



Province of Newfoundland

FORTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND

Volume XL

Fourth Session

Number 52

VERBATIM REPORT
(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable P.J. McNicholas

Thursday

9 June 1988

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

MR. DAWE:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DAWE:
Mr. Speaker, if you and the Legislature will bear with me, I indicated last week that, upon some study into comments made by the member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk), I would be bringing forward a point of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out, and all hon. members are aware, that this is the first time in the nine years I have been in the legislature that I have had occasion to do this. We have found over the past number of weeks that more and more members of this House are obliged to take exception and to voice what they consider to be legitimate infringements upon their rights as members of this Legislature. Mr. Speaker, there is a specific, and the specific relates to comments made by the member for Fogo. I quote for Your Honour and for the House from Hansard, June 2, Page 2606. In the context of referring to an item dealing with a conflict of interest which was alleged against my colleague, the member for St. John's South (Dr. Collins), which, as the Legislature is aware, had no foundation, the member for Fogo said, and I quote from Hansard, "We have had a minister in this House lie to us." Now, Mr. Speaker, the next statement, I am not sure whether it refers to the minister he referred to in that

statement or whether it refers to the minister he refers to in the next statement, but he said: "It has been established beyond any shadow of doubt we have had a minister in this House, the former Minister of Transportation, use public funds improperly." Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious allegation. It is, I contend, a serious breach of the privileges of me as a minister and as a member of this Legislature.

That is the specific I want to refer to, and this is the general topic which I believe reflects on this Legislature and members on both sides of this Legislature. In an obvious attempt that has been made over the past number of months, contrary to the initial comments by the Leader of the Opposition that he would not engage in name calling and pettiness in the Legislature, that he would take the high road, Mr. Speaker, that has been anything but accurate in what has transpired over the past number of months. Instead of taking his stated direction, the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition in general have taken a personal attack on individuals on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, which I believe is an infringement and certainly a breach of the privileges of all members of this Legislature.

I would commit to Your Honour's study, as I am sure he will, Beauchesne, Fourth Edition, Page 98, Section 108 (3), Section 112 (1) and 113, and Erskine May, Eighteenth Edition, Page 148.

I might also point out, Mr. Speaker, that in all points of privilege where this Legislature has come into some doubt, either as it relates to an individual

member, or as it relates to the Legislature as a whole, this House and the members in this Legislature have the opportunity to set the record straight. Precedent, Mr. Speaker, begins with one situation. In this instance, I am suggesting that I do not believe this is a precedent. I think there is enough identified precedent in the references that we use in this Legislature, but certainly there is an opportunity for us to return this particular Legislature, in the eyes of the public, to the level to which it belongs. Comments made by members opposite and made by the Leader of the Opposition certainly reflect on all of us as members of this Legislature, and I do not have to quote the kinds of references the Leader of the Opposition himself has put forward over the past number of weeks.

To the specific, Mr. Speaker, what I believe is a breach of my privileges as a member, this allegation by the member for Fogo that the former Minister of Transportation spent funds improperly, and I quote, "Is in complete contradiction, Mr. Speaker, to the facts."

MR. DOYLE:

That is right. And proven facts, at that.

MR. DAWE:

At the beginning of last Fall the member for Menihek made a number of initiatives that he has publicly acknowledged were wrong. They have done him a lot of damage, and I think members of the Opposition, and I look specifically at the member for St. Barbe (Mr. Furey), who, in a hotel lobby in Corner Brook, patted me on the shoulder and told me what a

blankety-blank sleaze the member for Menihek (Mr. Fenwick) was to bring this issue up, because they had had a look at it and there was nothing to it, and they certainly would not be pursuing it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a very short few hours later that very member was in front of the media cameras doing what he did best in his former capacity as a drama teacher, doing the very thing he used derogatory terms against the member for Menihek for doing just a few days before.

So I can only draw the conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that it was a deliberate and caucus approved action to change what was stated to me by the member for St. Barbe and to get involved in a matter of discrediting an individual in this Legislature, namely, me, as Minister of Transportation at that particular point in time, and that, Mr. Speaker, has continued since that point in time.

Need I point out, Mr. Speaker, that a servant of this Legislature, the Auditor General, when asked by the Public Accounts Committee, a Committee, of course, which was not in existence prior to 1971, I guess, or 1972 - there was no accountability - but certainly the Public Accounts Committee, as is its right, based on some concern, asked the Auditor General in his capacity to have a look at the expenditures which were involved. Certain members of the media, most of the media, who had an opportunity to look at the particular situation, called me immediately, and right throughout the process refused to comment on or publish this kind of political name calling that members opposite were involved in. Only two media look on the cudgel, if you will,

of the Opposition to try and draw some kind of a conclusion that certainly was not there.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Name him! Name him!

MR. DOYLE:

It certainly was not there.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General in this background document indicates that the development and maintenance and paving of the roads in the Topsail Pond and Topsail Round Pond area over the past several years have been a continuation of this long-term development plan, and he refers to a five year development plan that was established back in 1974 which had a rotating five year program to it.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is the man who determines whether members of this Legislature, whether ministers of the Crown, whether the administration, in his opinion, spends money improperly - again, Mr. Speaker, a very serious allegation, spends money improperly. That is determined by the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote again from the Auditor General's Report on that particular issue.

It says, 'The development and paving of the Round Pond Road and roads in the immediate area was consistent with the policies and practices of the Department of Transportation relating to the maintenance and upgrading of roads under the general block fundings allocated to specific Provincial districts.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. DAWE:

He went on to say, 'Funds were provided at the request of the member of the House of Assembly for the District of Conception Bay South.' I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that out of this allocation, which is obvious, and the Auditor General saw it was obvious, and those from the media and others saw it was obvious, it was a continuation of a program that was started many, many years ago.

The member for Conception Bay South, since 1979, through capital funding from the Department of Transportation, has received in the order of \$31 million, Mr. Speaker, of that money. Last year there was a small portion of that money spent in a program of developing an infrastructure that would allow residential development in a re-zoned development area, an area that was in the process of being re-zoned.

And, Mr. Speaker, would you not know that the member who was the Minister of Transportation is a member of whom Senator Rowe, the liberal Senator Rowe, says in a number of his books, "the Dawe name is the oldest recorded name in Newfoundland." It is reported that John Guy on his way to settle Cupids, replenished his water supply at Dawe's well, in 1610.

We have been in Conception Bay for a long time, Mr. Speaker, and would you not know that somewhere in Conception Bay, in proximity to some road the Provincial government was involved in, some kilometre away from this particular paving, there might be a person by the name of Dawe. And, Mr. Speaker, stretching that to its ultimate, members of the Opposition decided that somehow

this was the reason the roads were done.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, people in this Province and most of the people in the media and others who looked at the situation, just laughed at it. But it caused some concern, and that is an issue for another day.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General says, 'In connection with my examination and based on the standard attributes and the verification of expenditure, I have found that adequate procedures were followed in the calling and awarding of tenders relating to these projects and that adequate procedures were followed in authorization payment and recording of invoices related to these projects.'

Mr. Speaker, I commend to you the Auditor General's Report and point out that it is in direct contradiction to the statements made by the member for Fogo when he said that the former Minister of Transportation, and he could not have been referring to anyone else. As I understand it, the member for Fogo is a former English teacher and he knows that if he referred to 'a' Minister of Transportation it could have been any former Minister of Transportation, but when you refer to 'the' former Minister of Transportation, it can only mean the predecessor to the existing Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Speaker, that is the specific. The general is what I alluded to at the beginning. I think this is perhaps a more serious breach of privilege of the members of this Legislature, all hon. members of this Legislature, who have been duly elected and put

here by the people of this Province and the constituents they represent. I can only say, based on comments made to me by the member for St. Barbe, and then that direction changed again a few days later, that it is a concentrated attempt by the Leader of the Opposition, and I think the events of the past number of weeks have indicated that it is continuing, to discredit not only individual members but to discredit this Legislature and the people of this Province this Legislature represents.

Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious breach of my privileges and the privileges of each hon. member in this Legislature. I commit that to Your Honour for what I am sure will certainly be an adjudication that will reflect what we have been seeing in casting doubt on Your Honour in public statements, in casting doubt on the member for St. John's South, and in casting doubt on other members of this Legislature, both inside the Legislature and publicly as well. With Your Honour's indulgence, in order to substantiate and perhaps provide Your Honour with some insight into what the Opposition is trying to do in respect to the Legislature and to the members herein, I would respectfully submit that Your Honour provide an opportunity for one other member on this side of the House to comment on this particular point of privilege, and I think it will become clear to Your Honour, it will become clear to the people in the gallery, it is certainly clear to members on this side of the Legislature, and hopefully it will, and I am sure it will over time, become clear to the people of this Province the kind of backhanded attempt members opposite are trying to make in

order to discredit this Legislature in its totality, and certainly individual members who have been duly elected by the people from their constituencies.

I would ask Your Honour, as I am sure Your Honour will, to pay attention to what I have outlined and respectfully request that Your Honour permit an additional comment from this side of the House on what I believe, and I am sure all hon. members will agree, is certainly a gross breach of the privileges of this legislature in what members of the Liberal Opposition are trying to do to this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. gentleman finally has his research done and under notice of privilege has now agreed to bring in this so-called point of privilege, as he chooses to call it. Mr. Speaker, he attributes words to me, and he says I am an English teacher and, therefore, I should know that I was talking about the former Minister of Transportation. If he wants me to be a bit more specific, I will say to him that I was talking about the member for St. George's when I made that statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, the words are, "An improper use of public funds."

Those were the words and they were said, I say to the hon. gentleman, very carefully. It is amazing that the hon. gentleman could refer that statement to Round Pond Road. How did he know what I was talking about? How did the hon. gentleman know what I was talking about if he did not have some feeling himself that this may have been an improper use of public funds? Mr. Speaker, I ask how the hon. gentleman knew what I was talking about. I do not believe he will find Round Pond Road anywhere in my statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I say to the hon. gentleman, yes, there was an improper use of public funds in building that road. Does that accuse the hon. gentleman of stealing from the public purse? No, not quite. Not quite at all. Does that say he used the funds he was entrusted to use by the people of this Province, as Minister of Transportation, properly? Again the answer is no, it does not. The hon. gentleman did not use them properly.

Now, he refers to the Auditor General's Report. I will tell him what the Auditor General's Report says, if he is listening, so that he can get it straight. The Auditor General's Report says the contracts were awarded according to the correct procedure - procedure! He did not say that the funds were used in a proper manner. The Auditor General did not say that the former Minister of Transportation, as he now is, was using public funds properly.

He did not say that at all. The truth of the matter is, the hon. gentleman was using the funds improperly.

All we are talking about here is covered under Section 19 of Beauchesne, and this is a dispute between two hon. gentlemen about the facts in this case.

Let me use some of his own letters: One dated to one Mr. Chuck Furey, M.H.A., St. Barbe district, 'Concerning the upgarding of a branch road to four residential premises in Castor River North, the request has been listed for future consideration, however, due to the rather lengthy requests of a similar nature, I cannot make any commitment at this time when this road will be constructed at an estimated cost of \$3,400.'

Yet it was fine, it was the proper use of public funds - is that what we are being told? - to construct a road that ended, as the member for Fortune - Hermitage (Mr. Simmons) and myself saw last Fall, with a tree in front of it, on a square bank, leading to his own relatives cabins. Was that proper?

AN HON. MEMBER:
That is not true.

MR. TULK:
Again to the member for Eagle River (Mr. Hiscock): 'The cost to construct this road' - a road in Paradise River - 'is significant when considering the very small population of Paradise River.' I tell him there are forty homes in Paradise River. Was Round Pond Road appropriate? The use of funds on Round Pond Road, was that appropriate in this particular case?

Let me give him some more of his own words, addressed to 'Mr. Seymour Green, North Boat Harbour Development Committee, via Cooks Harbour. I would like to point out that your desires for a paved road is no different than the desires of residents of many communities throughout the Province, and given the many demands placed on my department for road upgrading and paving projects not all wishes of the communities can be fulfilled. When government is deciding its road program, priority must be given to those areas where the need for road improvements is the greatest.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:
Round Pond Road - great need for improvement in roads? Yes, the hon. gentleman was about to construct a cabin, Mr. Speaker.

Let me give him another one to 'Mr. Wilson Callan, M.H.A., Bellevue district, dated 1984/12/11.

MR. PATTERSON:
He is a good man. We would not take you.

MR. TULK:
You have never had the chance, my friend, and you never will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Go on! Go on!

MR. TULK:
'The department is not prepared to assume' - this was Anderson's Cove Road - 'jurisdiction and provide maintenance to this newly requested section of Anderson's Cove Road until it has been ungraded to a standard whereby the

normal maintenance services can be provided without inconvenience or damage to our equipment.' I do not know how the equipment could get over Round Pond Road. I almost had to carry a small car.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. TULK:
Now, Mr. Speaker, does he need more?

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please! Order, please!

All these letters are very similar, so there is no need to read more.

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, let me give you one that is a little different. This is to the member for the Strait of Belle Isle, Mr. Chris Decker 'To undertake the paving of Straitsview without undertaking the paving in other areas would be quite unfair.' Improper is another word for unfair.

I say to the hon. gentleman, and I say to anybody who cares to hear it, that he used the public funds of this Province improperly for the Round Pond Road.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:
If he wants to raise the matter in this House to dispute that fact which I make under a false guise of privilege, then, I say to him, be prepared to do it at any time and I will be prepared to respond at any time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me address the general overall point the gentleman talked about, in which

he accuses this side of trying to smear members of this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH:
Your Leader is a master at it, boy.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. TULK:
Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what is really happening in this Legislature. The hon. gentleman, along with the rest of his colleagues on the other side, know full well that there has been a change of attitude on the part of the Opposition in regard to their conduct in this House. The hon. gentlemen knew they had painted themselves into a corner, and now they are trying to take away the sting of the kind of misbehavior we have seen in this House, from that side, by saying that the Opposition is on a personal attack.

Mr. Speaker, I happen to like the hon. gentleman somewhat as a person. As a person I happen to like him, but as a Minister of Transportation in this House - and I am obligated to question his actions - I say the hon. gentleman was not only a disaster, but that, in fact, he did use funds which were entrusted to him by the people of this Province improperly when he built that piece of road that led to nowhere except to cabins belonging either to himself or to his family. Those are the facts of the case, Mr. Speaker. The hon. gentleman has never disputed those facts. He cannot dispute those facts, because it was as plain as the pavement on the road - not the nose on your face, the pavement on the road - where it was going.

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman wanted to dispute the facts, then, I say to him, he could have done it last Fall -

MR. DAWE:
I did.

MR. SIMMONS:
When he was ducking into elevators.

MR. TULK:
- when he was ducking into elevators trying to get clear of the cameras.

Mr. Speaker, he also referred to the Auditor General saying 'this was done consistent with the policies of the Department of Transportation.' The Auditor General must have been a prophet, because he was exactly right. Through block funding, this minister became very well known as the Minister of Pork Barrelling, but, in this particular case, he went overboard a little too far.

DR. COLLINS:
Would the hon. member permit a question?

MR. TULK:
No, Mr. Speaker. I am on a point of privilege. If the hon. gentleman wants to get up and speak afterwards, he can.

Mr. Speaker, what we see here, what we have seen by the Government House Leader, the Minister of Health, and now the Minister of Transportation. I am wondering why Your Honour is letting it go on - in the last three attempts by those three hon. gentlemen, is an attempt to muzzle this Legislature, under the guise of privilege.

MR. PATTERSON:
(Inaudible) after the next

election.

MR. TULK:
My friend, I hope you call the next election now. Your retirement would be over, and we would be in government.

Mr. Speaker, we have now spent the best part of thirty minutes on this point of privilege which is not a point of privilege. This is the third time in as many days we have had this done. It is a consistent attempt by the government to muzzle the Opposition. I say to the hon. gentlemen, through the Speaker, that this side of the House will not be muzzled when it comes to talking about what is wrong in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. TULK:
If we believe the Minister of Health is in conflict as the Minister of Health, we will say so. If we believe the hon. gentleman used funds improperly, we will say so.

DR. COLLINS:
For what purpose did he use them?

MR. TULK:
For what purpose did he use them?

DR. COLLINS:
Yes, for what purpose?

MR. TULK:
To build a road to nowhere, going nowhere.

DR. COLLINS:
For his own profit.

MR. TULK:
Going nowhere, Mr. Speaker.

DR. COLLINS:

You are accusing the hon. member of using money (inaudible).

MR. TULK:

I am accusing the hon. gentleman of using funds improperly to build a road to his own relatives' cabins, and we know he did it.

MR. DAWE:

That is not true.

MR. SIMMONS:

The public certainly did not profit.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. TULK:

No, the public certainly did not profit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I say to, Your Honour, that what is happening here is an attempt to distract this House and to muzzle it, and to have the government side of the Legislature ride roughshod over this Province and, I say to Your Honour, that should not be allowed to continue, and that the next time the hon. gentleman chooses to rise in his place on a spurious point of privilege, as has been happening the last two or three days, Your Honour should immediately call him to order. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BUTT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth.

MR. BUTT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to make a brief submission for Your Honour on this matter. Since the road in question is in the district of Conception Bay South, I want to just clarify a few things. The comments made just recently by the Opposition House Leader, by the way, were to the effect that this road leads to nowhere.

Mr. Speaker, in 1979, when I was elected to this Legislature, most of the roads under the control of the Department of Transportation in the district of Conception Bay South were not paved; there were gravel roads all over the place, far too many. As the former Minister of Transportation points out, since 1979, I say modestly, through some effort on my part, there have been \$31 million spent to address that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BUTT:

To zero in on the road in question, Round Pond Road, Round Pond Road is no different, Mr. Speaker, than any other road in the Topsail Pond, Three Island Pond area. It just so happens that in this case relatives of the Minister of Transportation - not him but his relatives - had land a kilometre in the road from there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have been squeaky clean on this. As a matter of fact, I would have liked to have put that road around to connect with another road, going in Angel's Road, which was done the previous year.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The hon. minister is not speaking to the point of order.

MR. BUTT:

Okay, Mr. Speaker, I will zero in. Because of the sensitivity of land in question, the road was only built to the end of where a rezoning was taking place to permit residential building. In fact, I had requests, written requests from constituents who wanted to build there. I say this for Your Honour's benefit, to point out that, in fact, it no way reflected on the former Minister of Transportation, but on the member for Conception Bay South who wanted to have that road paved.

Brief as it is, Mr. Speaker, that is the fact. It has been brought out by the Auditor General when he investigated, and so on. So every single matter brought forward today by the hon. member for St. George's is true and factual. It is just another -

MR. PATTERSON:

Nail in their coffin.

MR. BUTT:

That is right. It is just the Opposition picking out individual ministers over here, trying to destroy their character - at great expense, I might say, to that man's family, while they are doing it - and in so doing, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member's privileges were breached and I ask Your Honour to judge accordingly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

I will recognize the hon. member for Menihek now.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, to tell you the truth, I found that whole series of events I went through, along with, I think, the Minister of

Transportation at the time, to be a very distasteful experience, and one, I found in retrospect, I wished I had not gone through, but realized in retrospect that it was very important to do that.

The question you have been asked now is: Is the allegation by members of the Liberal Party that funds were improperly spent, or improperly committed, a breach of the hon. member's privilege? I think that is what you are going to have to address.

Personally, I would hope that you would rule that way, not because I think there is a breach, but because I think it is appropriate that this Legislature is eventually given an opportunity for everybody to listen to all the details of that particular episode. I think it is important that is should have been aired here. The fact that the Legislature was closed was one of the frustrations we went through at the time. And the Minister for Transportation at the time obviously had a problem, too, because he could not respond to the things that were being raised.

Mr. Speaker, in looking through the Conflict of Interest guidelines, in retrospect, the flaw in them is the section whereby the Premier is the sole judge of whether a conflict has occurred, and that is the problem that we had with it. There is no doubt in my mind that what was spent was improperly spent, in the sense that it was immoral to spend money on that particular road in that particular wilderness, leading to the member's family's cottages.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:

It was immoral that people on that part of the road had tried years ago to get permission to build houses there and were told they could not because it was not paved, and, more importantly, was not maintained by the Department of Transportation. They, therefore, sold these lots at a very low price and, later on, when people picked them up and the road then became maintained, which I think is an even bigger conflict myself, the property values up there are much higher as a result of those activities, all of which are under the control of the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Speaker, although I do not like going over this situation before us, I am convinced in my own mind that what was done was consistent with the way it was described by the member for Conception Bay South (Mr. Butt). I believe that he is the individual who asked for the road to be paved. The conflict was that the Minister of Transportation, knowing the property behind the road, should have then told the Premier that he had a personal interest in what was going on there and he should have done that in writing, according to the way the Conflict of Interest Regulations were written. I wrote the Premier and he wrote me back saying no such letter exists, and that is where the conflict itself exists. Not that he initiated it, but that he passed it on to the Cabinet for approval without signifying his interest in the whole affair.

Mr. Speaker, that and a whole bunch of other things, which I would be very glad to go through again - well, not glad, but I would go through again - make me

say that even though I do not believe that it is a violation of the privileges of the member, I, for one, would be very happy to get everything in Hansard, everything on the record, produce all the documentation we have, because, Mr. Speaker, there are people out there who were hurt in this whole process, in addition to the minister, the member for St. George's, people who sold property at a very low price only to find out later that through other actions on the part of the Department of Transportation and on the part of the government, the land became much more valuable and they lost out as a result of it.

These people, in my opinion, should, quite frankly, sue the government for redress, but they have not at this point. I would say to you that if the member's privileges are not breached, if you do not wish to go that way, then another avenue may be that the official opposition, ourselves and the government, may wish to have a special debate on the circumstances of what went on at Round Pond Road. I, for one, would be very glad to open it again, and I think everybody else should hear about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just be very brief. I cannot and I do not attribute any motives to the hon. member for St.

George's. I have not, up to now, and I will not, attribute any motives. I do not know why he paved that road. I do not know, and I still cannot understand why he allowed that road to be paved. The facts that have been alleged are facts. Anybody who wants to, can draw whatever conclusions they wish from it. That it was improper in the political sense to pave that road, I think everybody can make that judgement and come clearly to that conclusion.

I am going to address my remarks in the main, Mr. Speaker, to the comments of the hon. member with respect to what he called the general, and his suggestion to this House that it was part of some kind of scheme orchestrated by me to disrupt the House and make terrible statements. Nothing could be more untrue, Mr. Speaker, or incorrect. No judgement could be more incorrect than that.

On the other hand, the member for Fogo was quite correct when he suggested that what we are seeing with these points of privilege is an attempt to gag and muzzle the Opposition. The Opposition has a responsibility they must discharge and they will discharge, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the hon. gentleman, and all other hon. gentlemen, and the hon. lady in this House, that I take no pleasure in critically commenting personally on any one member of this House no matter who it is. It is a source of great regret to me that it has on occasion to be done, because that is the responsibility of the Opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I assure hon. members that we will not shirk from that responsibility no matter how many points of privilege they raise. It is not only quite

proper, it is our responsibility to raise these questions when the facts and circumstances warrant it, Mr. Speaker, and we will not be deterred from doing so by claims of breach of privilege and by suggestion that our actions are in any manner improper. There is, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, no prima facie case of privilege, but I do want to emphasize that if Your Honour is disposed to so find, we have no reluctance to debate any motion that is brought down.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I am going to study what hon. members had to say, and after the weekend I should be able to rule on the matter.

Before calling for Statements by Ministers, I want to welcome 30 Grade VIII students with four teachers, Lorraine MacKinnon, Clayton McCarthy, Kathleen Brenton, and Shari Wall, from Marystown Central High School.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

I would also like to welcome twenty five Grade IX students, with their teacher Mr. Ron Sullivan, from St. Francis School, Harbour Grace.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

And thirty Grade V students from St. Paul's School, Newfoundland Drive, with their teacher, Mr. Williams, and Chaperon, Mrs. Evans.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, before calling for Statements by Ministers, I have spoken to the hon. the Deputy Premier about this matter and told him I would address this.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to ask all members of this hon. House to join with me in congratulations to a young man who is part of this House, and who has just stepped behind Your Honour's Chair in the course of his duties, and is carrying on his duties, upon achieving a very prestigious award. On Saturday, he will be awarded the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. He will travel to Corner Brook to receive that award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, these awards offer our young people opportunities to broaden their interest and experience in areas of physical fitness, community service, outdoor exploration, and development of personal and social skills. That award is not easy to achieve. It is not awarded merely for entering and making an application, it is awarded on the basis of performance and discipline and commitment. This young man has done all this and achieved this award. And if hon. members want some measure of the significance of this particular award, it can only be awarded or delivered by a member of the Royal Family, as opposed to the other Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Mr. Speaker, I think this speaks well of a young man who sits every day and rushes around at our beck and call, and I think we all ought to join and give him a very warm round of applause. Sincere congratulations!

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

It is John Fitzgerald, incidentally. I did not mention his name.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth.

MR. BUTT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, too, on this side, would want to associate ourselves with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday of this week I will be going to Corner Brook to participate in the ceremonies with His Royal Highness, Prince Edward, after which appropriate recognition - there is no problem in doing it now and I welcome the opportunity, but there will be others, very small in number but very fine Newfoundlanders, who will receive similar awards in Corner Brook on Saturday, at which time the government will give appropriate recognition. I do not have all the names of the recipients right now, but I will know them on Saturday. I welcome the lead taken by the Leader of the Opposition in this case, and certainly we, on this side, associate ourselves with the very positive remarks on one our newest Pages in the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, we would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate our - I do not know what you would call him. Colleague? - probably future colleague, I would hope, for his accomplishments and the recognition of his accomplishments and the award that he will be receiving. On behalf of our significant caucus here, we would like to extend our congratulations as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Premier is engaged in other duties, as I am sure hon. members are aware, and I make this statement on his behalf, in his role as Minister of Energy.

It is my pleasure and privilege to table for the information of my colleagues in the House of Assembly, "Oil And Gas Resources Of Newfoundland and Labrador," that is the name of a document, Mr. Speaker, which will accompany this statement. It is a report which provides an up-to-date review of the petroleum potential and the latest events which bear on the development of that

potential.

For some time now it has been obvious that there has been a real need for a high quality report which provides information on our petroleum development situation for the benefit of potential investors and other financial and development interests within and outside of the Province. I believe that this document produced by the staff of the Department of Energy fulfills this need and presents comprehensive information on our petroleum potential in an attractive and readily digestible form.

The information contained in the report provides the reader with a broad outline of the importance of the Newfoundland petroleum resource within the context of the national petroleum supply and demand situation. It describes the geological setting of the Province - both onshore and offshore - and outlines the evolving legislative and administrative framework for the management of exploration and development of the petroleum resource. It highlights the impressive success ratio of petroleum exploration on our continental margin - particularly in the Grand Banks area - and clearly indicates the advanced nature of both Hibernia and Terra Nova as development prospects. Other significant discoveries which have taken place in recent years are also described. It includes reference to the Come-By-Chance refinery and provides details about major projects funded under the Offshore Development Fund. I might add, Mr. Speaker, it also refers to onshore possibilities for oil resources.

Equally important the report indicates the determination of the government to ensure that the people, the business community and the institutions of the Province take every opportunity to improve their skills and expertise in the highly sophisticated sphere of offshore petroleum technology.

It is our intention to use this report as a promotional document to increase awareness in Canada and abroad as to the importance of the Province's petroleum resources.

Mr. Speaker, I did give a copy to the hon. the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Wells) somewhat belatedly, but he has a copy. He may wish to comment also.

MR. WELLS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WELLS:
Mr. Speaker, I have not had an opportunity to look at the document because, since I have gotten it, we have been otherwise engaged.

I do welcome such an publication. Assuming it contains basically factual information, as the hon. minister indicated, it can provide readily available information for anybody who was interested in it, people in Newfoundland, as well as people investing in Newfoundland. So it is a commendable effort from that point of view.

My one caution to people in Newfoundland, in particular, is not to get carried away again by the now newly created hype in Hibernia. If and when Hibernia comes, and I sincerely hope it

does shortly, it will create a great many jobs in this Province and make a great contribution economically to the Province.

But let us not all think it is going to be the be all and end all for Newfoundland. It is not going to be the sole saviour. We still have to look at all our other things in this Province and pay greater attention to the rest of the economy of this Province.

So, as good as this may be in terms of providing information and making it readily available to people within the Province and without who may want it, I caution people not to get too carried away with great expectations out of Hibernia.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, I was looking at the brochure here, sort of flipping through it and trying to remember when I last saw a brochure similar to it. I think the last one I saw was put out by Mr. Smallwood back in the 1960s and it was the one lauding the hydro potential in Labrador and saying how much energy we had up there and how much we could do with it. The reason I mention that now is because I feel we are in a similar position here.

MR. BAIRD:
We are not giving anything away.

MR. FENWICK:
The judgement on the Peckford

administration will not be on anything other than the way in which they handle whatever development deal will occur, with not only Hibernia, but the Terra Nova structure. We have this very uneasy feeling in a world where there is a 12 million barrel a day surplus of oil, that signing an agreement over this period of time is an extremely chancy thing, one which we may live to regret ten or twenty or thirty years from now.

I say to the government opposite, I do not care when you are going to call the election, I do not know how you are going to call it, I do not care what issues you are going to work with, if you sign a lousy deal, we will run you every single inch of the way.

MR. LONG:
Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:
We will tell you, we are not going to go in for another Churchill Falls deal just because you want to get re-elected. We are going to demand we get something out of it in employment and in long-term revenue.

Quite frankly, what we are seeing today leads us to believe we are going into another disaster.

MR. LONG:
Hear, hear! Well said.

MR. WARREN:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WARREN:
Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce the signing of two federal-provincial agreements for

the benefit of the Native peoples of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. WARREN:
The agreements are for a one-year period and are extensions to the Canada-Newfoundland Inuit Agreement and the Canada-Newfoundland Innu Agreement, valued at a total of \$9.9 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. WARREN:
The agreements make available funding and programming in several areas, including: water and sewage, housing, community development, education, training, fisheries and, of course, the operation of the five government stores. Communities primarily involved in the agreements are Nain, Hopedale, Postville, Makkovik, Rigolet, Davis Inlet and Sheshatshit.

Mr. Speaker, these agreements were extended for 1988-1989 to allow time for comprehensive and detailed planning of new long-term agreements to take place between the Native people of Labrador and the federal and the provincial governments.

I would also like to thank the Inuit and Innu people of Labrador for the positive and professional manner in which they are proceeding with the planning process and I trust that the new long-term agreements will serve as a model for the future.

Mr. Speaker, there was some delay in getting these extension agreements put in force, and that

was due to unfortunate administrative circumstances. However, as I announced on April 13, the Province, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, stepped in and commenced community funding in the absence of signed agreements to avoid any additional hardship for the communities and the Band Councils that this delay would cause.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the hon. Ron Dawe, and myself signed those agreements for the Province and the hon. William McKnight, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, signed on behalf of the federal government.

I would once again, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, thank the Native people of Labrador for their support of these agreements and congratulate both the federal and provincial officials on finalizing the negotiations leading to the signing of these two documents.

MR. KELLAND:
Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. KELLAND:
I thank the minister for a copy of one of his rare statements in the House.

My initial comment, Mr. Speaker, is I would not want anyone to be misled or have the issue clouded because the term 'Native Peoples' Agreement' is used, and that is used in the context of clouding the issue that this is nothing more than yet another extension to a federal - provincial agreement,

on which the Peckford administration seems to thrive. I can think of the Coastal Labrador Agreement and the Rural Development Agreement which cannot be put in place in time, despite what is supposed to be the optimum conditions between Ottawa and this Province, and a form of crisis management takes place. Around the eleventh hour an extension is worked out. So all the minister is talking about is an extension to an agreement because of the inability of Ottawa and the provincial government here to reach a long-term agreement which, by this time, should already be in place.

Although it is probably inadvertent, Mr. Speaker, I find the minister's choice of words a little patronizing to the Native people. Of course, they are serious about it, of course, they are positive about it, and of course they are professional about reaching agreements with the Province and with Ottawa. Why would they not be if their present way of life and their future hangs in the balance? I find those comments to be a little condescending and patronizing, perhaps inadvertent on the part of the minister and perhaps he should take steps to alleviate that impression.

I do not believe the Native people have any choice but go along with the extension because the long-term agreements have not been able to be worked out. Rather than do without full funding, despite any claims of stepping in by the provincial government to help them out in the interim, in order to get some kind of full funding, they would have to and felt forced into accepting an extension.

The story that the provincial government tells with respect to the relationship between the Province and the Native peoples of Labrador is vastly different than the Native peoples themselves are saying. I think the media and correspondence we have all seen is a clear indication of that.

I would say it is about time the Minister responsible for Northern Development (Mr. Warren) fulfilled his role as Labrador's representative in the Cabinet and put all of his efforts towards making sure we do not have further extensions, but rather long-term, permanent agreements which will benefit the people of Labrador.

MR. WARREN:
Have no fear.

MR. KELLAND:
He should not forget that if we take the definition that a Metis person is one of mixed ancestry, if that is the only definition we apply -

AN HON. MEMBER:
Are you one?

MR. KELLAND:
- then the largest segment of the indigenous people of Labrador are very well Metis and may not be covered by the aspects of the agreement the minister is now speaking of.

So I would like to assure him of my support when he talking about helping the people of Labrador for much needed funding for their programs and their future, but ask him to expend every possible effort and not be patronizing and not play politics for the possible September election this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FENWICK:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Torngat Mountains, the Minister responsible for Northern Development, just returned, I believe, from a conference in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon talking to the Native people in the North and in other parts of Canada.

One of the comments he made to me in giving sort of a mini-report to us Labrador MHAs was how much better off the Native people in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon were in terms of the support they are getting with programs and so on. I think if he holds that idea, maybe we can start doing a lot of things for the Native people of Labrador as well.

There is only one point I would like to make on this, Mr. Speaker, and that is I think if we really want to support the Innu and Inuit in Labrador, if we want to make sure that their land claim settlement goes ahead, then, I think, we should agree with the position taken by Labrador Inuit Association and that is that their land claims are the highest priority and we should use whatever levers we have to make them move forward.

As they have suggested, in the past, and still suggest, what we should do is tell the people who are expanding the low level flying in Happy Valley, Goose Bay, we are not going to allow any expansion

until the land claims agreement is signed. That, I think, is one of the few ways to put enough pressure on the federal government to get some movement in that direction because, quite frankly, even though we sit down at the table, we are irrelevant when it comes to the land claims agreement. It is a federal responsibility to deal with Native people. They are the ones who have to be pushed, they are the ones who have to move.

If they want a NATO base, if they want expanded low level flying, let us make them pay for it by giving a good Land claims agreement to our Native groups in Labrador so that they can live in a style and dignity they deserve.

MR. LONG:
Hear, hear!

MR. R. AYLWARD:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The Hon. the Minister of Forest Resources.

MR. R. AYLWARD:
Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to make known to all hon. members of this House that two CL-215 aircraft from the provincial fleet were dispatched to Thunder Bay, Ontario last week. This was facilitated by an agreement between the federal government, the provinces, and the territories which established a mutual aid resource-sharing agency which is coordinated and administered by the Canadian Intra-Agency Forest Fire Centre, based in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The government of Ontario

approached the agency for assistance and in turn the agency contacted the Department of Forestry in this Province asking for the assistance of aircraft from the department's fleet. The request was made after numerous fires in the Northwestern region of Ontario broke out and the capabilities of the province for controlling and containing the fires on the strength of their own forest fire fighting resources were deemed impossible.

Temperatures have been ranging anywhere from 30 to 40 degree Celsius in the region due to a heat wave which has been ravaging Western Canada and the woodlands of Northwestern Ontario for the past two weeks or so. This is the cause for the numerous forest fires in the Thunder Bay region. Because the woods are so dry, the forests are burning at an alarming rate, thus necessitating the extra reinforcements in this area.

The government of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, have also requested assistance from the governments of the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Alberta through the Canadian Inter-Agency Forest Fire Centre in Winnipeg. If conditions deteriorate in the area and more assistance is required, then additional aircraft from the province's fleet may be sent to Thunder Bay.

The Department of Forestry is pleased to be in a position to offer assistance to Ontario during their time of need. Hon. members will recall the devastating forest fires in Central Newfoundland during the Summer of 1986. At that time we received invaluable assistance, through the agency, from Ontario and other provinces in controlling and finally

containing our fires.

In no way, Mr. Speaker, has the forest fire fighting capability in this Province become jeopardized or diminished in any way. The decision to send the two CL-215 aircraft to Thunder Bay was made by my department's provincial fire committee. This decision was based on the fact that the weather situation within the Province has been wet and damp and this situation is expected to continue for a little while longer. Coupled with the fact that the Fire Index in Newfoundland at the present time is low, we were in a position, and still are in a position, to assist the province of Ontario.

The department recognizes however, even though weather conditions are wet and the Fire Index is low, the situation can change quickly. If the occasion arises where the aircrafts sent to Ontario are needed back in Newfoundland for firefighting, the aircraft will be recalled without delay and proper action will be taken. The Department of Forestry and our Forest Fire Committee will continue to monitor this situation.

Mr. Speaker, just to inform hon. members, if the occasion does arise, we can have our CL-215s back in this Province within a twenty-four hour period.

MR. SIMMONS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for supplying me with an advanced copy of his statement. I welcome his statement. It is a good example of what well co-ordinated interprovincial cooperation can achieve.

I am delighted, as a Newfoundlander, to be able to help directly through this initiative the people of Ontario at a time when they need our help. I notice it is a reciprocation of what they were able to do for us in 1986.

Perhaps the key sentence otherwise in the minister's statement is towards the end of the second page in which he assures the House, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the forest firefighting capability in this Province has not become jeopardized or diminished. I believe that to be the case, but that is key to any such collaboration we have in terms of making our resources available to other jurisdictions in Canada, that in the process, we do not leave ourselves exposed. I believe we have not so done.

The minister notes at the moment the Fire Index in Newfoundland is very low. If I may get the minister's ear for just a moment, that statement allows me to piggy-back a concern I have.

I support fully the forest fire regulations implemented sometime last month and which will stay in effect I believe until September. But I would hope the minister might want to reflect on the atmosphere in which those regulations were first promulgated, at a time when we were faced with a very serious forest fire hazard some years ago.

I submit to him, they served us well during those periods, but at the present time, when the Index is very low, there might be a more flexible mechanism which would allow us to suspend the regulations or allow for some more activity at various times.

Right now, for example, I know of individuals who want to do some burning and some cutting as well. Because of the regulations, an extra constraint is imposed that is really not justified when the Index is quite low, as it is at the present moment.

That submission, Mr. Speaker, in no way should be construed to mean we want a haphazard situation during the height of the fire season. The minister's first priority in that respect has to be ensuring the forests are properly protected from fire hazard. But if he would consider that thought in tandem with the early one, that perhaps there is need for a little more flexibility for the convenience of residents, I would be most grateful.

We support the initiative, Mr. Speaker, on this side.

Oral Questions

MR. LUSH:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Bonavista North.

MR. LUSH:

My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. Brett). Now that we have had an opportunity to analyze in more detail the figures of the Capital Works Projects

announced for this fiscal year, it is only appropriate that we ask the minister some questions that he can answer publicly. In that respect, Mr. Speaker, I wonder can the minister can specify the degree of correlation between the criteria used by his department to allocate municipal capital funding as compared to the correlation with the actual amounts of money allocated to municipalities, particularly in view of the large and excessive discrepancies in monies received by districts on the Opposition side of the House?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is already aware that the program announced by me two or three days ago was almost exactly as it was put forward by the Capital Projects Committee. There was very little change by the Cabinet or anybody else. It was based on need and, considering the fact we had requests of in excess of \$160 million, I think we did very well indeed.

The hon. gentleman and some of his colleagues have been using figures that are incorrect, and I wish he would not do that. They tried to get this point across the day that I announced the program. They are using the figure of 11 per cent as going to the Opposition. That is incorrect. They know it is incorrect. There was almost \$20 million in grants, subsidies, loans, what have you, that went into the Capital city this year. There are two members in the Opposition who represent districts in the capital city and, therefore, they are included in that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I make no apologies for the way that the money was distributed. As I indicated, there were in excess of \$160 million in requests, and I think we did a very good job. I feel sorry for the communities and the town councils throughout the Province that did not get money. Many of them are upset and that is to be expected. I understand that. There is frustration when one has sewerage running in the ditch, or so it is suggested, but the hon. members realize that it is impossible, from a financial point of view, to cure in one year all the ills with respect to water and sewer that we have in the Province. This is one of the biggest programs that we have had, if not the largest, in years and years, and we are addressing the problem, taking into consideration the amount of funds that we have.

MR. LUSH:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Bonavista North.

MR. LUSH:

I ask the minister in all fairness, Mr. Speaker, how can he rationalize, out of a total budget of \$43 million, Opposition districts receiving only \$5.1 million? Now, Mr. Speaker, these are the facts. How can the minister, out of a total budget of \$43 million, just under \$6 million, if we include the total Opposition, \$5.1 million by just counting the official Opposition, how can the minister justify that apparent, unfair and callous treatment of municipalities throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, the same game that goes on every year, I guess, not only here in Newfoundland but in every province in Canada. When everybody does not get all they want, then they come up with this sort of thing.

Again, I remind the hon. member that these figures were given last year, over and over and over, by the hon. gentleman who came before me, the former minister of the department.

There are districts that are totally serviced, Mr. Speaker. You cannot stand up and say that because we have 30 percent of the members in the House, therefore we should get 30 percent of the funding. That does not make any sense. You do not put water and sewer into a community if they already have it. And you do not pave roads in a town if they do not need to be paved, and you do not recap them if they do not need to be recapped. So it is the 'lies, lies, and the damn statistics,' this game the hon. gentlemen are trying to play.

I repeat that the Opposition got more money this year than they ever got before, at least since I have been in the House and that is seventeen years. And I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, that I was the minister who was able to introduce one of the largest programs that we have had. The funding was done based on need, it was done fairly, and the Opposition members got, as far as I am concerned, a fair share of the dollars.

MR. LUSH:

Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Bonavista North.

MR. LUSH:

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister is he not aware that the percentages of 11 per cent or 12 per cent, 11 per cent in that area, have been the same for the last number of years in terms of the ratio, the proportion of the budget awarded districts on the Opposition side?

Now, Mr. Speaker, in view of this I ask how can the minister explain to the people of Newfoundland that this does not smell of political patronage, that this does not smell of political pork barrelling, rancid, political pork barrelling of the worst kind?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, the political pork barrelling is this: Bonavista North, represented by the hon. member, got \$595,000. That is the political pork barrelling!

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BRETT:

Gander, \$400,000. That is the political pork barrelling! Strait of Belle Isle, \$1,283,000. That is the political pork barrelling that he is talking about.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, my question goes to

the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Earlier, Mr. Speaker, the minister made reference to the Capital Projects Committee, I think he called it. That is a committee, I believe, of senior civil servants who are supposed to recommend to the minister projects to be undertaken by his department.

I wonder is the minister prepared to table the recommendations of that committee?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

I will take that under advisement, Mr. Speaker.

MR. W. CARTER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the minister did not agree. If it is being done as fairly as he says it is, why would he object to tabling their recommendations?

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: Yesterday in the town of Summerford, which is probably the second largest community in Twillingate district, a community of some 1200 people approximately, the entire council resigned. They resigned because of shabby treatment. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: In light of the fact that these councillors have resigned, have seen fit to resign because of raw sewage in their roadside ditches, in their community, will the minister now accede to their request and make funds available

to them in order to alleviate the problem they have?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, this is an annual event. Every single year about this time of the year there are any number of councils who threaten to resign because they did not get the funding that they applied for. This year is no exception. We have had one resignation so far. I have reluctantly accepted the resignation of the total council. We will appoint someone to look after the affairs of the town until such time as we can get another town council.

I can tell the hon. member that Summerford is not the only place in this Province where there is sewage in the ditches. If he would like to take the time out over the weekend, I will take him out to Trinity North and I will show him sewage in the ditches.

By the way, the hon. member did not exactly wear out the carpet coming to the minister's office looking for funds for his district this year. I do not remember ever seeing him in that part of Confederation Building. But, meanwhile, Summerford, I suppose, is frustrated and upset, as was Bell Island this morning, as are many councils throughout this Province, but I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, they are going to have to wait another year. To the fact that they have resigned, there is not very much I can do about that, but I am afraid they are going to have to wait another year to see if they are included in next year's program.

MR. W. CARTER:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister is not telling the truth, and he knows it. He knows, Mr. Speaker, that I have sent letters to him concerning the need for water and sewer in Summerford.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. W. CARTER:

In fact, in this very House I have done it.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

I would ask the hon. member to withdraw that remark about the minister not telling the truth.

MR. W. CARTER:

I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker, but I think the minister knows what I am talking about. He knows very well.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: The Mayor of that community who resigned yesterday is a Mayor of seventeen years experience, one of the most highly respected and credible people in Twillingate district. Will the minister now then tell the people of Summerford, Mr. Speaker, through this House, what they can do when they have raw sewage in the street, the threat of an epidemic? Again I ask the minister: Would he undertake to give them some hope by telling them that there will be funds made available this year, at least to make a start towards correcting their very serious and life

threatening situation?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

No. Mr. Speaker, I cannot give him that assurance.

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 hon. the Minister of Health (Dr. Collins) concerning very serious problems in our health care system. In relation to the minister's statement yesterday when he said he has a continually open channel to the Health Sciences Complex and its management, I ask the minister is he aware, did management report to him - it was submitted to management at the Health Sciences Complex - that for twenty-seven days out of thirty the hospital was operating in a short-staff situation?

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brought up this matter yesterday. At the time I said I had some information from the management up there, and I do have to state my view that I get more accurate information from the management of the hospital than I do coming

across the floor from the hon. member.

But I said that I would try to get a bit more information because I only had a brief report at that time. I have succeeded in doing this, and I made a few notes on the information down in the department. I did not get it personally, some of my staff got this, from the management over there. The meeting in question, and this is where the hon. member's question today stems from, I think, was in the evening of June 7, and it was a meeting called by the unions of those workers in the hospital there, by NAPE, by NLNU, and by the AWHP, the Associated Health Workers.

We could not determine, we did not have any information on who chaired the meeting - I do not know that - but it was called by the union membership to discuss matters among themselves, presumably from a union point of view. Now, Mr. Speaker, I did inadvertently give a bit of incorrect information yesterday. The understanding I had from the brief report I had was that this was a meeting where the staff were expressing their concerns to management. That was incorrect because there was no management at the meeting. The union met together in the auditorium of the Medical School, which is available for meetings of this sort. I think you had to pay a little fee to use it, but that is what they did.

It was to discuss, from a union point of view, financial restraints that the hospital is under, as almost all operations of government are under restraint, and rightly so because we have limited budget, limited income in

this Province and we have to bring in restraint for all matters of government operations.

But they wanted to discuss the restraint effects on the hospital, and they also wanted to discuss a matter that I was asked about in the House a few days ago and responded to, that is, a pending number of layoffs at the hospital. Out of the large staff there there is a small number of layoffs pending.

The management told us that it was decided by the union members that they would likely have some demonstrations at lunch time over the next weeks or months to demonstrate their concern about restraint and about the pending layoffs. However, on inquiry the management apparently determined that the meeting was not one that engaged in hospital bashing, or indeed in bashing the administration. That is the word they gave us. There was no hospital bashing, there was no administration bashing, and the meeting was termed a fairly good one. The President of NAPE indicated the number attending was about a couple of hundred.

MR. LONG:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker, please!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. John's East, a point of order.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker, I have been very patient with the answer by the minister, but he has not yet, in about eight minutes, addressed the specific question which was put to him. We only have a short time, so I plead with the Chair to call the minister to order, and have

him either address the question put to him or to sit down.

MR. SPEAKER:

There is no point of order.

I would ask the hon. the minister, though, if he would keep his remarks as brief as possible.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, I may have overstepped things a little bit, but I was trying to give some information that I said I would give. In terms of the hospital not having the number of staff that they would like to have available to them, you know, I have indicated that any number of times. I have said that the hospitals at this time of the year, as at other times of the year, are decreasing the number of beds that they are going to make available for care. They are making beds available for acute care, emergency care, but not elective care. The reason why they are doing that is because they have some staff difficulties and it is not all related to money. They cannot get some of the staff they would like to get at this particular time of the year for obvious reasons, reasons everyone knows about.

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Minister of Health did not even touch on the question I asked him, not even close to it. I will ask the Minister of Health a different question, a supplementary. Giving the Minister of Health the benefit

of the doubt that he believes it was a union meeting, today some of the staff called me and said if the Minister of Health did not get his invitation from the Premier, the staff of the hospital are willing to meet with the Minister of Health and/or his representatives to tell them about the problems they are having, about safety of the staff and the safety of the patients.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

Please pose a question.

MR. EFFORD:

Will the Minister of Health agree to meet with the staff of the Health Sciences Centre to listen to the problems they are having with the safety of working conditions and the safety of the patients? It has nothing to do with union problems.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is saying that the administration over there lies to me. I do not think they do lie to me. I really do not think they do. The executive people at the hospital told the officials in our department that the meeting was called by the unions on a joint basis, NAPE, NINU and the WAHP. Now, I am reporting what the administration tells me. If the hon. member choses to believe otherwise, that is his privilege. I am reporting to the House what I have been told, that this was a meeting that was called by those three separate unions so that the

unions could have a joint meeting and discuss matters and relate their concerns to one another. I have no doubt that the union members have certain concerns. The administration has concerns, the Department of Health has concerns, the government has concerns, everyone has concerns! What is new about that?

MR. EFFORD:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary.

MR. EFFORD:

Let me ask the minister this question, since he is still bringing in the management, and the management is not in this situation. Will the minister agree to meet with the workers if I personally set up the meeting? It has nothing to do with unions. If the concerns do not come down that were brought out the other night, if those people do not tell the minister the same things they told about the safety of the patients, I will personally get down on my knees and apologize to the Minister of Health.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, I am tempted, really tempted. I have met with the management and staff of the Goose Bay Hospital, Western Memorial Hospital, Stephenville Hospital, Bell Island Hospital, Grace Hospital, the General Hospital, and so on and so on. I do not need the hon. member to set up meetings for me, I have meetings all the time. Meetings coming out of my ears! I am open to any invitation that anyone wants to send me and I will do my best to

accommodate them. I meet with people who come into the office, to the department. I go to the hospitals, and so on and so forth. So I do not need the hon. member to set up meetings. I have a very good grasp of what is going on at the Health Sciences Complex, a lot better than the hon. member, I would suggest.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FENWICK:
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Blanchard). It has to do with the general question of health and safety at the Newfoundland Enviroponics operation. We have been told by people who operate the ambulances in this city that they have received frequent calls to the Newfoundland Enviroponics operation to pick up individuals who have been injured in industrial accidents, the most serious of which are involved with heat prostration.

My question to the Minister is: Have you received any complaints about this particular kind of problem through your Occupational Health and Safety Office, and what have you done as a result of it?

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

MR. BLANCHARD:
The answer is no, Mr. Speaker, I have not received any, but that does not mean that the Occupational Health and Safety Division may not have received complaints. But I will undertake

to enquire and let the hon. member know tomorrow whether we have received any complaints of unsafe conditions at the Newfoundland Enviroponics operation.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, it is required under The Occupational Health and Safety Act to have committees established in each work location. Could the minister stand up and assure us that a committee has been established there, that it is functioning, is monitoring the health hazards in that particular operation, and that it is in a situation to make sure that employees there are working under safe conditions?

AN HON. MEMBER:
Hear, hear!

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

MR. BLANCHARD:
No, Mr. Speaker, I cannot assure the hon. member at this particular time, but, again, I will check that out. There is a requirement for workplace Health and Safety Committees and I will check that out and let him know the answer to both questions tomorrow.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, final supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:
A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

The final short question is we have been told by individuals who work there that the temperature on a sunny day around two or three o'clock in the afternoon rises above 125 degrees Fahrenheit. Could the Minister ask his inspectors to inspect the operation on a continuing basis on sunny days over the next week or so and bring back to this House some indication on whether or not indeed these are the working conditions these individuals have to endure?

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

MR. BLANCHARD:
Mr. Speaker, the way is open to any employee in any workplace, whether there is a committee or not, to make a complaint through the Department of Labour. It does not have to be done in any written form or anything like that. They can pick up the telephone. If they called my office I would refer them. But the answer is I have not had a single complaint. I do not know if my Deputy has, or whether the actual clerical staff or inspectors have had a complaint. We are very concerned about any complaints and they are followed up promptly.

So I will get answers to that for the hon. gentleman by tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KELLAND:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KELLAND:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Health. In

laying the basis for the question, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that a few months ago an announcement was made of certain cuts in staff and service at the Grenfell Regional Health Services, the object being to save about \$250,000 to the end of the 1987 - 1988 fiscal year. There was some implication, or an impression at least, that these cutbacks were temporary at the time. I am wondering would the minister confirm whether or not that is so?

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

DR. COLLINS:
These are in the Grenfell Health Services?

MR. KELLAND:
Grenfell Health Services.

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, I do not have the details right in front of me now. I will have to take it as notice. But my understanding is that the Grenfell Hospital is by no means under pressure in terms of beds. As a matter of fact, they have beds that are underutilized. The Melville Hospital has quite a number of flexibilities. There are many beds there that are underutilized. When I was in it last there was a whole ward totally empty. My understanding is that the amount of money that was given this year, which was greater than last year - there was a percentage increase in the funding given this year over last year - is adequate funding for their needs.

Now, they may well, like all hospitals, at particular times have a difficulty when someone goes on holiday, because they do not have large, large numbers of

specialist nurses or specialist laboratory technicians, in some of those hospitals. If someone has to take annual leave, they may be under a bit of difficulty and may have to reduce their services somewhat.

I will have to check into the details of the hon. member's question, and I will get back to him.

MR. KELLAND:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:

I was not just referring to the Melville Hospital, Mr. Speaker, but rather the Grenfell Regional Health Services which serves at least four districts. There were cuts not only in the major hospital but also along the coast, the nursing stations and so on, security staff and maintenance staff, things of that nature, the object being, as I said, to save \$250,000 by the end of the fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. KELLAND:

Just as an explanation, Mr. Speaker.

These layoffs did take place and some positions were not filled. I am wondering if the minister would undertake to answer whether or not any of the positions that were deleted at the time, in what was believed to be a temporary measure, were reinstated, or will some of them be reinstated, as far as he knows?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I will have to check into that to make sure I do not give any misleading information. But I might mention, also, that the Minister responsible for Northern Affairs (Mr. Warren) will be having meetings shortly with the Grenfell Board, and the Grenfell Board itself has begun an indepth study of the health needs of the area and what resources are needed to meet those needs, to see if there is an appropriate tailing together or coming together of the needs with the resources available.

I will have to get details. The hon. member said there were some layoffs. I will have to get the details if there were and what they were, and the nature of the layoffs, the extent of them.

MR. KELLAND:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. KELLAND:

My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker: It has been pretty well established that a new hospital is required for the Happy Valley - Goose Bay area. In view of that and in view of the fact that the Grenfell annual report indicated that there is an increase in demand for services, is the minister aware of any anticipated further cuts in funding to the Grenfell system which may result in fewer positions filled?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, the Grenfell Board has been informed of the funding assigned to them for the year as a result of the budget passing in this House. They, I believe, have made their plans on the basis of the funding available to them. I am not aware of any ongoing restraints that they are going to have to put in place. I believe they have already gotten their plans fully arranged, how to use the money we have allotted to them.

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister of Career Development and Advanced Studies (Mr. Matthews): The minister is aware of the case of a girl from Gander who, after spending two weeks at Harbinger, is now responsible for a full year's tuition. I would like to ask the minister, first of all, how many other students were ripped off in a similar manner? What would the total amount of money involved be? Does the minister believe there may be other students in the Province in a similar situation whose cases the minister does not know about, which may come to light in the future?

MR. MATTHEWS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. MATTHEWS:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. For the

years 1986 & 1987 there are four students who have been affected in a negative way, and in 1987 - 1988 some eighteen students. And the total amount of money involved is 25,700-and-some-odd dollars. So the particular student the hon. member has talked about is owed some money from Harbinger because of the bankruptcy, in essence she is a creditor of the school. I have talked to the hon. member about it on a number of occasions and what we are in essence suggesting to those students is that they make representation to the Secretary of State (Mr. Crombie), who is responsible for the program. It is a Canada Student Loan Program. And we are very willing to assist students in preparing documentation to ask the Secretary of State to consider writing off the debt. Whether they will or not is too early to predict, but we are very willing to assist in representation to make the Secretary of State aware of all of the facts and then they may just consider writing off the debt.

MR. BAKER:

The minister is aware, Mr. Speaker

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The time for Oral Questions has elapsed.

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker, there are two minutes left.

O O O

MR. TULK:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I am not questioning the Speaker's ruling at all, but I am just wondering if there has been a mistake made. I understand from the table that when Your Honour said the time for Oral Question Period expired, there was at least a minute left.

MR. SPEAKER:

I took note of when we started and it was 3:05, according to my time.

MR. TULK:

It is not quite 3:35 yet.

MR. SPEAKER:

When I called for the next item, it was 25 minutes to.

MR. MATTHEWS:

Check your eyes.

MR. YOUNG:

Go to the Speaker and get your eyes tested.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

DR. TWOMEY:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Public Works.

DR. TWOMEY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to table in this hon. House a Report of the Public Tender Act Exceptions for the month of May, 1988.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BLANCHARD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Labour.

MR. BLANCHARD:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the hon. House the first annual report of the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Notices of Motion

MR. WINDSOR:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. WINDSOR:

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider certain resolutions relating to the advancing or guaranteeing of certain loans made under The Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act To Amend The Municipalities Act."

I also give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act To Incorporate The City Of Mount

Pearl."

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

Answers to Questions
for which Notice has been Given

DR. TWOMEY:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Public Works and Services.

DR. TWOMEY:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to table in this House the answer to a question on the Order Paper. The Question number is 179. It was asked by the hon. member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir (Mr. Gilbert).

Orders of the Day

DR. COLLINS:
Mr. Speaker, I am going to call Motion 11. I understand we do have agreement from all parts of the House to have this motion either brought forward now for acceptance or voting, without debate, or perhaps by very brief debate. That is Motion 11. It is the one that the hon. Minister Responsible for Northern Development (Mr. Warren) gave notice of yesterday and it relates to the action of the British Parliament in regard to regulations on the labelling of fur products.

I think that we intend to get this motion voted on today. Whether we do it without debate or very brief debate, I do not know. You want

five minutes, is it?

AN HON. MEMBER:
Oh, no.

DR. COLLINS:
Okay. Mr. Speaker, I call Motion 11 then, and the hon. minister will just read the motion.

MR. TULK:
If I could, Mr. Speaker, before the Minister for Northern gets into it.

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

MR. TULK:
We have agreed with the Minister for Northern Development that indeed the question should be put, and that it should be put without debate. So we are ready for the vote on that question.

MR. WARREN:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WARREN:
Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with it. There are just two words I wish to change in the resolution: "WHEREAS the federal government, on Wednesday, May 31, 1988," I would like to change this by saying, "unanimously condemns such action." I have read a transcript of the debate in the House of Commons and that is actually what the twenty-two members spoke of, from the three parties - "unanimously condemns such action."

In the third last sentence, I want to say, "Advise the Government of Britain," instead of saying, "United Kingdom." With these

amendments, I have no problem.

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the House ready for the Question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Yes.

MR. SPEAKER:

All those in favour of the motion please say, 'Aye'. Those against please say, 'Nay'.

The motion is carried, unanimously.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting The Newfoundland Hospital And Nursing Home Association." (Bill No. 20)

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, just a brief word of explanation about our order of business. The hon. the Minister of Justice (Ms Verge) is not available today. On the last day we adjourned debate on Bill 23, that is The Act To Amend The Legal Aid Act. The hon. Minister of Justice will be back on Tuesday, I think, and we have had agreement that we would delay further consideration of that bill until she returns.

So we are now on Bill (20), "An Act Respecting The Newfoundland Hospital And Nursing Home Association." This is a very short bill, Mr. Speaker. It is in the form of a new bill, although the reason why it is in the form of a new bill is that the Act is so short that where there has to be a few necessary amendments, we just said we may as well bring in a new bill rather than try to amend the other one, which was very brief anyway.

The Newfoundland Hospital Association Act was passed in 1960 and that created The Newfoundland Hospital Association. In 1985 the Department of Health took over responsibility for chronic care institutions from the Department of Social Services. At that time the Association broadened its mandate so that it not only dealt with hospitals, but also dealt with nursing homes.

Indeed, the nursing home aspect has become a very important part of this association now to the extent that the presidency of the association has been some people from the nursing home sector, not from the hospital sector. The new bill now will have a new name and, as was mentioned in introducing the order, it will now be called not The Newfoundland Hospital Association, but The Newfoundland Hospital And Nursing Home Association. That is essentially, Mr. Speaker, the main point of this bill.

The rest of the bill means very little change from what was in the older bill. There are no significant changes.

For instance, Clause 3, sets out just the objectives of the association; Clause 4, sets forth certain powers of the association not different from the powers that were held by The Hospital Association; Clause 7 gives a structure, the Board of Directors; Clause 8, the association may make bylaws; Clause 9, it may establish a pension plan for the benefit of employees and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the only other point to be brought to hon. member's attention is that the older bill had in it a provision that upon request, in writing, the

Lieutenant-Governor in Council could ask the association to render an account of its properties and affairs. Now, in the twenty-one years of existence of The Hospital Association, they never had to do that because the Lieutenant-Governor in Council just never considered it necessary to ask for a report in that way. It is a very well run organization. That provision of the act was never used. So, the new bill now will just drop that provision.

So with those words of explanation, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading.

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker,

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

MR. EFFORD:
Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister is quite correct in what he is saying. It is just a matter of housekeeping to combine The Newfoundland Hospital Act and The Nursing Home Association Act under one act. It is quite true, as the minister said, prior to 1984 it was under the Department of Social Services and since then has now come under the Minister of Health's responsibility.

While it is simple housekeeping to combine them under the one act, the problems surrounding the health care system in the hospitals in our Province and especially, if there is anything more special than health care, it is the aging and the nursing homes situation in the Province.

There are a number of questions we are going to have to ask the

minister and he is going to have to be responsible to see these questions are answered in a correct manner that satisfies the Opposition. It is not the Opposition, I should not say that, because we are asking them on behalf of the people of the Province. We do not want to get this into political rhetoric and the questions that are answered get thrown back as an attack on the Opposition for the irresponsibility of trying to bring political attention to themselves because this is not the case, I assure the Minister of Health and this hon. House.

The situation with the aged of our Province is beyond the explanation of words. The seriousness of the condition in which the people are living affects the questions we have been asking the minister in the House over the last several weeks, concerning the situation at the hospitals and the cost of operating the hospitals.

The Hospital Act, very clearly, tells us that the board is responsible for the administration and the running of the hospitals. This is where these problems come from.

If we look at the number of beds taken up in the hospitals with chronic care and we combine that with the number of beds closed each year, the minister tells us those beds are closed in the Summertime because people do not prefer to go into hospital in Summertime, that is the reason why he tells us the beds are closed, nevertheless, the beds are closed.

Dr. Young, the former President of the Medical Association, said very publicly last week, and very

clearly, that the reason why the beds are closed is because of budgetary cuts and because of the restraints and the amount of money that each individual hospital has to operate on. They have to do this each year in order to come within the budget. It is a further strain put on the management and the administrators of all the hospitals. We are not talking specifically about the Health Sciences Complex. That is the problem we are trying to get through to the Minister of Health. It is not just the Health Sciences Complex who is encountering these problems in the health care system, but it is Province wide, in all the major hospitals and in all the smaller hospitals. There is no difference from one hospital to another in the Province.

The problem we have here is to get the minister to understand, or to admit there is a problem there. It is not caused by the management; it is not caused by the hospital boards; it is not caused by the staff; it is caused by the fact that these people do not have the money to administer and to properly run the hospital in the best way. They certainly know how to do the job, but the funds are not available. That is the problem, Mr. Speaker.

The minister himself is the first person to say that they are giving \$624 million and it is not easy to access more money to give to the hospitals. We understand that, but if he is serious about what he is saying, why is he allowing numbers of beds to be taken up by the senior citizens or the chronically ill of our Province? In some of the hospitals around Newfoundland, there are as high as twenty-five to forty beds taken up

and these beds cost the taxpayers and the hospital administration a lot of money, three times the amount of money it would cost to put them into a senior citizens home. It is simple, basic economics.

If it cost \$700 a day to keep an individual in hospital and it cost \$150 or \$175 a day to keep a person in a senior citizens home or institution, then is it not more economical to do that? Would that not save money on the health care system so we could then have more money available to hire on the extra staff that are needed, a nursing assistant, a nurse, a lab technician or, instead of closing forty beds in the Health Sciences Centre at a particular time, could we possibly have to only close twenty beds? There would solve some of the problems.

What the minister and the Department of Health will not do is give the people the opportunity, the license, to construct more nursing homes in the Province which are so desperately needed. They are not only needed by the people out in the Province, they are needed by his own department to save money for the taxpayers, to save money on the running of the hospitals so they can effectively get out there and do the job they are quite capable of doing.

There is nobody in this hon. House and there is nobody in this Province who will ever say that the people working in these institutions, and working in the hospitals, are not capable. They are quite capable and they are more than willing. They are now working themselves beyond any human imagination. They are being burnt out because they are so

capable, so interested and so dedicated to their professions. The Minister of Health, his department and this government are not recognizing that.

Now, what else does the closure of beds do? The closure of beds in the Summer months is causing a backlog in elective surgery. The backlog in the Health Sciences alone goes back to 1985. There are admission slips dated 1985 where people were ready to be admitted to hospital and are still not admitted. Now, this is 1988. They have been waiting three years to get in hospital. It is only common sense, it is only logic, to understand why.

If there are 430 beds closed this Summer and those people who did not want, as the minister says, to go in hospital in June and July, therefore those 430 people must want to get in in September, October, November, or January, whenever it is possible for them to get in. For the number of people then who want to get in at that particular time, the beds again are not there. How can the beds handle that extra backlog? If that continues for four years, you have a 2,000 or 3,000 backlog, because people do not choose the time to get sick. While the minister is trying to tell us they may choose the time to go into hospital, they cannot choose when they get sick. People get sick in July. People get sick in January. It is common sense.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

AN HON. MEMBER:

Go on!

MR. EFFORD:

Now, the two hon. members in the

backbenches do not understand anything like that, because they are so taken up -

MR. REID:

If you were back in Bay Roberts, you would serve your district better.

MR. EFFORD:

A doctor is needed in the backbenches.

Mr. Speaker, this is the problem we are having. This is not a joking situation. This is not something we can joke about. It may be the hon. member himself tomorrow who may have to go into a senior citizen's home. I suggest he is getting close to it -

MR. REID:

I would say you should be there now.

MR. EFFORD:

- as well as we all are. We are all going to have to face those things one of these days. That is the situation.

I am not concerned about myself personally today. I will be concerned a few years down the road, if I have to face a situation like this where I could be lying in an institution for four or five hours not able to help myself, waiting on somebody to come and give me the basic essentials, to help feed me or to give me a needle or whatever, and the nurses cannot do it. It is economics. That is the whole problem. It is just simple, basic economics.

We have no more feeling for the aged of this Province than we do for animals in a barn! If I had an animal in a barn, I would at least go out and feed it when I

get up in the morning and at lunch time. When I would eat, I would feed that animal again, and the same in the evening. I would clean the stall out, as I have done with the horses I have for riding pleasure. Three times a day I feed them and I clean the stalls out, because I am concerned about the animals.

We try to tell the people of this Province we are concerned about the aged when we listen to the stories that the nurses, the nursing assistants, the doctors, and the people who are connected with these institutions are telling us patients are lying there for hours with no attention. It is not sensible. We are supposed to be responsible people!

Whether we are the party in power or the Opposition, we all have a responsibility to make sure that these situations do not take place. It is not a matter of who is going to win or who is going to lose in politics.

Who is losing? The senior citizens are losing.

MR. REID:

Ten times as many people wanted to get in there probably ten years ago.

MR. EFFORD:

That is sensible. That is the reason, Mr. Speaker, we are in the situation we are into.

The Minister of Health has to recognize there is a problem there. We can pass this bill here in the House to incorporate the Newfoundland Hospital Association and the Newfoundland Hospital Act together, because it is quite sensible and logical to do it.

Both are now under the responsibility of the Minister of Health and he has to live up to the responsibility which has been bestowed on him by the Premier of this Province and by the electorate of this Province to do the job he is responsible to do. It is not just a matter of saying it on paper, passing this bill, and forgetting it. We have to try to this impress upon the Minister of Health.

I am sure being a doctor by profession he knows the situation and the problems there. Probably the answer is he cannot get his Cabinet members to agree with him, that more money should be put in there. The priority of government spending should be put where it is needed rather than on a political basis like trying to put water and sewerage out in somebody's district to gain votes, or trying to build boats for a middle distance fleet, \$10 million given out last Thursday night in Marystown so the member for that district could get re-elected, when we have thirty-one boats that are privately-owned, that the people are quite capable of operating and making a profit with and creating jobs with the fish they bring in, lying tied up to the wharves with no quotas to catch; when we have one of the middle distance boats, that the minister was responsible for having, **The Brandon**, tied up with no quota to catch, yet the minister goes and announces another \$10 million.

Now, the Minister of Health will tell us, 'We have no money, we have to cut back, we have to bring in restraints.' But if we have no money, where is the logic in doing that? The \$10 million last Thursday night could build ten

senior citizen's homes, twenty nursing homes, twenty boarding homes, probably thirty. This is what we need. We need our priorities in the right place. It could keep the 430 beds that are going to be closed this Summer open so the people can get the health care they so desperately need. If we had those concerns in mind, we would not be losing the specialists we are losing in this Province.

While the Minister of Health will tell me again I am being an alarmist and creating things he has no understanding of, the fact is we are going to lose more specialists again this year. It was said very clearly the other night. There are two orthopedic doctors ready now to leave the Health Sciences Complex. Why are they leaving? They are leaving because of the pressures put on them by this Minister of Health and by his department. They cannot do the job they were trained to do. They know they have a responsibility to their patients, and it has come down to the situation now, as one person told me, where they have to actually, on a day off, go in and try to make arrangements with their colleagues, on a day when they need some rest or some leisure time, to go in and argue and try to make arrangements for the next week or two to try to get a space in the operating room.

Now, no professional doctor or professional person can work under those kinds of strains, Mr. Speaker. That is what the Minister of Health is not dealing with. He is trying to turn a blind eye. I am sure the Minister of Health knows full well everything we have brought up in this House of Assembly is correct,

100 per cent.

I think the problem is the Minister of Health cannot convince his Cabinet votes are not more important than the health care system. They are taking the money, the Cabinet, and spending it around because an election is in the air. They know they are losing and they are trying to hold on.

MR. YOUNG:
Not true.

MR. EFFORD:
Not true! The Minister of Consumer Affairs and Communications is gone. Make no mistake about that!

MR. YOUNG:
I will have a bigger party than you.

MR. EFFORD:
I can tell the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Communications he will not be in this House of Assembly after the next election as an Opposition member. He will not be here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. YOUNG:
That is my decision.

MR. EFFORD:
The people of Harbour Grace district have decided that long before today, not the member for Port de Grave, although he will help to ensure it. The people of that district have decided that. They know now where the people of this Province is setting with this government. They know who is responsible. Mr. Speaker, we, on this side -

AN HON. MEMBER:

You are not a shoe-in yourself.

MR. YOUNG:

You have the nomination and that is all. You are (inaudible).

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I must ask the Minister of Health -

MR. YOUNG:

I will have more than 73 at my party.

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious situation we are facing within this Province. The problems being faced by the staff of the Health Sciences Complex, St. Clare's, the Grace, and other hospitals, are not to be taken lightly.

We have to ask the Minister of Health, as I did in Question Period today, to please listen to those people, at least give them the time so he can sit down and hear the concerns they expressed the other night. While he accused it of being a union meeting or whatever, give them the benefit of the doubt. Listen to the concerns. It is better to do that since if we showed them that we are concerned and that we are listening, at least the morale of the workers will increase a percentage point. That in itself, Mr. Speaker, would improve the health care system in this Province.

That is what we are asking the Minister of Health to do because the morale of those people is going down to an all time low and it is not necessary for that to happen. They need someone to listen to them, to hear their frustrations.

They are not asking for dollars for their wages, they are not asking for better working conditions, a desk in their office or better meals in the cafeteria or better working conditions, they are asking for the opportunity to be able to provide to the patients who comes into their hospitals for a decent form of health care which they so desperately need.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we want the Minister of Health to listen to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Greening):

Before recognizing the hon. the member for Gander, I would like to inform all members of the Late Show this afternoon. We have one question. It is directed to the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs from the hon. the member for Twillingate, not satisfied with the answer given to a question asked in the Question Period today.

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very happy to participate in this particular debate. As for the bill before us combining the fact that the nursing homes in the Province have now come under the Department of Health, rather than the Department of Social Services, and the change to reflect that reality, of course, we support that change.

I would however like to talk, Mr. Speaker, through you to the

Minister of Health (Dr. Collins) concerning my concerns about the health care system in the Province. I am not going to be a long time.

First of all, what we are talking about here is a system which is absolutely essential. It is a system which deals with the people in our society who are elderly in terms of the nursing homes aspect and also hospitals. Hospitals handle a lot of the elderly people who cannot look out to themselves. It is concerned with the people in the society who are sick and need care. It is not like some of the other departments, and I could use the Department of Municipal Affairs, for an example. If a road does not get repaired this year and it gets repaired next year, then it is no big deal. But when you are talking about the health care system you are talking about something totally different.

People are desperately in need and when they are in need they are in need now and they are in need totally. So you are talking about a different creature altogether than the other line departments, I would like to say to the minister. I am sure that he appreciates that or should.

You would expect because of that the health system would be looked upon differently from other departments of government because of the absolute necessity of having this health care system in place for the people in the Province who need health services.

In looking at what has happened in the health care system, you begin to wonder. You would assume decisions would be made on the basis of the need. If the need is

there, it will be taken care of. You would assume that would be the basis on which decisions are made. On closer examination we find this is not the basis on which decisions are made. Unfortunately, too many of the decisions are subject to Cabinet approval and are subject to Cabinet pressures.

Some examples of what I mean, Mr. Speaker: I am sure the minister from Burin - Placentia West (Mr. Tobin) will appreciate one of the examples I am going to use. When the new hospitals were built in this Province, there was a brand new hospital built in Burin. The present Minister of Social Services, that is his district, I am sure was very pleased this hospital would be built in Burin.

There was also a hospital built in Clarendville, the present Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. Brett) district, and I am sure that he was very happy and pleased the hospital was built in Clarendville. They were supposed to be regional hospitals serving a region.

In the case of Clarendville, a couple of other existing hospitals were closed down because they were close to Clarendville and the major service could be provided through the brand new Clarendville Hospital and would could leave clinics in the other areas. This was the basis of a decision made by the Minister of Health. He explained it convincingly. He did not convince the people in Come by Chance, mind you that it should have happened, but he used very logical arguments to explain what happen to the hospital in Clarendville.

The hospital in Burin however was

a different kettle of fish. The two hospitals which are very close to Burin remained open. Even though there was an announcement that the same thing would happen that had happened to Clareville, the hospitals remained open. The reason given was there was a demonstrated need.

I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, the two cases are very similar. If the two hospitals close to the Burin hospital were kept opened, if these two were kept open then I would suggest that perhaps the Come by Chance hospital -

AN HON. MEMBER:
(Inaudible).

MR. BAKER:
Did the minister have a few words to say?

MR. TOBIN:
What have you got against (inaudible) in Grand Bank? That is what I asked you.

MR. BAKER:
Okay, I would ask the intemperate minister with the low boiling point to please listen to what I have to say because I am not suggesting that. The minister listens with half an ear, I believe like myself that is all he has left.

It would seem to me that if the logic that applied to the Burin Peninsula, if that were sound, then it should have also applied to the Clareville situation.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Hear, hear!

MR. BAKER:
It is very similar. But, Mr. Speaker, there is a difference in those two cases, you know. The

difference is in the political colour of the districts involved. That is the difference, pure and simple.

The political colour changed now that the member from Bellevue (Mr. Callan) crossed the floor. Maybe this is one of the reasons why he crossed the floor. The political colour changed, but at the time when the decision was made, there was a difference in political colour.

I would say this indication, I am not saying that that was the basis, but that is what it would seem to me because that is the only difference in the two cases. This indication to me, if it is true, is shocking.

We have come to accept in this Province, believe it or not, the people out there have come to accept the fact that water and sewer money and roads money is delivered politically. That has been a fact of life in this Province for a number of years. As a matter of fact, there is a member of the House now who campaigned on that idea in a by-election. So it has become an accepted practice of this government to give out these monies politically, by and large.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Not true.

MR. BAKER:
However, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you will understand that if it does go to the health care system, then that is something that is beyond understanding and beyond belief. The health care system, like the justice system in this Province, should be totally free from political influence.

I will cite another case for the minister which I cited to him recently in a letter, and it bears repeating, the situation that exists in the Gander and Grand Falls hospitals.

I wholeheartedly support work being done on the Grand Falls hospital. I know for a number of years work was needed there and I believe that were work is needed to be done, it should be done. I remember there was a Cabinet minister who resigned over the fact that work was not done in the previous administration, the Moores administration. Work needed to be done.

But, Mr. Speaker, what work and for what reason? That is the problem I have. What work and for what reason? There is \$20 million being spent in Grand Falls now. Part of that money, a fair portion of it, is to be used to improve and add to the operating room facilities. Now, the member for Burin - Placentia West (Mr. Tobin) might say, 'That is fine. We need good operating room facilities' and I agree with him wholeheartedly.

However, if you compare the Grand Falls hospital with the Gander hospital, in Grand Falls there are three specialists using the operating rooms, three, using what is going to be at the end of the Summer five operating rooms. Now, on the surface there is nothing wrong with that I say to the minister because this means that operating rooms can be gotten ready while others are in use and you can speed up the process and a surgeon can run a rather efficient operation, where there are three specialists and five operating rooms. That is good, but it is Cadillac.

MR. TOBIN:

So you are against that.

MR. BAKER:

However, here is what I am against. I am in favour of the best possible system that we can develop however here is what I am against: In Gander, there are eleven specialists. Now, I am not counting anesthetists. I am just counting the others.

MR. TOBIN:

The people from Windsor (inaudible).

MR. BAKER:

There are eleven specialists and the people from Windsor have to go to Grand Falls to avail of the services in Gander, so they want to see the Gander hospital improved. You have eleven specialists using three operating rooms.

Now, what is the difference, Mr. Speaker? If the object of the exercise, of the spending of health money, is to bring a service to where it should be, then it is obvious to everybody in this Province the operating rooms - and the minister knows there are many other problems with the operating area in Gander that I could go into but it would take an hour or so to explain. If the money were to be spent to improve the operating facilities in the hospitals in the Province, where you would improve the operating rooms would be in Gander. That is where you would do it. You would make sure the other hospitals had adequate operating areas as well but, my heavens, how can you justify such a tremendous difference?

I would say to you again, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of

Health, through you, the big difference in those two cases is in the political colour of the districts. That is the only thing I can come back to. I want an explanation. In my own mind, I need to get settled away. I need an explanation. That is the only explanation I can settle in my own mind. It seems to be operating in this case.

So I would say to the Minister of Health, through you, Mr. Speaker, that if money in the medical system in this Province is being used politically, then it is one of the most shameful things that can be done. I would really like an explanation of the examples that I pointed out. There are many more that I could use. But these are the two of the more obvious ones. I would like an explanation.

I would like the minister to convince me that it is not being done that way, that the health care system is not being subjected to Cabinet pressures, is not being subjected to ministers insisting politically that something be done with the health care system in their district. I want to be sure that does not happen, that a minister cannot put pressure on Cabinet and, therefore, change an expenditure in the Health Department. I would like an explanation from the minister.

I would like to also point out to the Minister of Health that the closedown of beds has been particularly hard on the Gander hospital. There are 157 beds, plus six day surgery beds. That is 163 beds in total. Fifty-six of them have had to be closed. One-third of the beds in the hospital have had to be closed. Now, the reason they have had to

be closed is because of financial constraints.

So not only is the proper attention not being paid to the operating area in the hospital in Gander, but the beds are being closed, so that, I suppose, if they had ten operating rooms, where would you put the patients? It is due to fiscal or financial restraint, a lack of money. Save money and close down fifty-seven beds.

Eleven surgeons want to work. They want to do more than the absolute emergency work they are now forced to handle, operating with three rooms, one of which will have to be closed down for regularly scheduled cases if there happens to be an emergency case. Mr. Speaker, it is beyond belief what is happening in the health care system in this Province.

I would say to the minister it has not all happened since he took over the department, as I jokingly said to him one day in front of Confederation Building. It has not all happened overnight. It is something which has developed over the years.

I think there is a responsibility to ensure: Number one, adequate beds are available in our hospitals; number two, adequate personnel are provided to handle the beds; and number three, the money in the health care system of this Province is not doled out simply on a political basis, but all expenditures are done on the basis of demonstrated need in whichever hospital money is spent.

Demonstrated need, Mr. Speaker, is the only way to give out money in the health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FENWICK:
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Just a few comments with regard to this particular piece of legislation, An Act Respecting The Newfoundland Hospital And Nursing Home Association. After receiving a copy of the legislation in the House here, we had a chance to talk to individuals involved in the health care system, specifically our contacts in it, which are primarily through the trade unions involved. I must tell the Minister of Health, because he has obviously been having a hard time lately, that this happens to be an initiative we support, and that we find has a tremendous amount of support among those who actually work in the institutions themselves.

The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is that this establishes the Newfoundland Hospital and Nursing Home Association. It is our impression that some of the nursing homes, especially the private nursing homes, were interested in setting up a separate association, one that would be removed from the hospitals themselves. From this perspective, Mr. Speaker, you would end up with two employer groups involved in the health care system of the Province. Since the Nursing Home Association, perhaps, would not have the history of unionization that the Hospital Association had and so on, there was a fear that two levels of employment standards would be

established in the system and, if that were to occur, then individuals who worked in certain institutions would be at a disadvantage compared to others.

If you look under Section 4, you will see what the objectives of the association are, and section (d) says, 'to negotiate and provide labour relations services on behalf of members on request.' If you go on further and look at the powers, by-law number 9 says, 'The association may make by-laws not inconsistent with this Act providing for the entering into of agreements and contracts by the association with any person' and so on. So it is a collective bargaining group. By being one collective bargaining group, it is our feeling that it will be a better situation for the thousands of people who work in the health care system in the Province.

So, since the Minister of Health has been receiving a lot of negative criticism of his department, actions which we subscribe to quite considerably, we thought we would at least tell him that this initiative is one that we can support. We see it as a positive move, and one, hopefully, that will make sure that the working conditions of people in nursing homes is at the same level, the same standard as that in the hospitals and other institutions which have been involved for a period of time.

By way of other comments that we could make on the health care system, I would just like to make one general observation on it, because I, along with a lot of members of the public and the official Opposition and others, are somewhat disconcerted by the attitude of the present Minister

of Health. The previous Minister of Health, whenever he was asked a question about bed closures or shortages or something, would get up and say, 'We know we are not perfect. We know we have problems. We are working on the problems. We accept the fact that it is not the ideal situation yet, but we are hoping to make improvements and so on.' Quite frankly, it was very difficult at that point to argue with the Minister of Health under those circumstances. But the present Minister of Health does not have that degree of candor, I would suggest, and it is because he does not exercise that degree of candor that we find his answers so infuriating.

I think if you talk to people involved with the John Howard Society and people who are involved with rehabilitating human beings, they will tell you that the first step in rehabilitating a person is to have them recognize that they are not perfect and recognize the faults they have to work on.

The Minister of Health's fault is that he does not recognize that the health care system has faults and, therefore, not being able to recognize them it is very difficult to get any feeling of confidence on our part that these things will be addressed and that they will improve in the future. In that respect, I am disappointed that the Minister of Health does not have the degree of candor the previous Minister of Health had.

The problem as I see it, Mr. Speaker, goes back to the freeze on budgets, placed by this government on the major institutions, especially in the St. John's area, for a three-year

period of time.

When that occurred, we ended up with a situation where you had the costs of a hospital's operations increasing; the cost of supplies increasing, salaries would increase, the cost of virtually everything that went into providing a high quality health care system would increase. When your budget is frozen, you are in a position whereby the only way to make the budget balance is to cut out some of the units that you have, and thereby we ended up with a series of bed closures, wards being closed, people being laid off, to the degree that we ended up with the budgets being balanced but with a health care system, especially here in St. John's, which was not able to meet the needs that were placed on it.

Because at the same time as we cut back on the beds and the other things that were here, we ended up going into a much more complicated health care system, one that required more sophisticated equipment, required a lot more testing, and, to a large extent, government established a policy that the work would be done at major centres like St. John's, like Corner Brook, like Grand Falls and Gander, and a few others which had reasonably equipped hospitals.

As a result, we have seen a change. Instead of the cottage hospitals and the smaller hospitals being able to handle the treatment, the mandate was passed up the line, so to speak. So while we had smaller hospitals shrinking because of bed closures and ward closures and layoffs, we also had an increase demand on their facilities because of the way in which we are delivering the

health system. These two things came together, and I would suggest that is the reason you are getting the degree of frustration out of the people who actually have to deliver this health care on the wards themselves, and it is that area that I would hope this government would address.

Just by way of giving numbers, back in 1982 or so, before the freezes occurred, there were 1,200 employees at the Health Sciences Complex who worked in what is called the hospital support group, and in Versa Services, which are the people who provided the catering services. These 1,200 people, Mr. Speaker, over the last five years, have been cut again and again so that they are now down to 900 people. There are 300 missing, and these 300 clearly are the ones who should be there to operate the wards which have been closed, and in order to give some degree of backup to the people who are delivering the health care system.

My suggestion to the minister is that we have to replace them, we have to find the extra money to put the extra staff back in place. Because if we do not, we are in a position where we will not be able to offer high quality health care.

This year we saw longer waiting lists than we ever had before. We saw numbers of people going into hospital, being prepared for their operations, and being told at the last minute, 'I am sorry. A bed has not been vacated. We cannot put you through, because we have nowhere in the recovery unit to put you.' This situation has become worse. The people who are, perhaps, as frustrated as anybody are the ones who have to deliver

the health care. In a sense, that is what they were saying several nights ago when they decided to hold a meeting at which they could express their frustrations.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I would suggest to the minister that he and his government have to start paying back the resources that were essentially taken from these institutions over the last number of years. By doing that, maybe we will be able to get ourselves back into a good health care system.

The final comment, Mr. Speaker, is just to reiterate what I said at the beginning. Bill 20 we have no complaints with at all. As a matter of fact, we see it as a progressive move whereby there will be one employer in the health care field and, therefore, the working conditions for individuals - nursing assistants, housekeeping, dietary, nurses, and everybody else - will hopefully be on par right across the country, in all our institutions, and that, quite frankly, is a progressive thing to have happen. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down and let the minister address it.

MR. SPEAKER:

If the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, I thank hon. members for their comments. I will try to go through them as quickly as I can.

The hon. member for Port de Grave commented on budget savings through bed closures. I think we have been over that quite a bit. I think we have a good

understanding of the matter. I want to make two points: Firstly, no one prefers bed closures over bed openings. If all the beds in the hospitals could be kept open, that would be great, certainly from our point of view. However, if you have a responsible attitude towards budget keeping and you have a lower pressure on your facility at certain times of the year, that is the time when you want to try to close a few beds and let people take their vacations, and, perhaps, decrease your elective admissions and confine yourself to urgent and emergency cases. And that is what is happening. As I have said a number of times in this House, it is not only a budgetary thing. There are some difficulties in nurse staffing not related to budgets, but related to the availability of particular types of nurses.

The hon. member also made the statement that all hospitals are doing the same thing. That is not quite the case. There are about eight of the thirty-one hospitals which need to close a few beds in the summertime. Most of the smaller hospitals, which have quite a low occupancy rate in many cases, they do not need to close the beds, or, shall we say, the pressure on them is not such that they need to close beds.

He commented on the chronic patient occupying some hospital beds and that is true. It is a problem. But I do not think there is a great amount of savings there. Because, in actual fact, what is happening is that some hospital beds are being used for chronic care but they are not demanding the same amount of attention and funding and so on and so forth that a very acute bed

needs. So if we just designated some of the hospitals as chronic care beds that would seem alright, but there really would not be any change in funding.

Just as an example, I would like to bring the hon. member's attention the fact that we brought into play, a number of years ago, the St. John's Home Care Plan, and the sort of thought at the beginning was this would decrease hospital bed costs. In actual fact, it increased them. Because you had more acute patients filling up the hospitals, and the lesser acute ones, and therefore demanding less funding, were being discharged early.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to take serious objection to any suggestion that there is poor care given in hospitals. Granted the hospital workers require a lot of dedicated activity and a lot of dedicated attention in their work. I suppose it is only expected to come out in debate, that you hear all the negative things. There are so many good things being done by hospital workers that it is fantastic.

With the amount of nursing care that is given, the amount of callback that is done quite willingly and quite expertly, the amount of meticulous attention given to tests and so on and so forth, I would not like the impression to get around that our hospital workers are not pulling their weight. They are!

Mr. Speaker, what do you say on the economic side of the thing? We have increased our budget this year by over 6 per cent; we have more than doubled the amount of money given in the health care system since this administration

came into office. In actual fact, the pressures in terms of numbers of admissions on hospital beds has levelled off in the last three or four years.

In regard to the the member for Gander, I am afraid I will have to make just one comment. He is a bit worried that politics is coming into health care. I would like to assure him that is not the case, and I would like to prove to him that is not the case. I have a major hospital in my district, the Grace General Hospital. I was in charge, if anyone was in charge, I suppose, of the purse strings of this Province for nine years, and that was the one hospital that did not get any major funding during that period. I say to the Salvation Army that they have been very, very patient in waiting their turn. Laterally they got a bit impatient, and I do not blame them, but that is an index of the lack of political input into these decisions.

On the Gander/Grand Falls one I understand where the hon. member is coming from on that, but I would like for him to take a historic view. For many years Gander got a lot of attention and, as he said himself, the Grand Falls hospital slipped a bit behind. Now Grand Falls is getting a bit of attention, and so on and so forth. There is only so much money, and you have to give so much to one institution during one period, and then give money to another institution in another period. He suggested that perhaps the health care system got into trouble since I became Minister of Health. I will not be unkind to him and say that interest rates and the stockmarket crash came about since he has been the finance critic. I will not say

that.

The member for Menihek says he has given up on me. He says I am incorrigible and there is nothing he can do. All I can say to that is my predecessor was such a worthy, worthy gentleman in every possible term you want to use, that no one could follow that act. All I can say is that I hope as time goes on, he will find that the health care system is getting along alright, despite my having something to do with it.

With those few words I thank hon. members for their general support for this bill and I move second reading.

On motion, a bill, 'An Act Respecting The Newfoundland Hospital And Nursing Home Association,' read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill No. 20)

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

It is now four-thirty. I will call on the hon. member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first of all let me tell this House and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs that both he and his predecessor have been made aware now, on a number of occasions, of the desperate need for proper water and sewer facilities in the community of Summerford. In fact, Mr. Speaker, no later than May 13 I spoke in this House at length on the terrible, life-threatening conditions that exist in the community of Summerford, where raw

sewage is present in the roadside ditches. I very graphically described conditions in Summerford, and in other towns in Twillingate district where similar conditions exist.

I can recall at least three separate occasions in the past two or three months when I personally, and privately I might add, and confidentially, discussed the problem with the minister. Indeed, I am sure the minister is aware that just before he announced his 1988 capital works program, I sent him a handwritten note asking him to consider Summerford in his 1988-89 water and sewer budget.

The minister, of course, Mr. Speaker, is also aware that the mayor and councillors of Summerford visited the minister's office shortly before budget time, at which time they again made a very strong presentation to the minister on behalf of their community. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the mayor and the councillors of Summerford, in total frustration, resigned en masse; they threw in the towel. Mr. Speaker, in Summerford we had a good council, a very responsible council. I think the minister and his predecessor will have to say that. The mayor is an outstanding man, in the person of Mr. Harvey Bulgin, who has served his community, and served it well, for the past seventeen years. Mr. Bulgin is one of the most highly respected and most credible people, I suppose, on the Northeast Coast of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Bulgin just did not resign for the sake of resigning, or to grab a temporary headline in the Lewisporte Pilot or in The Evening Telegram, Mr.

Bulgin and his council resigned because they could not take anymore of this political pork barrelling and discrimination that is meted out by this government as it affects their town.

Mr. Speaker, we can play around with figures all we like, and we can get up and pontificate all we like, but I think it is pretty obvious now to most Newfoundlanders that the minister and his predecessor, with the concurrence of his Cabinet colleagues, are playing a very sinister game and are guilty of political chicanery. What is even worse, Mr. Speaker, is they are playing a form of Russian Roulette with the health and safety of the hundreds of people who live in Summerford, and others, of course, who live in other communities in my district and in other districts around the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I say the minister should be ashamed of himself. They are not worthy of the trust the people of our Province have bestowed in them. And I say, Mr. Speaker, and I suppose it will be of some consolation to the people of Summerford, thank God the nightmare will soon be over and the people of Summerford, and communities such as Summerford, will then get justice, and they will see the real benefits, Mr. Speaker, of democracy, which is something this government has denied them.

Mr. Speaker, I should remind the minister and the House that in Summerford there are men who have fought for democracy, and Summerford people died for democracy.

MR. TOBIN:
(Inaudible).

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, hon. members opposite might not be taking my speech too seriously, or the matter I am discussing, especially the member for Burin - Placentia West.

MR. TOBIN:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

A point of order, the hon. the Minister of Social Services.

MR. W. CARTER:

He is wasting my time.

MR. TOBIN:

Mr. Speaker, I take what the hon. gentleman is saying very seriously, and I take what the people of my constituency say very seriously. I got money for my district because I went to the minister's office several times looking for it. He never showed up once.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, that is not a point of order. The truth is, he is killing my time.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

There is no point of order.

MR. TOBIN:

That is true.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I repeat, members opposite might not be taking too seriously this very serious and grave problem, so let them laugh and carry on. I will tell you now that for the people of Summerford it is a very real problem, and it is in their behalf that I make this presentation here today.

I would ask the minister, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider and to make funds available to the community of Summerford so these people can get rid of the raw sewage on the sides of the roads and live in safety and in comfort and in dignity. That is something they are not able to do now with the conditions that currently exists in that community.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, this sinister game the hon. member for Twillingate refers to is the same game he played when he sat over here for many years. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, and I say this with all sincerity, that he was better at that sinister game than anybody in this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. MORGAN:

He is a good politician.

MR. TOBIN:

And he is playing politics now.

MR. W. CARTER:

At least I never had to resign (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. TOBIN:

Now we are seeing it. Now we are seeing it.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. TOBIN:

Now we are seeing the real Opposition.

MR. R. AYLWARD:

Spurting his slurs again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed the hon. member said that, because I do not think I have been known, in the last seventeen years, as somebody who stood up here and went after anybody in character assassination or personal attack, or that sort of thing.

I made a very grave error, Mr. Speaker, in my political career and I paid very dearly for it, financially, psychologically, and morally. My family suffered for it, and I paid very, very dearly for it. I wish the hon. gentleman had not said that, but I will forget he did it and go on with the few words I have to say. It is unbecoming of the hon. member, really, to get on with stuff like that.

The hon. member is right when he says he has made representation on behalf of his district. That is true, Mr. Speaker. He has done that from time to time. He never was in my office, and that is exactly what I said.

MR. TOBIN:

What? What?

MR. BRETT:

He has made representation to me verbally. I cannot remember if he ever wrote me or not, but he has made representation verbally. He did not see fit to accompany any

of the councils from his district to my office, as other members in the Opposition did from time to time.

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that I can understand the frustrations of Summerford as I can understand the frustrations of Windsor, or Millertown, or Shoal Harbour in my own district, and many other places around the Province. I just now met a council from the district of Fogo, and the hon. member was there during the meeting. And they are very frustrated, Mr. Speaker. If they had a mere \$25,000, they could hook up fifteen or twenty houses. They did not get it, and they are very frustrated. I hope they do not resign. I do not think in this life, those of us who are in politics, I think we learn that we are not going to solve a problem by running away from it. I believe that is what the council in Summerford is doing. I recognize the mayor as a very hon. gentleman, and I am really sorry that he saw fit to resign. I wish that he would hang on. Perhaps next year there will be more money or whatever, for whatever reason. Maybe next year the hon. gentleman and his council will get some money to do the water and sewer work that needs to be done.

I said earlier this afternoon that Summerford is not the only place in Newfoundland which has serious problems. There might be sewage coming up through the ground. I do not know. I did not see it. But there are so few exceptions to the number of councils in the Province that are not having serious problems. I can name you maybe a half a dozen councils that are broke because they cannot afford the services they got. There are a number of councils in

the Province that have sewage treatment plants and the town is broke because they cannot afford to operate these plants; they probably should never have been installed in the first place.

There are a lot of problems, Mr. Speaker, in our system. We have half the population of Nova Scotia; they have sixty or seventy town councils or whatever they call them up there - counties - and here we are with 314 municipalities, town councils and 150-odd local service districts. So we have many, many problems. All I can say to the hon. member is, the communities in his district which did not get funding, they are going to have to be patient. Mr. Speaker, that is all I can say, and I hope that next year they will be included when the money is shared out.

Before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat I am really sorry the hon. member brought up the matter he did, because I think it is beneath his dignity. Anyway, so be it.

MR. W. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

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

MR. W. CARTER:

I apologize to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. W. CARTER:

It was improper. I am gravely sorry for saying it. I should not have said it. But I would expect him to, Mr. Speaker - it is not

nice being told that you were almost bordering on being a shyster when you were in Cabinet. I served with the hon. member in Cabinet. I do not think he has any basis, Mr. Speaker, to say that I conducted myself improperly. Nevertheless, I do apologize for what I said, Mr. Speaker. I should not have said it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

There is no point of order, the hon. member took the opportunity of explaining his point of view.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, June 10, 1988, at 10:00 a.m.

Index

Answers to Questions

tabled

June 9, 1988

Hansen

Tabled by Hon.
Minister of Public
Works & Services

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

9 June, 1988

QUESTION #179
(1)

HOW MANY POSITIONS WERE FILLED IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DURING 1987?

ANSWER

724 positions were filled by the Public Service Commission during 1987.

QUESTION #179
(2)

HOW MANY WERE FILLED BY INTERNAL COMPETITION?

ANSWER

484 were filled by internal competition.

QUESTION #179
(3)

HOW MANY POSITIONS WHICH WERE ADVERTISED FOR OPEN COMPETITION WERE SUBSEQUENTLY FILLED BY INDIVIDUALS FROM WITHIN THE CIVIL SERVICE? HOW DOES THIS COMPARE WITH THE NUMBER FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR 1986-1987?

ANSWER

36 positions which were advertised publicly were filled by individuals from within the Public Service in 1987-1988.

56 positions which were advertised publicly were filled by individuals from within the Public Service in 1986-1987.

CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 9 JUNE, 1988.

Point of Privilege:

Mr. Dawe.....	2800
Mr. Tulk.....	2804
Mr. Butt.....	2808
Mr. Fenwick.....	2809
Mr. Wells.....	2810
Mr. Speaker, reserves ruling.....	2811

Congratulations on Award for House Page:

Mr. Wells, Mr. Butt, Mr. Fenwick.....	2812
---------------------------------------	------

Statements by Ministers

Oil and Gas Publication Released:

Dr. Collins, on behalf of Premier Peckford.....	2813
Mr. Wells.....	2814
Mr. Fenwick.....	2814

Canada/Newfoundland Innu and Inuit Accords Signed:

Mr. Warren.....	2815
Mr. Kelland.....	2816
Mr. Fenwick.....	2817

Two CL-215s Water Bombers Loaned for Ontario Fire:

Mr. R. Aylward.....	2818
Mr. Simmons.....	2819

Oral Questions

Municipal Capital Works Projects:

Correlation between criteria used to allocate funds compared with funds actually allocated, particularly in Opposition districts.
Mr. Lush, Mr. Brett.....2820

How can the Minister rationalize \$5.1 million from a total of \$43 million going to Opposition districts. Mr. Lush, Mr. Brett.....2821

Contends political patronage. Mr. Lush, Mr. Brett.....2822

Seeks tabling of the report of the Capital Projects Committee. Mr. W. Carter, Mr. Brett.....2822

Resignation of the Summerford Council.
Mr. W. Carter, Mr. Brett.....2822

Asks that a start be made this year on a sewer system for Summerford. Mr. W. Carter, Mr. Brett.....2823

Health Care System:

Health Care Centre operating short staffed.
Mr. Efford, Dr. Collins.....2824

Will the Minister meet with the staff.
Mr. Efford, Dr. Collins.....2825

Will the Minister attend a meeting if the member for Port de Grave sets it up.
Mr. Efford, Dr. Collins.....2826

Are cuts in staff and services in the Grenfell operation temporary. Mr. Kelland, Dr. Collins.....2828

If the cuts are temporary, have former employees been reinstated. Mr. Kelland, Dr. Collins.....2829

Are further funding cuts anticipated.
Mr. Kelland, Dr. Collins.....2829

<u>Sprung Project: Health and Safety:</u>	
Reports of heat prostration. Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Blanchard.....	2827
Seeks Ministerial assurance of safe working conditions. Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Blanchard.....	2827
Requests the operation be monitored. Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Blanchard.....	2827
<u>Harbinger Bankruptcy:</u>	
Ministerial awareness of a student who attended Harbinger for two weeks and now is responsible for one year's tuition. Mr. Baker, Mr. Matthews.....	2830

**Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees**

<u>Tender Act Exceptions for May, 1988:</u>	
Dr. Twomey.....	2831
<u>Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal Annual Report:</u>	
Mr. Blanchard.....	2831

Notices of Motion

<u>Certain Resolution Relating to Loan and Guarantee Act:</u>	
Mr. Windsor.....	2831
<u>Amend Municipalities Act, Incorporate City Of Mount Pearl:</u>	
Mr. Brett.....	2831

**Answers to Questions
for which Notice has been Given**

Public Service Commission Statistics:

Dr. Twomey.....2832

Orders of the Day

By leave, A Motion Opposing Britain's Fur Labelling Plans:

Mr. Warren moved the motion, passed unanimously.....2832

Second Reading:

Bill No. 20:

Dr. Collins, moves Second Reading.....2833

Mr. Efford.....2834

Mr. Baker.....2839

Mr. Fenwick.....2844

Dr. Collins, closing debate.....2846

Bill No. 20, carried.....2848

**Debate on the Adjournment
[Late Show]**

Municipal Affairs Allocations and Summerford's Situation:

Mr. W. Carter.....2848

Mr. Brett.....2850

Adjournment Motion.....2852