MR. TULK:

What was her last position?

MR. MATTHEWS:

Her last position in essence was, well, I asked her would she be willing to enter into a lease agreement either with government, who could then sublease to someone else who might be interested, or to enter into a lease agreement with another operator so we could get on with the business.

She indicated last night she would do that, she would give me the conditions of the amount of rent or lease she would want per month. She wanted certain protection for the assets in case of damage or wear or whatever. She was going to put all of that in writing for me and she has not done it.

If she had done that, then we may have been on with the business of twenty-four/forty-eight hours of having someone else in there because, as well, there has been interest from two or three concerns willing to operate, but she is still the owner, and that is the problems that we have.

MR. WELLS:

Would the minister consider proposing conditions to Mrs. Ting?

MR. MATTHEWS:

Yes, I am going to contact her now, in light of what has happened since 4:30 p.m., with the telex that has come in, and try to reach her in Ontario and see if she will agree to some things. Again, you really need it in writing, you know.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Tomorrow we will be doing points of privilege and legislation.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10 a.m.

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