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Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker (Lush): Order, please!

On behalf of hon. members I would like to welcome to the public galleries today thirty-two grade eleven students from Queen Elizabeth Regional High School, Foxtrap, accompanied by their teachers Mr. Lloyd Johnson and Mr. Heber Best.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Health has raised the level of fear and anxiety in the Province by telling the news media that more than twelve hospitals should close. Does the Minister agree with that statement?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Not only do I not agree with the statement, Mr. Speaker, I have had a discussion with the Minister of Health since that time and the Minister of Health tells me that he has never made that statement to the news media. And I would prefer, Mr. Speaker, to ask the Minister of Health to answer the question. He can explain exactly what was said rather than have me do it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the hon. Member let me put this into perspective. On

Friday afternoon past I was approached by a journalist from the Sunday Express who asked me to verify his source, a rumor from his source, that we were going to close twelve to fourteen hospitals in this Province. I advised the journalist that we had no intention of closing twelve to fourteen hospitals, but I did go on to explain that it is possible that we will be changing the role of some of the institutions in this Province. I explained that was being looked at. I also explained that even if the Province did not have the fiscal problems that we have, in the interest of better health care it would be necessary for us to change the role of some of the institutions to help meet the problems that we have in our chronic care.

Mr. Speaker, in this Province there are 3,225 acute care beds, we require 2,300 - if they were properly distributed and properly utilized. There are 2,500 chronic care beds, we need an additional 300 beds. So, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more logical or reasonable than us to make a swap. There are institutions in this Province which are operating at forty per cent. I said in the paper fifty-five, I have checked with the department since then; forty per cent occupancy, Mr. Speaker. Now, we have a choice: we can let those institutions die a lingering death in being improperly used and underutilized, or we can meet a more drastic need in our Province and use some of those places for our chronic care facility, Mr. Speaker. So, that is the context in which the statement - but the headline is misleading from what the actual story says, for hon. members who would read the story.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has, in fact, confirmed that he and the Premier are proposing closing hospitals. I would like for him to tell the House which hospitals he is proposing to close and convert to chronic care, or to convert to any other use?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how I said it, but just in case I did give misinformation, I did not say that we are going to close hospitals. I do not know where the hon. Member was but I did not say we are going to close hospitals. What I said is, that we are going to change the role, we are looking at the possibility of changing the role, and this will ensure that some of the smaller hospitals which are now being utilized at as low as 40 per cent, some of these hospitals will be changed into an area where the need is greater. Now, there is nothing new about changing the role of hospitals in this Province, Mr. Speaker. Some years ago a hospital in North West River had their role changed. It was totally closed - it was not used for chronic care. The hospital in North West River was turned into a clinic. A hospital in the Whitbourne - Markland area was totally closed down and a clinic was put in its place. In Come By Chance the hospital had its role changed from a hospital to a clinic. Buchans was changed from an acute care centre to a chronic care centre.

An Hon. Member: Botwood.

Mr. Decker: Botwood. We can go on and on and name them. Now, we have the choice: we can maintain the status quo forever or we can take taxpayer's dollars and spend them for the sake of keeping institutions alive, which are not serving a valuable function in the health care system. We have a choice of leaving this alone or we can be progressive, we can change with the times, and we can meet the other need where the demand is increasing. Our population is aging, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is a very sensible approach to take. Rather than destroying buildings, I think we can change the role of them and ensure that in the future they will be there to serve the needs of our people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presumably, changing the role is the Liberal euphemism for closing hospitals. Will the Minister tell the House which hospitals he wants to change the role of? Which hospitals are targeted for a role change?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I am not ready at this time to specifically say which hospitals are, other than to tell the hon. Member that ever since I was appointed to this job a year and a half ago I have been looking at the role of every single institution in this Province, from the smallest to the Health Sciences Centre. Every single institution is being looked at and I would be remiss if I were a Minister of Health and did not

look at the roles of various hospitals throughout the Province to see if they are best serving the needs of our people. I am not in a position at this moment to say to any particular hospital that we are going to change your role. We are looking at the total health care system. We are looking at all the hospitals, we are looking at all the nursing homes, and we are trying to make sure that our health care system, which was allowed over the years to disintegrate and fall behind the times and not meet the modern era, we are trying to pull this health care system up to the latter part of the twentieth century so that we are ready to move into the next century.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary for the Premier. Will the Premier tell the House whether his Government's rural hospital role change/closure plan is part of phase two of the Liberal resettlement program?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, let me give the House some information on health care budgeting. In the year 1978-1979, 21.6 per cent of the Province's Budget went to health care. The former Government increased that by a whole 4.2 percentage points. So in the last year they brought in a Budget, it had been increased to 25.8 per cent, which is 4.2, a fairly substantial increase, because the demands had been increasing.

Mr. Simms: Actually (inaudible) budget figures.

Premier Wells: These are two pages out of Budget Estimates and I am asking them to look now at the actual expenditures. But I can tell the hon. Members that the 21.6 per cent was the revised figure, the 1988-1989 was the estimated figure at 25.8 per cent, and I believe it had actually increased. The actual expenditure was probably a bit more than that, it might even have been 26 per cent or 26.1, or something of that nature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, within twelve months of this Government taking office we have brought in two Budgets and by that time we had increased the expenditure to 27.8 per cent - 27.8 per cent within twelve months, Mr. Speaker -

Mr. Simms: Yes, 1 per cent.

Premier Wells: - of this Government taking office.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: No, that is the estimate for this year. That is the estimate for this current year in which we are in. We put it up to 27.8 per cent, Mr. Speaker, which is approximately 40 per cent in one year of what the former Government had done in ten.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) your budget (inaudible).

Premier Wells: Now, if you want a -

Mr. Rideout: What will the actual be after you are finished (inaudible).

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, the actual will be approximately the same as that. I do not see any substantial difference in the

actual expenditure this year; there may be some, but a relatively minor difference in the actual expenditure this year on health care and that that was budgeted. So, Mr. Speaker, this Government is not intent on closing out hospitals and resettling as the hon. Member is talking about. It is utter nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to redirect my questions to the Minister of Health. He suggested that his comments with respect to the questions asked by my colleague were taken a bit wrong by the Sunday Express.

May I ask him if this comment is accurate, or this allegation I guess, in the same interview in which he described the Province's health care system as a veritable make-work factory that sometimes overlooks its very reason for existence. And if he made that statement, that statement is certainly a serious condemnation of the entire health care system.

But I want him to confirm that he made that statement. I assume he did. Would he briefly explain it? And what evidence does he have to support that particular charge, that the health care system in this Province is primarily concerned with make-work programs, employing doctors and nurses and other health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, of course I did not say that the

total health care system in this Province is a make-work program. That would be totally irresponsible. What I did say in the interview, Mr. Speaker, was that there are hospitals in the Province which are being utilized at 55 per cent. I have since checked it out and have discovered that there are hospitals in the Province which are being utilized at 40 per cent of their occupancy level, Mr. Speaker.

Now, why do we keep these institutions alive? I pointed out that we cannot keep hospitals alive simply as a make-work program. I said we cannot do that. Now make-work program is not the proper words and I apologize for that, but, Mr. Speaker, we can only keep hospitals alive in this Province to deliver health care.

Now sometimes when we change the role of a particular institution we get the Members of the Opposition screaming out, we get some people, some stakeholders complaining because we are changing the role. But very often these complaints are made not on the basis of whether or not we are delivering health care, these arguments and these complaints are based on non-health matters, Mr. Speaker. But for delivery of health care it is not a proper use of the people's money to keep institutions in their present role when only 45 per cent of their beds are occupied; it is better to change the role, and we cannot stop from changing the role by making the decision based on non-health issues.

Make-work program is probably a little extreme, and I would apologize for making that statement.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are making some progress. Now the Minister admitted he made that comment but he is sorry for making it, and that is fine.

Would the Minister not agree that underutilization of hospital services is really one of the consequences of our geography and our population distribution? Secondly, is he suggesting - and in that interview this is what I think comes through - that in the name of saving dollars and balancing the book we must cut back on providing health care services to remote and rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador? And while I am on my feet, can I ask him if he would table in the next day or so a list of all hospitals in the Province and their occupancy rates?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, those are a lot of questions he has compressed into one. The reasons for the low occupancy rate are many and they are varied. On the Burin Peninsula, for example, there was a low occupancy rate in the St. Lawrence and the Grand Bank hospitals. We had to change the role of these and make them into community health care centres. Now the reason for the low occupancy rate in these two facilities was this: Just up the road, at Burin, there was a big regional hospital built - the previous administration did it. So what was happening was the people who lived in Grand Bank and St. Lawrence were by-passing the local institutions and they were

going to the bigger centre, where you have specialists on staff, where you have all the most modern technical equipment. So that is one of the reasons why the beds are underutilized.

The institutions were named as acute care centres, but they did not have the services to offer to the people, so they just began to disappear.

Now geography is a factor that we have to consider in this Province. It has nothing to do with occupancy of beds. Geography means that we have to have hospitals in different regions of this Province; we have to have hospitals in Labrador and on the Northern Peninsula; we have to have hospitals west of (inaudible). Whereas if all our people were in one city, we are only the equivalent of a large city, Mr. Speaker, we could certainly - I can understand what the hon. Member is saying, but from the geography point of view it does have some bearing, but it is not in any way the main factor. The main factor is what is happening to health care, Mr. Speaker.

Health care is becoming a highly specialized profession and in order to meet the needs of our people, we have to have specialists, we have to have technical equipment in facilities, and the Province just can not afford to put a health science care centre in Roddickton, for example. The Province does not have the money to do it, so we have regional centres. And the people realize that their needs cannot be met in these smaller centres, so they are going on and smaller centres are being underutilized. But they certainly

could make excellent places for chronic care facilities, so that their life could be insured, Mr. Speaker, for as long as the Province continues to exist.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: I am sorry, I ask too many questions for the Minister. I will try to make it easier. He did not tell me if he would table a list of all the hospitals and their occupancy. I presume he would have no problem with that, perhaps he can address it in my final supplementary.

In that same interview the Minister said, I believe he said, we will give him a chance now to confirm whether he did or not, that we could save millions of dollars if we could just get duplication out of the health care system in St. John's, I believe he said that. And, of course, we have heard that before from the Minister in reference to arguments about closing down hospitals in St. John's. Can I ask him this, is he or has he had discussions with officials of the hospitals in St. John's? And is he presently, therefore, looking at the close down of speciality services or whole departments in certain hospitals in St. John's? And could he also tell us when he is on his feet if, in fact, he does have a timing plan for the close out of the Grace Hospital or the other Hospital, St. Clare's?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I have an excellent relationship with the hospital boards and the administrators in this Province. And we have met on several

occasions with the hospital boards and the administrators right here in this city. And I pointed out that if the duplication in this city were removed we could save millions of dollars. I stand by that statement, Mr. Speaker. Obstetrics alone: we have in this city two hospitals, either of which could meet the needs for all the deliveries in the St. John's region, either one could do it. What has happened over the last couple of years, we have seen the Clarenville Hospital which is taking the deliveries which used to come to St. John's, we have the hospital on the Burin Peninsula which is now dealing with the deliveries which take place on the Burin Peninsula. They used to come to St. John's. We also have a declining birthrate, Mr. Speaker. So we find ourselves in a position in this city where we have the Grace and St. Clare's: with very little modifications, either one could handle all the deliveries in the city. We have in this city, Mr. Speaker, two hospitals which are delivering dialysis services, either one of which could provide all the needs of our people. I could go on and give a whole lot of examples.

Now Government has no intention of going in with the hobnail boots and closing this down. What Government has done though is met with the administrators and the hospital board chairmen and we said we will see if we can work out some system whereby we do not have to take \$3 million and put it into obstetrics here and \$3 million and put it across the street in another hospital, is there some way we can bring these two systems together? And the hospital board administrators and the board chairmen agree that it is indeed worth looking at. It is

indeed worth pursuing, Mr. Speaker. And I am glad to tell hon. members that in co-operation with the boards we are looking at ways to take out duplication, because this Province owes \$5.6 billion which the previous administration built up. We cannot borrow any more for duplications. This Province has all its taxing capacity used up. We cannot raise any more taxes to pay for these needs. And we have to look, Mr. Speaker, at ways to take out any duplication. However, at the end of the day we have to make sure that all the basic services we can afford are available to our people, and that means available in the different regions, but that does not mean available two and threefold, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, a question for the Minister of Mines and Energy. As the Minister is aware, Abitibi-Price in Stephenville is the only large industry in Bay St. George, and I would take it that he is also aware that the mill is dependent on Government generated sources of electricity. I believe the mill manager recently said that 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the mill's operating cost is electricity. And in light of the fact that officials at the Abitibi-Price mill have said that the mill will only break even this year and are forecasting losses for the coming years, because of the ever-increasing rises in the electrical rates which are forecast, has the Minister had any discussions with the management of the mill about their concerns over the cost of electricity and their ability to achieve economic

viability for the mill?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy.

Dr. Gibbons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do not recall the last time that I had a discussion with the management of the mill, but it was during a visit to the Stephenville area several months ago. In the meantime, people from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro have had discussions with management at the mill, and I think that has been over the last couple of months.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister confirm that he has told the management of the mill that the Government does not intend to offer relief from the onerous electricity rates, and their ability to achieve economic viability? Has the Minister told the management that they would get no relief on electricity rates?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy.

Dr. Gibbons: Mr. Speaker, I have not told the management of the mill anything. I know they have been having discussions with Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro about the cost of hydro. They have also been looking at things they could do on demand side management and off peak usage of power. And Hydro has offered to do a study with the management of the mill to help them in any way to address the cost of energy for that mill. Meanwhile they are aware, as all other industrial customers in the Province are aware, that there is only one

Industrial rate in this Province, otherwise we have to look at subsidies. At this time we are not looking at a direct subsidy from Government to the mill.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, the Minister is no doubt aware that the mill was originally built by the Government. I mean it was built as a linerboard mill by the Liberal Government, and the mill does not have an adequate wood supply and it does not have any private source of electrical generation. Mr. Speaker, does not the Minister feel that the Government has an obligation in these difficult times, with the difficulties that are being forecast, that the paper industry is facing and particularly the Stephenville mill? Does not the Minister think that the Government has an obligation to give the mill a break in light of the economic importance of the mill?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy.

Dr. Gibbons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we all realize the importance of this major industry to the Province, and we are going to continue to work with them. And when they come in to talk to me and my colleague in Forestry again, we will talk to them about their wood supply and about their energy supply.

But as I said in my first answer to the other question about industrial rates, there is only one industrial rate in this Province, and until we are asked to talk about subsidies I will not

be doing so.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask a question to the Minister of Forestry. I am sure that the Minister of Forestry, who is directly responsible for the mill, realizes that the Bay St. George area of this Province would become an economic wasteland without the mill. Has the Minister had any meetings with the management of the mill to ascertain ways in which Government might assist to keep the mill in operation? But most important, and my question to him is: Does the Government have a plan? Is there any plan to keep the mill in operation should closure become eminent? What is his plan, could he tell us that?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have had various meetings with management.

An Hon. Member: When was the last one?

Mr. Flight: But as far as the Hydro issue is concerned I have left that with the Minister of Mines and Energy, because that is his responsibility. And I might say, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Mines and Energy has displayed just as much concern for the mill's future viability, and has done everything that he can do, as I have done, -

Mr. Hodder: Which is nothing.

Mr. Flight: - to maintain and to build confidence in the mill in Stephenville.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, you know it is passing strange to me that at a time when the pulp and paper industry in the world is having problems - every business in Canada, as a result of the recession we are in is having problems - these are difficult times. The pulp and paper industry faced those hard times a little earlier than all the rest of the industries because downtime, oversupply of production, soft markets, were creating problems for them. And I find it passing strange, Mr. Speaker, when Abitibi-Price in particular overcame three strikes, they have overcome labour problems, they are spending money in modernization - the Government has done everything possible to bolster the confidence of the workers, the work force, the people in the towns to whom they provide the basis of their economy. I find it passing strange that these kinds of questions that do nothing except undermine the confidence and the ability of the companies to continue the operation should come at this particular time.

Mr. Simms: You are not allowed to ask a question are you?

(Inaudible) do you want the reports?

Mr. Flight: (Inaudible) the same to me.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Thank you, Mr.

Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations. We were hearing over the weekend some very disturbing comments concerning the Labour Minister, in which the Minister is alleged to have thrown a temper tantrum, we are told, stormed out of a meeting and refused to listen to the concerns of the union and departmental inspectors for Occupational Health and Safety.

First of all let me ask the Minister: as the Province's chief mediator - what kind of a tone is the Minister setting for a healthy and a conciliatory labour relations climate within her own department, but in particular, and more importantly, within the Province in general?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Labour and Employment Relations.

Ms Cowan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not think I stormed out, I flounced out, I believe. I think that was how it was described in the paper. I find the question interesting in that the Member of the Opposition seems to have confused somehow my role as Minister responsible for running a department in an efficient, effective way that is answerable to the taxpayers of this Province, with my role as seeing that negotiations are carried on in an effective and efficient manner as well. And I might add that there is quite a distinction there.

I am aiming, as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, to have a very effective Department, one that I can stand up proudly and face the taxpayers and say that it is doing its best work in occupational

health and safety in the Province. And I will undertake any means that I have to in order to see that that becomes an actuality.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the Minister, having an effective department is not the problem - having an effective Minister happens to be.

The Occupational Health and Safety Division are quoted as saying that they feel their ability to do their jobs is impeded by Government policy. Could the Minister explain what is meant by that comment? And to what policies are the Occupational Health and Safety people referring when they say that they are being impeded from doing their job because of Government policy?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations.

Ms Cowan: I -

An Hon. Member: Don't get mad and run out.

Ms Cowan: No, I will try to keep calm. I only read in the paper what you read, to the hon. Member from Harbour Main, I am not sure which policy was being referred to.

An Hon. Member: Were you in the Department this morning?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Mr. Speaker, on a supplementary. The Minister is quoted as uttering an ultimatum to

her Occupational Health and Safety people, and the quote is: if you do not like it here you can leave, and quote, 'if you do not like this, perhaps what you should do is think about going somewhere else.' Now, is this quote accurate, and is the minister saying that her occupational health and safety people, her inspectors, who have years and years of experience should leave if they cannot contend with the minister's erratic behavior?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations.

Ms Cowan: Mr. Speaker, I did indeed make those comments, and I am not the least bit ashamed of having made them. I am a great believer in working with people in a democratic way, in trading ideas and so on with all levels of management and workers within a department, but there comes a point in time when I, as an elected person, am answerable to the taxpayers of this Province and if I feel that the communication process that has been put in place is not serving to better the role of the department, then indeed I will make statements to that effect, and I believe I owe it to the public of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health if he can tell me, or the House, which hospital board or hospital has jurisdictional responsibility for providing health care services to Petite Forte and South East Bight?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the

Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: No, Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I do know this. I will take it as notice.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, the minister, in a letter to me on March 7, 1990, told me that it was now being done by the Clarenville Hospital Board and that the responsibility was in the process of being passed over to the Burin Peninsula Health Care Board. I know that was the intention and was what the minister was trying to do, but let me say to the minister that the visits are now being made by doctors from Placentia, and everytime a different doctor goes down, which is confusing for the people in terms of dealing with the doctors. So I would like to ask the minister if he would do his best, hopefully before the end of this month, to clarify that situation, and if he will also give the people of Petite Forte and South East Bight the assurance that when he is cutting his budget, or whatever he is going to do with it, that the frequency of the doctors' visits to the area will be maintained in the upcoming budget.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I recall the situation now. There were problems getting physicians in there to deal with the clinic and the hon. member brought it to my attention. We transferred it over to another board, and I thought it was running along quite smoothly. I certainly will endeavor to see that it is done

properly. It was difficult getting the physicians to go out there. I will certainly check the matter out. However, I cannot commit any more expense to it, but I certainly will look at the issue and see exactly what is going on and make sure that the people of Petite Forte get the best possible health care we can deliver, within our means.

Mr. Speaker: Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, as required by statute, I wish to table the Annual Report of the Newfoundland Farm Products Corporation, and the financial statements ending March 31, 1990, Newfoundland Farm Products.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the financial and statistical reports for the Division of Developmental and Rehabilitative Services of the Department of Social Services for the year 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Simms: Great speech.

Mr. Efford: You won't ask me any questions; I cannot say anything else.

Notices of Motion

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations.

Ms. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act To Amend The Labour Relations Act, 1977". (Bill No. 73).

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has identified education as a major priority; and

WHEREAS access to quality education is a right not yet enjoyed by every Newfoundlander and Labradorian; and

WHEREAS the Government has taken major initiatives in the area of education, such as the White Paper on post-secondary education and the Royal Commission of Inquiry;

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly go on record as supporting the Government in its plan to make education equal, effective and efficient.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Order, please! Order, please!

Orders of the Day

Mr. Baker: Order 4, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, the following bills were read a third time, ordered

passed and their titles be as on the Order Paper:

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, 1988". (Bill No. 48)

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Municipalities Act". (Bill No. 23).

A Bill, "An Act To Provide For The Regulation of Motor Vehicles Used In The Transportation Of Persons Or Goods For Compensation". (Bill No. 12).

A Bill, "An Act To Repeal Certain Obsolete And Spent Statutes". (Bill No. 21)

A Bill, "An Act To Revise The Law Respecting Securities". (Bill No. 15).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Dangerous Goods Transportation Act And The Summary Proceedings Act". (Bill No. 37).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Young Persons Offences Act". (Bill No. 36).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Members Of The House Of Assembly (Retiring Allowances) Act, The Public Service (Pensions) Act And The Uniformed Services Pensions Act". (Bill No. 44).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Corporations Act" (Bill No. 53).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Western Memorial Hospital Corporation Act, 1947". (Bill No. 64).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Principal Agreement Ratified By The Avalon Telephone Company Act, 1938". (Bill No. 54).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act, 1981". (Bill No. 55).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Occupational Health and Safety Act". (Bill No. 59).

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Summary Proceedings Act". (Bill No. 63).

Mr. Baker: Motion 3.

Mr. Speaker: To move pursuant to Standing Order 50 that further consideration of Second Reading of Bill No. 38, "An Act Respecting The Creation Of Regional Service Boards throughout the Province". This is the closure motion and we have to ask the question. All those in favour 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Those against 'nay'.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: Carried.

This is second reading of that bill which was adjourned. I do not know who was speaking or whether we had somebody on the other side adjourning the debate. Maybe the table can inform me? It was adjourned debate. It was the second reading, was it not?

Mr. Simms: Yes, second reading.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: A point of order for a moment, Mr. Speaker.

I think now that we are into this motion we start over again. It is not necessarily the person who closed debate and so on. We are

starting over fresh now on this particular (inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader is correct. So it is the second reading of the bill on regional services.

Mr. Simms: It is closure.

Mr. Speaker: Closure.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting The Creation Of Regional Service Boards Throughout The Province". (Bill No. 38)

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would have thought that a Government which is prepared to move the closure motion for the fourth time, I believe -

Mr. Simms: The fourth time this session.

Mr. Rideout: - there would have been at least some brief introduction to the bill. They are coming at the rate now, Mr. Speaker, of about once a week. Once a week or so the Government now gives notice of the gag order, the closure motion to get bills through the House. Mr. Speaker, just look for a moment at what has transpired on this particular bill, the Regional Services Board bill. I believe, on the amendment that was put down by our colleague, the Opposition House Leader, there are seven or eight speakers left to go?

Mr. Simms: Yes, there are quite a few yet.

Mr. Rideout: From our caucus over

here, on the amendment, the six month hoist, we are down to seven or eight speakers left to go.

Mr. Simms: Eight.

Mr. Rideout: Eight, is it? Well, that is not very many, Mr. Speaker. When that particular amendment was disposed of, we would be back to the main motion and I believe we had two speakers who were entitled to speak on the main motion.

An Hon. Member: That is not true.

Mr. Rideout: It is true. We went through it this morning, Mr. Speaker. On the amendment itself, the six month hoist, yes, we had eight people who were left to speak on the amendment.

Mr. Windsor: You will have more speakers now than if you had not introduced the motion.

Mr. Rideout: But once the amendment was disposed of this afternoon or tonight, if we were sitting tonight or whatever, if that were to carry on, then there were two speakers who had not already spoken, the Member for Torngat Mountains and, I believe, the Member for Green Bay. They are the only two speakers on this side left to speak on the main motion itself. Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that this Government is very, very quick off the mark to invoke closure - very quick off the mark.

What have we seen, Mr. Speaker, on this particular Regional Services bill so far? We have seen three speakers from the Government side of the House - three speakers! The Government spent a total of one hour and forty-two minutes defending a bill that will

radically alter the structure of municipal government in Newfoundland and Labrador. From beginning to end, one hour and forty-two minutes. That is what defence has been put into this piece of legislation by the Government. What has been put into it so far in debate in this House by the Opposition? Four and a half hours, Mr. Speaker, up to today.

Mr. Simms: No, up to before the closure threat.

Mr. Rideout: Yes, last Tuesday. Right? Four and half hours up to last Tuesday, November 27. That is what we had to debate this particular bill, four and a half hours. Again, Mr. Speaker, a piece of legislation that will have the effect of radically changing municipal government in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Baker: You had five on Tuesday.

Mr. Simms: That was after you threatened closure.

Mr. Rideout: That was after the threat of closure, Mr. Speaker. Look, the bottom line is that on an amendment we have seven or eight speakers left, and on the main motion we have two other people who can speak. This Government is so anxious to come into this House and use closure that they do not want to let parliamentary debate take place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simms: Right on! Shame on them. Shame!

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I stood up -

Mr. Simms: Shame! Shame!

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I stood up in this House, I believe it was last Tuesday, and I spoke for an hour on this bill and so did other people, but I spoke for a particular hour rebutting, point by point, a number of points made by the Minister in introducing the legislation. Have we heard an answer from the Minister yet?

Mr. Simms: Not a sound.

Mr. Rideout: Not a squeak, Mr. Speaker. He has not raised since. There has not been an answer. We have only had one hour and forty-two minutes of Government members trying to defend this bill. Mr. Speaker, it is indefensible that this Government today - four or five hours debate with only six or seven or eight members left to speak on the amendment, two to speak on the main motion, would be so pigheaded as to call the closure motion today.

Mr. Simms: Totally unnecessary.

Mr. Rideout: Totally unnecessary. This bill, I would say, that if we were sitting tonight we would have run out of speakers.

Mr. Simms: Right on!

Mr. Rideout: So that, Mr. Speaker, brings us to the question, we have seen closure in this House now more times this year than ever used by any government since Confederation.

Mr. Simms: In total since Confederation.

Mr. Rideout: In total.

Now if that does not tell you something, Mr. Speaker, about the belief of this hon. crowd and democracy, if that does not tell you about how they view and want to give time to members of this House to debate, then we all have to be pretty dumb and dense indeed, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: A dictator (inaudible).

MR. Rideout: So, Mr. Speaker, there is a dictator running rampant around Confederation Building, and it matters not how important the legislation is. It matters not whether this Government did not have the intestinal fortitude to bring in a budget this session as they should have done. When the Opposition takes advantage or tries to take advantage of parliamentary procedure to debate the lack of fortitude in the Government in bringing in a new financial plan, they will use closure, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Obstruction.

Mr. Rideout: Obstruction, my eyeball, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Obstruction. I mean if this debate had been going on for a couple of weeks with parliamentary tactics being used to delay the passage of the bill, maybe the Government House Leader would have a case of obstruction. But, Mr. Speaker, this Government has never let a full week go by yet without introducing closure on a piece of legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Rideout: Closure on Meech Lake, closure on The Loan Bill,

closure on Supplementary Supply.

An Hon. Member: Closure on regional government.

Mr. Rideout: Closure on regional government.

This Government, Mr. Speaker, has no appreciation. I remember in this House in the middle part of the 1970s when the Government of the Day, faced with a Liberal Opposition at the time, used to have to sit mornings 9:00 to 12:00, afternoons 3:00 to 6:00, nights from 8:00 to 11:00 to accommodate its legislative agenda. Did that Government use closure, Mr. Speaker?

An Hon. Member: Not once.

Mr. Rideout: Not once. I believe later on in the years in office there was yes, a use of closure.

An Hon. Member: On one occasion.

Mr. Rideout: One occasion.

But the Government of the Day let debate continue. And if members wanted to debate, then the Government made sure that the House was open in the morning, it was open in the afternoon, it was open at night, and if the Opposition wanted to participate, wanted to debate they could. But is this what this Government does, Mr. Speaker? Not on your life. This Government after in the judgment of the dictator himself that enough has been said, orders the Government House Leader to invoke closure.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader was not in this House from 1975 to 1979. He

was not here, so he is not a good one to talk about what opportunity governments give to oppositions. But when there was a fifteen member Opposition over here in that period between 1975 to 1979 - I challenge him to go check the records - there was day after day, week after week, that this House met morning, noon, and night but there was no such thing as closure. And the Government just sat there until the Opposition ran out of opportunities and then the bills eventually had to pass. But is that the wont of this Government? No.

An Hon. Member: A co-operative Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: A co-operative Opposition. A co-operative Opposition with the House meeting morning, afternoon, and night, Mr. Speaker. That is co-operative Opposition. That was an example of a Government allowing the Opposition to debate as long as it wanted, and when they were finished the debate then the vote would have to be put. This is an example of a government that wants to take total control of the time of this House, Mr. Speaker, and not worry about whether the Opposition have had an opportunity to adequately do the job for which they were elected.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader has no idea of the question that he is asking. He has never tried it. He has had a few night sessions.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: That is up to you, I say to the Government House Leader. You are the Government

House Leader, you have the responsibility to budget and manage the time of this House. And if you can't do it in a competent fashion then the responsibility is all yours. We have to sit, Mr. Speaker, when the Government calls the House.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Oh no, what do we do?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Pardon?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Oh, I do not think so.

An Hon. Member: No, no. No. You can do it yourselves (inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: I think the Government just gives notice, as I recall it. I do not recall the then Government House Leader, Mr. Justice Hickman, as he is now, doing anything only giving notice that when we would rise at 11:00 a.m. we would reconvene at 9:00 a.m. the next morning.

An Hon. Member: You don't have to have agreement on that.

Mr. Rideout: That is how I recall it being done.

An Hon. Member: Do you accept that?

Mr. Rideout: That is not a matter of us accepting it. That is a matter of the Government House Leader, leading, Mr. Speaker. I say to the Government House Leader that it is a much more palatable alternative than using closure like it is going out of style. We only have another eight speakers

left on the amendment. We only have two left on the main motion. And if there was an extra session or two we would all have an opportunity to speak. And then at the end of the process there would have to be a vote. But that is not the wont of this Government. They are not going to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that brings us to the question: we have taken part in closure debates now on four occasions this session. Four occasions the Government have had to stoop to the Parliamentary low of bringing in closure to cut off debate, to cut off the Opposition. So that brings us to the point of what we should do. Because that is what is before us now. We are debating now under the closure order of Standing Order 52, I believe it is, or 50, but we are - this debate continues under the gag order. We all are allowed to speak twenty minutes at a time. And come 1:00 a.m. if there are still speakers left, and they have not spoken, then the vote must be put. So the question becomes, Mr. Speaker, do we for the fourth time this session participate in that kind of a sham?

There is going to be no surprise at the end of the process. Absolutely no surprise when all sixteen or seventeen or how many of us are here today on this side of the House get up and speak for twenty minutes, and unless we agree there can't be any adjournment for the supper break. So therefore sometime around 8:30 p.m., 9:00 p.m., or 9:30 p.m. tonight, we will have run out of speakers.

If the Government is going to be true to form, Mr. Speaker, they may put up one or two. They may.

That is about the extent of what they will do on this gag order. They might put up one or two speakers. So, Mr. Speaker, what do we do? We could continue to debate the resolution until we run out of speakers, 9:30 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. tonight. But we are after doing that three times, Mr. Speaker. It does not make any impression on the Government House Leader at all. He does not look for some other alternative to try to break what he considers to be a logjam. He just does the easiest and dirtiest approach of all from a Parliamentary perspective. And that is to give the closure notice.

So, we could decide - every single one of us, as we have done now three other times in this session - to debate as long as we are permitted under the rules.

Mr. Simms: Depends what they say now in this debate, (inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: And it depends on what we hear from the Government, Mr. Speaker. If there are responses that ought to be made to rebuttals from the other side, we will take the opportunity to make them. I have not heard the Minister yet respond to the points that I made when I spoke last Tuesday. He has not attempted whatsoever in the normal course of debate - not this abnormal course of closure, but in the normal course of debate - he has not attempted to do it. He is not going to have the opportunity now to close debate, because we are debating under the closure order. So he will not have the normal opportunity of a Minister rising to close debate on second reading and taking that opportunity to respond to criticisms that come from the Opposition or from some other part of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, we shall see what is going to transpire here this afternoon. I am not inclined, Mr. Speaker, to run the clock out by all of us participating for twenty minutes on something that is a sham and a farce anyway.

Mr. Simms: Unless we are provoked.

Mr. Rideout: Unless - well, unless there is something to respond to. I am not inclined to do that. We have done it already three times this session. We have debated the principles of the bills involved as well as the Government's quickness to use closure. We have done that, so to do it again with all the speakers we could put forward over here, to me, Mr. Speaker, seems to be getting a bit of a charade. It seems to me that the die has been cast, the Government have made the decision that they now have in fact invoked the closure order, so it does not make much difference whether we drag it on or whether we do not. If there are some members on this side who wish to speak they are certainly entitled to and they have every right to speak, but I am not about to go agonizing and organizing just to sit here for the next four or five hours, until nine or ten o'clock tonight talking about closure, because that is what we have to talk about in essence while we are debating the balance of the time left on this bill. I would like to hear from the Minister on a whole range of points that I in particular raised on Tuesday of last week. What I did was I went through the Minister's introductory remarks to this bill and I picked out of them what I thought were significant inaccuracies that the Minister used in introducing the bill, and I highlighted them in a hour long

presentation to this House, and some of my colleagues who spoke after highlighted some others. I think it would be useful if the Minister would take some opportunity to respond to some of those points that were made the first part of last week. Why is it that the Government must have this Regional Services Board Bill when all of the authority it is seeking here in this bill is already contained in the Municipalities Act? Why is it that the Government needs a new piece of legislation giving it authority to do the things it says it wants to do, when it already has that authority under Part 3 of the existing Municipalities Act? I think it is incumbent on the Minister to tell this House why. We know there is a major difference between the authority granted the Government in this new bill than the way they have to exercise the authority in the current bill. We know there is a major difference. Under the present Municipalities Act the Government, before it could exercise the authority of Part 3, would have to have public hearings. They would have to have feasibility studies. There was mandatory consultation between the areas affected and the Department and the Government, but there is nowhere in this piece of legislation that the Government, seeking the same authority, is bound to carry out the same process. Nowhere, Mr. Speaker, in this piece of legislation is it mandatory for the Minister and the Department to have public hearings. Nowhere is it mandatory for them to have feasibility studies, and nowhere is it mandatory for them to have consultations with people in the communities in the areas affected. I think it is incumbent

on the Minister to stand up and tell us why he wants that kind of legislative authority. Why does he want it in a way that is so different from the legislative authority that he already has under the present Municipalities Act? Why does he want that? He has not yet made the argument to this Legislature as to the why. There are those that suspect that it is a method and a vehicle to perhaps speed up the amalgamation process. Well, if that is the case the Minister should tell us, Mr. Speaker, but I believe it really is incumbent on the Minister to answer the questions as to why he wants this piece of legislation so badly that the Government is prepared to invoke closure to get it, so badly when you already have the same type of authority that you are seeking here under a present Act of this Legislature, except that it is a little bit more cumbersome for you to use it. You have to engage the public in the debate. You have to have feasibility studies and public hearings.

I can see a Government that is in a rush, that those little trappings of democracy might be, you know, a pain in the neck from time to time. But nevertheless, that is the process that is there now, and this bill does nothing more only to ask again for that authority but in a way that you do not have to consult or hold hearings or do the studies. That is the question, Mr. Speaker, that must be answered. I hope the Minister will take the opportunity to answer it sometime during this debate. As I said a few minutes ago, if the Minister does not, then I guess there is not much we can do. We can only continue to point out that the Minister sought the authority of this House

through closure to get the bill through, but was not prepared at any point, having introduced the legislation, to answer the questions as to why it was necessary, why he had to have it, what is so different about this piece of legislation and the statute that is already on the books known as the Municipalities Act that gives you the authority anyway. What is so different about the scene out there that makes this bill absolutely essential and absolutely necessary, Mr. Speaker? There may be others who have some questions that we will try to get answered over the course of the rest of the debate, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately the clock is running and twenty minutes does not be long going.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I want to add a few comments to this because of the comments about closure. I want to point out to the House that it was the Opposition who invoked closure, not the Government. The Opposition decided on closure, not the Government.

An Hon. Member: Don't be such a fool. Sit down!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Premier Wells: The truth really is a burr under their seats. It gets them so stirred up that they cannot stop -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Premier Wells: They cannot refrain. They do not want to hear it. They have such an aversion to

the truth coming out that they try to stop it all the time. Now, Mr. Speaker, let me put forward this proposition to you - that it is the Opposition, not the Government that has caused closure.

An Hon. Member: That is nonsense. You are being stupid. (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: Having said that I have the responsibility to justify it, and if we can keep that noise, that gaggle of geese over there slowed down a little bit I will justify -

An Hon. Member: Hon. geese.

Premier Wells: Hon. geese. If I can keep that hon. gaggle of hon. geese quietened down a little bit I will justify the proposition that it was the Opposition who decided on closure, not the Government.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) use your words carefully.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, they did not know how to govern and they do not know how to oppose. They have to be taught how to oppose. You see, Mr. Speaker, it is one thing for an Opposition to oppose and stand up and argue against it and have a strong, forceful, detailed debate on any subject, but it is quite another for an Opposition to stand up time after time and say we are going to hold up these bills. We are not going to allow them to pass, no matter what. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is when closure was decided upon. We did not decide it. That is in the record; it is there to be seen: 'We are going to hold this up and we are not going to allow it to pass - not only that, we are going to hold up this bill

and this bill and this bill and we are not going to allow them to pass." Now, Mr. Speaker, that is when closure was decided upon, because, you see, we have a responsibility to the people of this Province to make sure that the public business gets done, and we do not let an irresponsible Opposition stop the public business from being done to promote their own political ends, which is what they are doing. They think they can make gains with this, but the people of this Province know exactly what they are doing. They are very much aware of what they are doing. It is no wonder the Leader of the Opposition is now standing on his feet and saying we are not going to talk out this bill or we are not going to talk out the time on the clock.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: Alright, we will see. Now, Mr. Speaker, if you just want some idea of how irresponsible this Opposition has been, I will give you the facts and figures that will enable a fair and full judgement on this.

Mr. Speaker, we have been in office now 19 months. In two days it will be 19 months. 19 months. Too long for the hon. members but just much, much too short for the people of this Province. They cannot wait to extend the term. They cannot wait for an election to give us an extension of our time.

An Hon. Member: Call it now.

Premier Wells: Call it now. Yes, we could call it -

An Hon. Member: Put your money where your mouth is.

Call an election.

Premier Wells: I can give the hon. member the figures. Just let me get - here we are. Here is the latest poll. If an election were held today the results would be this:

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

An Hon. Member: What has this got to do with (inaudible).

Premier Wells: 67 per cent Liberal, 18 per cent P.C., 14 per cent NDP. The whole side would be wiped out. Mr. Speaker, it would be irresponsible for us to call an election now. Everybody would be on this side of the House and we want to maintain an Opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me get back to the real point of this debate - my proposition that it was the Opposition who decided on closure, not the Government. They decided on closure when they announced that there was a certain list of bills that they were going to hold up. That is when the Government had the responsibility to bring in closure. And I tell the House, Mr. Speaker, and I tell the public of this Province, that we will bring in closure as often as is necessary to ensure that we discharge our responsibility to the public of this Province. Now, if you want, Mr. Speaker, some kind of a measure of just why closure was necessary, let me give it to you.

We have been in power just a couple of days short of nineteen months, Mr. Speaker. And in those nineteen months we have had 144 sitting days, with 499 - now, Mr. Speaker, 500 - sitting hours. Five hundred hours and ten minutes, to be precise. Five

hundred sitting hours in those 144 days. Now, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, we created and put in place legislative committees to shorten the time necessary for House debate on bills and to provide for other public discussion. And those committees have had an additional 120 hours of debating time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's go back and look at the last nineteen months that the hon. Members controlled the Government of this Province. Now let's look at it. And here are the figures, Mr. Speaker. They had 216 and one-half hours for a total of sixty-nine sitting days.

Mr. Simms: When?

Premier Wells: In the eighteen months prior to the call of the last general election.

Mr. Simms: We sat seventy-seven days in 1990. Oh, I am sorry that is this year (inaudible).

Premier Wells: I am sorry. The record is very clear. That is this year, seventy-seven this year. That is what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Way to go, Len!

Premier Wells: Now, Mr. Speaker, here is the record. If you look at our nineteen months that we have been in power -

Mr. Tobin: How good are your figures?

Premier Wells: Now, Mr. Speaker -

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please! Order please!

Premier Wells: The hon. Member

may not want to believe it, because the truth hurts too severely.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: The figures, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, the figures came from the Clerk.

Mr. Simms: We got them here too.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

An Hon. Member: Yes, because we had the nerve to call an election.

Premier Wells: Now, the hon. Member had better act reasonably. I mean, that is not, that does nothing to his credit nor the credit of this House, to have that kind of behavior in the House. And there is no merit in the position, no justification for it. It dishonours the hon. Member more than it dishonours anybody else, Mr. Speaker. It is a measure of the length to which they will go to cover up their own shortcomings, and what they did, and their own failures when they were in Government, and now, Mr. Speaker, their failures as Opposition. They were a failure as Government, they are a bigger failure as an Opposition. And the people of this Province know it!

Now, Mr. Speaker, these numbers are accurate. I can tell the House they were obtained from the Clerks, as an accurate account of what happened. In our last nineteen months, Mr. Speaker, those are the numbers of days and the numbers of hours. We have had more than twice the amount of time debating in this House that the hon. Members had when they were in Government. In the same nineteen month period.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is when closure was made necessary, when the Opposition decided to put their political interests ahead of the interests of the people of this Province. This Government has a responsibility to make sure that that does not happen and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that when and so long as it may be necessary, this Government will introduce closure caused by the action of the Opposition every time that it is necessary. They have had now ten hours of debate -

An Hon. Member: Not enough.

Premier Wells: At least, ten hours of debate on this bill!

Mr. Simms: Wow, whoop-de-doo!

Premier Wells: At the very least -

Mr. Simms: Whoop-de-doo!

Premier Wells: - Mr. Speaker, ten hours of debate on this bill.

Mr. Simms: Nine hours.

Premier Wells: In the ordinary routine of things one could expect any bill that required a significant amount of attention -

Mr. Simms: How much contribution from your side?

Premier Wells: - one would expect, Mr. Speaker, that a whole day might be used, a whole three hours. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, two full days, a whole five hours might be used in debate on the principle of such a bill as this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in addition to this do not forget that the Legislative Committees did a lot of work and had a lot of debate on this Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was so much interest and so much concern about the debate, I have here a transcript of November 27 sitting, there was so much interest in this that the hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes got up and told a series of five jokes and used just about all of his time telling jokes on this bill. Now this is what they are using up their time for. If they are interested in the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker, and interested in the system of regional government that we are proposing, why do they not confine their time to debating it instead of wasting it telling jokes as they did in the House. And they stand now and cry because closure is invoked.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: We invoked closure, Mr. Speaker, because it was brought on by the actions of the Opposition in holding up the business of the people of this Province and we, Mr. Speaker, have a responsibility to the people of this Province to ensure that that does not continue and that we get the business of the Province done as expeditiously and as fairly and as quickly as we can, so as to cut the cost to the people of this Province. Do not forget, Mr. Speaker, the cost of keeping this House open every day while the hon. member for St. Mary's - The Capes stands and tells jokes at public expense.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Premier Wells: That is right.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to the taxpayers to ensure that we conduct their business in a proper fashion, and we will not allow an irresponsible

and incompetent Opposition to throw us off the rail. When it is necessary, we will invoke closure. Now, Mr. Speaker, somebody asked us to justify closure, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, it has amply been done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, what a pathetic attempt to try to cover up the dictator's actions once again. What a silly and stupid attempt, Mr. Speaker, to justify the fact that this Government is unwilling and incapable of defending their own legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: I have never seen such a disgraceful display of antidemocracy in the history of the British Parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker, as we are seeing here today - that this Government who are bringing in a piece of legislation which muzzles municipalities in the Province and in order to do so, they are bringing in closure to muzzle the people's House of Assembly. That is what we are seeing here today, Mr. Speaker.

What an admission of failure! That is what we just heard from the Premier, in his attempt to try to blame closure on the Opposition; what an admission of his own failure to be able to manage the business of this House and to get legislation through this House of Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we saw on Thursday and Friday - and the Government House Leader stood in his place on Friday morning and

said what a great couple of days it has been. We have done some legislation. We have had some co-operation. We have gotten ten or fifteen bills through the House of Assembly. That is what happens, Mr. Speaker, when you manage the business of the House properly. But when you come into the House of Assembly with the dictatorial attitude that the Premier has, he can hardly expect - and before the Premier runs away - when he says that the Government has a responsibility to represent the people, I suggest to the Premier and the Government, Mr. Speaker, it is the Opposition's role to represent the people, to represent the twenty people who came before the Legislative Review Committee unanimously against this bill, to represent all the other municipalities as represented by the Federation of Municipalities who are against this bill, that is representing the people, Mr. Speaker, not bringing in closure, not standing in your place for twenty minutes and refusing to even address the bill. That is what the Premier has done. They have not even got the intestinal fortitude to defend their own legislation.

An Hon. Member: They do not understand.

Mr. Windsor: They do not understand. They do understand I disagree with my colleague. I understand where he is coming from. They understand fully and we understand what they are trying to do here; they are taking unilateral authority for themselves.

The Leader of the Opposition pointed out very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that there is only one thing done by this piece of

Legislation. It does not give power to create regional councils, it does not give power to create regional services, the only power it gives is a power to do so without public hearings and feasibility studies.

An Hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. Windsor: All it takes away is the voice of the people and the councils. And this message needs to get out clearly, Mr. Speaker, that this Government is taking upon itself, the Cabinet and the Minister, unilateral authority to dictate what regions will be, what services can be taken away, grabbed and stolen away from municipalities, what assets can be taken away from municipalities.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Government will have the opportunity, the right and the power to turn municipalities into nothing more than tax collectors for them. They can put a whole range of services under the auspices of a Regional Council, which they can establish. It does not matter if there is a regional authority or regional council in place now, they can overrule all of that and bring in a whole new structure. Without consultation, without feasibility studies, without public hearings, they can put it in place and they can turn over all authority to that council.

-And not only that, Mr. Speaker, they are going to appoint the council and they are going to appoint the chairman. So to whom will the council and the chairman answer? Not the people, not the people's House, not to an election - they do not have to go and be elected - they answer only to the master himself, Mr. Speaker. That is all they answer to. Mr.

Speaker, if that is not taxation without representation then I have never seen it. Because that is precisely what it will be, precisely what it is, Mr. Speaker.

These regional boards will have all power;; they do not answer to the people, they will be given the right and the responsibility to operate regional services and to assess user communities. They do not even have to send out a tax bill, they do not have a right to, they do not have the power to send out a tax bill, they do not have to explain to a citizen why they received a bill in the mail for taxes. All they have to do is tell the municipalities, here is what you will pay this year - no consultation with the municipality, they will tell it. What that breeds first of all, Mr. Speaker, it breeds inefficiency - it breeds inefficiency. A municipality which has to tax the people directly answers to the people both at the election time and in the tax rate that they have to set to raise revenues. This structure will not have to answer, Mr. Speaker.

They can be as efficient as they wish to be and all they have to do is tell the municipalities, here is what you will pay me. Now go find the money the best way you can. In other words, you tax the people. They will be telling the municipalities what the tax level should be in that municipality and they do not answer to anybody for it except this Government.

It is a most undemocratic system, the most undemocratic piece of legislation ever introduced into any Parliament. It is, in fact, a serious and a direct threat to municipal Government in this Province - a direct threat to

municipal Government in this Province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister said in his few remarks that the legislation would allow Government to bring communities formally together in situations where we cannot achieve amalgamation. Now therein lies the secret to this, Mr. Speaker - therein lies the secret!

The Minister has already had to admit publicly that his amalgamation proposals have been a dismal failure, an absolute, dismal failure. It was all going to be done within a six month period and here we are, nineteen months later, and he managed to get two municipalities to combine, Grand Falls and Windsor, only by the skin of his teeth, and only because it made all kinds of sense and everybody out there wanted it anyway; it made all kinds of sense, and we do not have any problem with that.

They promised them money which he backed down on. He misled them into amalgamating, Mr. Speaker, is what I should say. What, I suggest to you, we are going to see here is that under this power, this absolute power given to the Minister by this legislation, he will create regions in areas where he could not get the amalgamation he asked for because the people do not want it, and if people do not want it, it is not going to work anyway. But the Minister does not care about that. He is now going to create a region and give that regional council all the powers the enlarged municipality would have, so that the municipalities will be left with nothing but caretaker duties and the responsibility to impose taxation, to raise the monies required to

operate these regional councils.

The question we have to ask is why must the Minister follow this? Why is he so intent, why is the Government so intent on following this course of action? What does the Minister want from this legislation that is not in the existing legislation? It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the existing legislation provides for the creation of any kind of regional structure that is appropriate. It requires feasibility studies and public hearings. The people must want it and the municipalities must want it. All this legislation does is provide an opportunity for it to happen against the wishes of the communities and the people involved.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have regional services in many areas of the Province, but more so in the urban region than anywhere else in the Province. Let me use as an example the city of Mount Pearl, which purchases regional services from various groups. It works well, so the Minister cannot stand and argue that he needs this legislation in order to provide regional services. We have had regional services for fifteen years in this region. Longer, in fact. We have had a regional fire department for many, many years operated by the Department of Provincial and Municipal Affairs, formerly operated by the Department of Justice. It is in effect a regional service owned and operated by the provincial Government. That is precisely what it is.

We have a regional water supply built and developed by the Province and now operated, I believe, by Metro Board, providing

a regional water supply to the city of St. John's, the city of Mount Pearl, Conception Bay South, Paradise, Kilbride, the Goulds, and many other areas, each municipality paying for service, paying for the purchase of the water they use.

We have a regional busing system operated by the city of St. John's, the St. John's Transportation System, Mr. Speaker, selling service to outside municipalities. We have regional trunk sewers built by the Province, federal/provincial trunk sewers, operated by St. John's Metro Board, and not by the city of St. John's, as one hon. member would have us believe. We have a regional police department operated, again, by the Province, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of the city of Mount Pearl I will just quickly quote you a couple of numbers. The bus service costs the city of Mount Pearl \$355,000 a year; the water supply costs \$732,000 a year; trunk sewer assessments \$217,000; the fire department \$1,847,000 a year - it has been recently suggested that it is going to go to \$2 million this year; solid waste disposal \$532,000 a year - \$3,206,000 a year paid by the city of Mount Pearl to purchase regional services from various authorities. Not just from one group, but from various authorities. It represents 22.9 per cent, I might add, of their total budget of \$13 million - 22.9 per cent of the budget purchases regional services. So how can anybody argue that we need this new piece of legislation to create regional services? The fact is, we do not. There is nothing in

this legislation that is not in the existing Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is the most undemocratic piece of legislation I have ever seen. I suggest we call a vote on it.

An Hon. Member: Hear hear!

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question. Question.

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Against?

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the 'nays' have it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Order, please!

Division.

Division

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Ready.

Those in favour of the motion please rise:

Mr. Simms: Lucky, lucky, lucky.

The hon. the Minister of

Fisheries, the hon. the Minister of Social Services, the hon. the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation, Mr. Hogan, Mr. Reid, Mr. Ramsay, the hon. the President of the Council, the hon. the Minister of Health, Mr. Walsh, Mr. Noel, Mr. Penney, Mr. Barrett, the hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture, the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, Mr. Grimes, the hon. the Minister of Finance -

Mr. Simms: No, you get out!

Some Hon. Members: Out! Out!

Mr. Simms: You're not allowed in.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, the hon. the Minister of Mines and Energy, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Short, Mr. Langdon.

Mr. Speaker: Those against the motion please rise:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Hewlett, Mr. Hearn, Mr. Doyle, Mrs. Uerge, Mr. Simms, Mr. R. Aylward, Mr. N. Windsor, Mr. Tobin, Mr. Woodford, Mr. Hodder, Mr. Greening, Mr. Power.

Clerk (Miss Duff): Mr. Speaker, 'ayes', 22, 'nays', 13.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Baker: Second reading.

Mr. Speaker: Second reading of this bill?

Mr. Baker: Yes.

On motion, a Bill, "An Act Respecting The Creation Of Regional Service Boards Throughout The Province", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House, on tomorrow. (Bill No. 38).

Mr. Simms: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Simms: Just for clarification, what was it we just voted on on Division?

Some Hon. Members: We voted on second reading of the bill, wasn't it?

Mr. Simms: So it was already done.

Mr. Baker: Yes, but the reading wasn't done.

Mr. Simms: No. But you did not read another motion, that the bill now be read a second time?

Mr. Baker: That is right. The reading had to be done.

Mr. Baker: Motion one, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole on Supply, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

Shall the resolution carry?

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, it would be nice to know what it is. Could somebody from the Government side explain what it is?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the

Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This Bill 2 is for supplementary supply, and it is detailed here. It is for the special warrants that we brought in at the end of last spring totalling \$41,747,800. For hon. members I will summarize these special warrants. One was \$21 million, a special warrant for a special lump sum payment into the pooled pension fund on behalf of the teachers' pension plan; another was a special warrant for \$605,500 for consultant services relative to the Hibernia negotiations; another one was -

Mr. Baker: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Chairman, there was a mistake in procedure in terms of getting into the Committee on this particular bill, in that the Message from His Honour was not read. So I wonder if we could revert to the Chair and start this procedure over and get the Message from His Honour?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: Yes, to the Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: Do you move that the Committee rise?

Mr. Baker: Yes, so we can get back into this properly.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for

Bellevue.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred, have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

On motion, report received and adopted, Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, Motion 1.

Mr. Speaker: Motion 1.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I have received a message from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Speaker: I, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland, transmit supplementary estimates of sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending the 31st day of March 1990 by way of supplementary supply and in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution Act of 1867, I recommend these estimates to the House of Assembly.

(sgd).....
Lieutenant-Governor.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I move that the message together with the amount be referred to the Committee of Supply.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the message of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

Resolution

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the Public Service for the financial year ending the 31st day of March, 1990, the sum of forty-one million seven hundred and forty-seven thousand eight hundred dollars (\$41,747,800).

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say a few words about this bill, which is basically a summary of the special warrants that we brought in last spring. The first was a special warrant of \$21 million for a special lump sum payment into the pooled pension fund on behalf of the teachers' pension plan; another was to the Executive Council, a special warrant for \$605,500 for consultant services relative to the Hibernia negotiations; one to Finance for \$150,000 for the commission of enquiry on pensions; another for Legislature of \$325,000 for implementation of the recommendations of the Morgan Commission on remuneration to Members of the House of Assembly; a special warrant for Forestry and Agriculture of \$1,274,800 for forest fire suppression; a special warrant of \$1,715,000 for the Youth Employment Strategy Program; and three warrants for Justice totalling \$6,871,500, one for various salary accounts of

\$3,356,000, RCMP buildings \$1,247,000, the Hughes Royal Commission \$965,500, Legal Aid \$456,000; a special warrant for Municipal Affairs for \$560,000 to cover the accumulated deficit of the Canada Games Park Commission, a special warrant of \$896,000 for Municipal Affairs to provide for planning and design work for a number of water and sewer systems in Labrador under federal-provincial agreements; and finally, Mr. Chairman, a special warrant of \$8,350,000 to cover social assistance payments - \$8,000,000, and salary costs for the St. John's Youth Centre of \$350,000.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is not a great deal that can be said about this particular bill. It is a straightforward bill to cover the special warrants, the Lieutenant-Governor's warrants issued last year. It is interesting to note, having listened to the Premier's lecture about wasting the time of the House and all the rest of it, that first of all they make a mess of the procedure to get into Committee, Mr. Chairman, and then we have to spend time dealing with money that was spent last year - this was the last fiscal year. These are special warrants from last year. Now the Premier is saying that we have to have closure on the Regional Services Bill, but we still have these routine matters that should have been cleared up last spring.

Last June, Mr. Chairman, this piece of legislation was introduced to the House, Bill No. 2. The Government forgot to bring

that one in, I guess, the same as they did the Loan Bill. They almost forgot that and all these other things. It could have been brought in the spring, if the Premier wasn't so anxious to go running away, if he wanted the time left to deal with bills such as the Regional Services Bill.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: A Loan Bill he brought in closure on - there are four bills so far he brought in closure on. You talk about incompetence in managing the House of Assembly.

On motion, resolution, carried.

On motion, schedule, carried.

On motion, enacting clause, carried.

Mr. Baker: I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker, returned to the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

On motion, resolution read a first and second time.

On motion, a Bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying

Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending The Thirty-First Day Of March One Thousand Nine Hundred And Ninety And For Other Purposes Relating To the Public Services", read a first, second and third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper.

Mr. Baker: Order 19, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A point of order.

Mr. Simms: Talk about an air of co-operation. Generally speaking, the Government House Leader will indicate to me in advance what legislation he intends to bring in, and all the rest of it, and how we intend to proceed. I had no indication from him that this would be the next piece of Legislation, following the conclusion of the debate on the Regional Services Board. And, of course, he should have been well aware of the fact that simply because there is closure on a bill it does not necessarily mean that the debate on closure will carry on for seven or eight hours, it can conclude shortly. So he should, perhaps, have been better prepared for that. There is no other particular piece of legislation there with which he would like to proceed, that would be of more importance or of more urgency, I suppose, at the moment? That is the question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: To that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the Opposition House Leader well knows, the legislative plans are in place and have been in place

for quite some time. There have been a number of bills on the Order Paper, all of which at any given point in time could be called. He also recognizes the fact that there are certain bills that have been passed through Committees; the Committees have already considered them and given approval or disapproval and all this kind of thing. I have indicated to him in the past that I intend to call legislation that has been dealt with by the Review Committees before I call any other type of legislation. Whether the Opposition House Leader paid attention to that or not is a totally different matter. It had been indicated to me that the Opposition was going to hang tough on the original bill today, but they showed a co-operative spirit which I was glad to see and I am surprised to see, now that the Opposition House Leader is back.

We got into this legislation a little quicker than had been anticipated, but the point simply is that I have told the Opposition House Leader we will deal with the bills that have been dealt with by Committees. I would like to inform him now that Bill No. 11 has been dealt with by the Committee, that Bill No. 46 has been dealt with by the Committee, and, in effect, Bill No. 25 has been dealt with by the Committee. So these are some bills that have been dealt with by the Legislative Committees that I can call at any point in time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: I listened carefully to the words of the Government House Leader and they do not reflect very much similarity to what he said on Friday, when I was

not in the House, when he said and I quote from Hansard, 'I kind of shudder to think of the fact that the Opposition House Leader will be back on Monday. I am hoping that will not have an effect on the air of co-operation.' Is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that we would perform the parliamentary miracles that we performed today, such as getting the Government to lose a vote in the House and having to rush to call division again in order to muster up troops enough to try to pass it on a subsequent vote? Because that is exactly what happened.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: I wonder if the Minister of Justice could speak a little louder? Could the Government House Leader now confirm then - he is only going to deal with legislation, or he is going to deal first with those pieces of legislation that have been through the Committee process? Then he listed off four or five -

Mr. Baker: No, three. Bills 11, 46, and 25.

Mr. Simms: Bills 11, 46, and 25. So we are doing now Bill No. 11. Can I ask him this? The debate on this particular bill may not go on to any great lengths, so can he tell me clearly then, in the air and spirit of co-operation that he often talks about, which bill he intends to call next of the two he said were ready? He said Bill 46 and Bill 25 were two others that were ready. Which one would he propose to call next? Would it be Bill 46, which is the Human Rights Bill, or Bill 25, which is the infamous Crown Lands Bill? Could he help the proceedings along by telling us that?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader. Sorry! The Chair fell asleep.

Mr. Simms: So did the Government.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Responding to that point of order, I would like to raise another point that is really a point of order, in that Bill No. 46 did receive Second Reading. I think this is a mistake on the Order Paper and should not be listed under Second Readings but should be listed in Third Readings. So Bill No. 46 did receive Second Reading and should be in Committee of the Whole. So that leaves Bill No. 11 and Bill No. 25. If these get through quickly, then we will move to one of the others. The order does not matter a great deal beyond that, simply because I have not received reports from the Committees that the others have been properly dealt with in Committee. So I would have to then call a bill that has not gone to Committee, and that is something I hoped I would not have to do. If these get through quickly, then we will call some of the bills that have not been dealt with by the Committee yet, and as the hon. House Leader can see by reading down through, there are quite a number of them. I would say to him that I had no intention of calling Bill No. 42 today.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I would be surprised if he had any intention of calling Bill No. 42 at any time. So he is now saying that when we finish with the Forestry Bill, the next one is Bill 46, going into Committee on The Human Rights Bill?

Mr. Baker: No, we will do second reading on Bill No. 25.

Mr. Simms: So you will go to second reading on Bill No. 25, the Crown Lands amendment. That is his intention?

Mr. Baker: Yes.

Mr. Simms: Did you say you had another point to raise?

Mr. Baker: No, the other point was there was a mistake on the Order Paper.

Mr. Simms: Oh, I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker: The Government House Leader called Order 19, which is Bill No. 11.

Motion, second reading of a Bill, "An Act To Revise The Law Respecting The Management, Harvesting And Protection Of The Forests Of The Province," (Bill No. 11).

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting to hear the hon. House Leader suggest in a sense that there was no urgency with this particular bill. The bill is coming into second reading at a time when, for the past two or three days, questions have been raised about the wood supply in this Province and about what the Government is doing with regard to the wood supply situation, what measures we are taking? Because, Mr. Speaker, this bill deals directly and gives the Government the legislative tools they need and spells out exactly what we will be doing in the future to deal with any real

or perceived problem in the forest industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, it has been my privilege to present to the House for its consideration Bill No. 11, entitled "An Act To Revise The Law Respecting The Management, Harvesting and Protection Of The Forests Of The Province", or The Forestry Act.

Today I would like to take this opportunity to elaborate on the provisions of the bill. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to outline to the House a number of basic principles and policies which will guide this Administration in the management of the forest timber resource. Many of these policies are explicitly stated in the proposed bill, whereas in other cases the proposed bill provides a legislative framework for policy development.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to outline to the House some of the major initiatives I will be undertaking to implement these policies. However, before I endeavour to do this, I would like to make a few remarks on the forestry sector and its contribution to the Newfoundland economy.

The forest resources of Newfoundland and Labrador play an important role in the well-being of the people of this Province. This naturally renewable resource not only provides wood for industrial and other uses, it is home to abundant wildlife, it regulates stream flow, it protects watersheds, it provides scenic and recreational values and serves as a pleasing landscape for our communities.

It provides close to 3 million cubic meters of wood every year. This allows for the operation of three pulp and paper mills and over 2,000 commercial and domestic sawmills. It provides thousands of households with firewood and results in numerous other end products. The forest resource of Newfoundland and Labrador has provided a unique lifestyle to the residents of this Province. Approximately 25,000 cutting permits are issued to the people of Newfoundland to provide wood for their personal use for firewood, sawlogs, construction timber and other purposes.

There is no denying that the forest industry in Newfoundland has been a very stable source of income and employment in the past, and we need to ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador continue to receive these benefits from the forests of the future.

In the past, there have been increasing demands from the forest land base for various other uses. These demands will continue in the future. Thus, we have to recognize these demands and adopt a sensible approach to the management of this resource which will ensure the continued viability of the forest industry as well as other uses for the forests.

It is true that forests occupy vast areas of the Province. For example, the total forested area on the Island of Newfoundland is about 5 million hectares out of a total area of just under 8 million hectares. However, only 2.8 million hectares are productive forests, or 35 per cent of the total landmass of the Island. Similarly, only 20 per cent of

Labrador is productive forest land.

While my department protects all lands under natural vegetative cover, it manages the vegetation of only the productive forest lands. This land base supports an industry which produces wood products with a value of close to \$600 million per year; it generates 12,000 to 13,000 direct and indirect jobs. The newsprint industry alone accounts for about 20 per cent of the manufacturing Gross Domestic Product in this Province.

The forest industry, both primary forestry and the manufacturing of forest products, contributes to over 8 per cent of the goods producing sector of the Province and 22 per cent in the manufacturing sector. A recent analysis of the resource shows that the current level of forest harvesting cannot be maintained over the next fifteen to twenty years - cannot be maintained over the next fifteen to twenty years. The major problem is that our forests do not have a well-balanced age class distribution. A balanced age class would normally support a sustained wood supply. However, because of an imbalance in the age class structure - and any of the hon. gentlemen opposite or on this side who are concerned about the wood supply problem should listen intently because here is the key to our problem: because of the imbalance in the age class structure, we will be hard pressed to provide an adequate wood supply to the current forest industry during periods when there will not be enough mature age class available for harvesting. In order to address this problem we will have to adopt some far-reaching measures. Our forest

resource has the potential of not only providing an adequate wood supply for the current level of forest industry but, in the long run, of sustaining a much higher level of production.

The current demand for timber within the Province exceeds available supply by almost a million cubic meters per year. This assessment closely parallels the finding of the 1981 Poole Commission on Forest Protection and Management and will have a profound impact upon our approach to forest management for the remainder of this century and beyond. In the developing. The Forestry Act and the related forestry policies, this Government has been guided and will continue to be guided by two fundamental principles: Firstly, this Government recognizes that the timber resource management must be placed within the context of other resource management objectives and in a manner which is consistent with sound environmental practices.

Secondly, this Government recognizes that - timber resource management must not only provide for the legitimate use of today's citizens; but also for future generations of Newfoundlanders. In short, our timber management policies and practices must conform to the principles of sustainable development and sustained yield. Both these principles are, for the first time in our history, enshrined in this Forestry Act. While the scope of the Province's timber supply shortage has been well documented, there still remains the task of identifying those areas of the Province where shortages will be most acute. Accordingly, my Department is conducting a detailed analysis of the

sustainable timber supply in each of the thirteen forest management districts having significant concentrations of Crown lands. These plans will identify areas of major timber supply shortages and will propose measures to balance the wood supply and demand.

My Department will be working with both pulp and paper companies on a similar process for company held forest lands. I have directed by officials to seek input from as many individuals and interest groups as possible. It is expected that this process will be completed within the next year. The vehicle for implementing plans of action will be the direct forest management plan. These plans will not only address the question of how available timber supplies will be allocated to various users, but will also outline those management activities which will be required to increase timber supplies over the next several decades. Wherever possible, these plans will identify areas where various community and regional development groups can co-operate with my Department's forestry personnel in planning and implementing forest management activities. Our forest management activities will see a concerted effort in three major areas: silviculture, protection and utilization. I will now address each of these in detail.

The Province's silviculture efforts, initiated in the mid 1970s and intensified in the 1980s, were just one component of successful federal/provincial and Government/industry cost-shared agreements. During this period, four federal/provincial agreements have been completed, with total expenditures of in excess of \$180 million. The early agreements set

in place the regional infrastructure required to allow the Department to carry out its management strategies. Some of the results of these agreements were the construction and maintenance of over 2000 kilometers of forest access roads, funding for protection from wildfires, insect pests and diseases, and the silvicultural treatment of over 110,000 hectares of forest land. The silviculture expenditures during this period have exceeded \$88 million and these efforts have increased sustainable timber supplies by approximately 18 per cent. However, in order to maximize the impact of silviculturing reducing current and projected timber supply shortages, it will be necessary to change the emphasis of the programme and to increase the level of available funding.

For the foreseeable future, reforestation will be maintained at a level of ten to twelve million seedlings per year. Emphasis will be placed upon such activities as pre-commercial and commercial thinnings and fertilization. The rationale for this redirection of effort is that reforestation efforts will not result in harvestable timber before the year 2035, whereas thinning will result in harvestable timber by the year 2015. Current projections indicate that the timber supply shortfalls will be most acute during the period 1990, this present year, until 2030. So that is roughly a forty year span.

Quite apart from its role in increasing timber supplies to meet industrial, commercial and domestic uses, silviculture has a major role to play in enhancing the productivity of the forest

land base. Despite our recent efforts, the productivity of some of our forests is extremely low. In large measure this has been due to repeated infestations of spruce bud worm and hemlock looper.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Port au Port was up today sanctimoniously asking questions that might, in effect, undermine the viability of the industry in a town which he represents. So it does not augur well for him to be standing in the door drinking his coffee and shouting across the House. Better he came in and learned something that he obviously does not know; better he came in and listened to the debate and listened to the speech and use it to stand up and ask informed questions, questions that will enhance the forest industry and not, maybe, undermine it.

As a matter of fact, I might tell him, Mr. Speaker, that his constituency does not necessarily find his line of questioning, or the Member for the West Coast, or the Leader of the Opposition, a few days ago; they do not necessarily find it amusing and may well find it irresponsible, given the problems the forest industry is having.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flight: Now, Mr. Speaker, if we are to pass on to future generations of Newfoundlanders a viable forest resource, it is essential that silviculture programmes be initiated in these areas. The restoration of these areas transcends mere economic considerations and goes to the very heart of the Government's

commitment to sustainable development as a means of promoting the social and economic well-being of ordinary Newfoundlanders.

The timber supply which will be available for harvest over the next twenty-five years is already growing in our forests. To ensure that it will continue to be available for harvest, it will be necessary to maintain an adequate protection programme against the main forest enemies, fire and insects. This Government is committed to the principle of protecting our forests from the ravages of wildfire and forest insect pests, using the most environmentally safe methods available. Not only must existing timber stands be protected from wildfire and forest insect pests, steps must be taken to ensure maximum utilization.

Mr. Simms: People's (inaudible).

Mr. Flight: These measures include - if the Member for Grand Falls will listen now, Mr. Speaker, I am sure he will be very supportive of the steps we are about to take.

Mr. Simms: How much more is there of this?

Mr. Flight: I do not know, another half an hour, maybe, or an hour.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: No, no, Mr. Speaker,

- the introduction of stricter timber utilization standards on lands held under timber licence as well as on Crown lands; the construction, maintenance and use of forest access roads on Crown

lands and lands held under timber licences. Road construction standards and the requirements to rehabilitate areas affected by temporary forest access roads will be outlined in regulations.

Mr. Hodder: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Beauchesne.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Port au Port, on a point of order.

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, it is a rule in this House of Assembly, a tradition in this House of Assembly that Members not read their speeches. Mr. Speaker, there is also a rule in the House of Commons. Our own Standing Orders are silent on it, I understand, but certainly it has been a tradition. Mr. Speaker, I have the old edition of Beauchesne here, but the new edition certainly says, section 309 -

Mr. Flight: He is referring to my speech, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hodder: - in the Fifth Edition it says, "It is a rule in both Houses of Parliament that a Member must address the House orally, and not read from a written, previously prepared speech". Mr. Speaker, that is quite clear. The Member for Windsor - Buchans, the Minister for Forestry, has been reading his speech which, Mr. Speaker, I suggest he should table. And certainly it has been a tradition in this House, and it is a precedent of this House that speeches are not read, and that is what the Minister is doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: To that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is another example of the obstructionist tactics of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: - another example, Mr. Speaker, of trying to kill time, trying to obstruct a bill that really should go through this House, and rising on points of order that have no bearing. Mr. Speaker, I think it is obvious to everybody concerned.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: The member probably has some copious notes in front of him that he refers to from time to time, Mr. Speaker. And we have seen this happen many times in this hon. House, but I think it is regrettable that the Opposition is once again resorting to these obstructionist tactics, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Briefly to that point of order. I would say to the Government House Leader if he wants to get this piece of legislation through then he should call the Minister of Forestry aside give him some kind advice, suggest to him that he not read verbatim as he appears to be doing, and simply address the bill in the best way he can, on his feet, and I assure him that there will be reasonable co-operation with respect to getting this legislation through. But to be perfectly frank, Your Honour, I mean whilst I like listening to

the Member for Windsor - Buchans, and the Minister of Forestry, I always enjoy his contribution to debates, I must say it is rather difficult to listen to somebody just continuously reading notes. And I know that is not what he has meant to do, he is quite capable of being a narrator and pronouncing on the objectives of this particular piece of legislation which we support, by the way, as I understand from my colleague, we support this piece of legislation - we have some comments to make on it and questions to ask, but if you want to see the bill get through maybe you could have a quick word with the Minister to get on with it. We are certainly not trying to obstruct it, we are trying to speed it up just the opposite.

An Hon. Member: I wonder if I could -

Mr. Tobin: No, boy, sit down.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if I could agree with the Opposition House Leader on one point that he made. He said the Member for Windsor - Buchans is quite capable of being an orator, and I can agree with him there, Mr. Speaker, because I remember a speech the hon. Member gave in this House, it started off - and it was perhaps the best speech I have ever heard in this House, it started off 'One day the sun will shine', Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: That was what the speech was based on, it was one of the best speeches ever given in

this House.

Mr. Tobin: Is that the one he made fifty years ago?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

To the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Port au Port, and he is quite correct in terms of what the rules say, that an hon. member is not suppose to read his speech, although in my long number of years here I have two things I might say, that I have never seen a Member have to stop from using copious notes or either table the speech from which he was reading. But there is a reason for members not reading their speech, because normally when one reads the speech it is very boring.

Mr. Simms: Right on!

Mr. Speaker: And that is the reason for it. It is better to give extemporaneous speeches, they come from the heart. But in any event I rule at this point that the member is using copious notes. And I will allow him to continue.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, if it is the will of the Opposition that this speech not be boring, I assure you that I can deliver this speech in a way the Member for Grand Falls will not feel boring.

Mr. Tobin: Throw away your prepared speech.

Mr. Flight: But, Mr. Speaker, this is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation that has been brought into this House of Assembly this past two or three years, particularly as it relates to one of the major

industries in this Province, and, Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to deal with it flippantly. I spent a long time in preparing this presentation, Mr. Speaker, with the help of my staff, and I intend to use my notes and I am going to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that it is well stated, clearly understood. Because I do not want either the Member for Port au Port or Humber Valley standing up in a day or two, Mr. Speaker, and taking anything I might have said out of context.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like now to pick up where I left off. Now, Mr. Speaker, this Government is committed to the principle of protecting our forests from the ravages of wildfire and forest insect, Mr. Speaker. And we intend to use the most environmentally safe methods available.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simms: He just read that a minute ago.

Mr. Flight: - Mr. Speaker, we can spend all day. I have about five minutes left here, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. House Leader wants to drag it out to fifteen minutes well sobeit.

Mr. Simms: Your the one who is dragging it out.

Mr. Flight: So, - it is our intention, Mr. Speaker, to increase the Government's effort to enforce forest management practices including the use of violation tickets for violation of specified forest regulations. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a new concept, the issuing of tickets for violation of forest regulations. I am sorry that the

Member for Port au Port is having a hard time hearing the speech, or the comments, because of the distractions of the Member for Placentia, Mr. Speaker. The extension of this mechanism to forestry related infractions will give individuals the option of paying a specified fine or pleading not guilty before a provincial court. In the past individuals alleged to have committed a forestry related offense have had no option but to make a court appearance. The current practice of providing individuals with access to Crown lands for the purpose of cutting timber for personal use will be continued.

Mr. Tobin: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West on a point of order.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, despite the ruling by His Honour who just left the Chair about reading a prepared text the Minister of Forestry continues to read his prepared text.

An Hon. Member: Sit down boy, you are making a fool of yourself. You are making a fool of the Opposition.

He is paying no attention to the ruling by His Honour, and I suggest that as Your Honour who sat there before ruled a member nor a Minister was not permitted to do it, but yet the Minister of Forestry continues to defy the ruling that has already been made about reading his speech. Every word has been from the prepared text.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To that point of order. More obstructionist tactics by this Opposition. When are they going to learn? In actual fact Mr. Speaker who was in the Chair ten minutes ago indicated that his ruling was that the Minister had copious notes that he was referring to, and it was not the interpretation put on it by the Member for Placentia West. He is only attempting to disrupt, interrupt, and to get on with his obstructionist tactics as he has been directed to do by the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Speaker: To that point of order.

His Honour has already ruled, and the hon. Minister of Forestry and Agriculture has already indicated, that he was reading from copious notes, so we have to take the word of the hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Copious, or dubious, or copious.

The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: The current practice of providing individuals with access to Crown lands for the purpose of cutting timber for personal use will be continued. Mr. Speaker, have I been recognized or will I sit here until I am recognized?

Mr. Speaker: I have already recognized the hon. the Minister

of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, it will now be a policy of this Government to undertake forestry management activities solely to increase the supply of timber for personal use. Forest management plans will therefore contain activities to increase available timber supplies for both personal and commercial use. At the same time we will have to improve resource utilization efficiency and eliminate abuses within the system by those who conduct commercial operations under the guise of personal use permits. In an effort to promote better utilization and management of the forest timber resources a private land management program was introduced a few years ago by the hon. members opposite as a pilot project in the St. George's forest management district. This program provided for the development of management plans for private woodlots and the provision of financial incentives to undertake various timber management activities. My hon. friends opposite will be pleased to hear that this program has been an unqualified success and that subject to signing a new federal/provincial forestry agreement this program should be expanded to other areas of the Province. In this time of scarce timber resources the manner in which timber is allocated to various groups assumes considerable importance. The Forestry Act provides three mechanisms for timber allocation. These are timber licenses, timber sale agreements, and permits. As most members of the House are aware timber licenses currently in place in Newfoundland were issued early in this century under extremely favorable terms and

conditions. For example, a typical timber license gave the licensee absolute ownership of all standing timber for a period of not less than ninety-nine years, Mr. Speaker, with almost no obligation to pay royalties. These licenses will commence to expire in the year 2002 and will have expired by the year 2037. This Act provides for replacement of these licenses with twenty year licenses subject to the licensee entering into a forest management agreement which specify responsibilities for the obligation of the licensee and the Crown.

The current licence may also be converted into forest management agreements by mutual consent. While timber licences are primarily intended for very large scale timber harvesting operations timber sales agreements are intended for small to medium scale operations. These timber sale agreements will be for a period of five years and will be issued primarily on the basis of a competitive bidding process -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: - but that can be negotiated. I hope the Member is listening, Mr. Speaker. This is great reform that you are hearing here, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Can't understand it b'y (inaudible).

Mr. Flight: In implementing this policy the legislation is sensitive to the legitimate concerns of individuals and groups of individuals who have traditionally conducted their timber harvesting within specific geographic regions. For example, in issuing a timber sale agreement

in the Clareville area, forest management in the Clareville forest management district, only individuals meeting certain qualifications and operating in the Clareville district may submit bids. Now this is for an example purpose as opposed to anything else, so we are going to make sure that the timber resource in the area is - the first call is by the people who live in the area and depend on it.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: Pardon me?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: Timber rights. If circumstances warrant it, Mr. Speaker, the request for bids would be further restricted to specified areas and individuals within a forest management district. This process of competitive bidding will ensure that the available timber resource will be fairly allocated.

The third mechanism for timber allocation will be the traditional timber cutting permit. As in the past these will be valid for a period of one year. Renewal will depend upon the availability of timber and the permittees compliance with specified timber harvesting standards.

A major feature of this legislation is that a sustainable annual level of harvest will be established for each forest management district. Allocation of timber, whether by timber licence -

Mr. Tobin: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: - timber sale, agreement or by permit will not be

allowed to exceed this level.

This is extremely important as it is a fundamental cornerstone of sustainable development which, as I have previously stated, is a basic principle running through the Forestry Act and the policies which I am announcing today.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flight: One further area of policy which is contained in the Forestry Act is the Government's firm resolve to designate a land base for long term timber production. This is absolutely essential to the long term viability of the forestry industry. In those timber production areas forestry will be the primary use but other compatible activities such as wildlife management and recreational use will be able to continue and flourish.

Mr. Speaker, as previously stated, Government recognizes that timber resource management must take place within the context of other forest management objectives. And it is a manner which is consistent with sound environmental practices. Currently the combined annual expenditure of Government and industry of silviculture is in excess of - listen, Mr. Speaker - \$15 million per year annually. Million. Annually.

Since these investments will require a minimum of forty to fifty years to mature and be available for harvest it is paramount that they receive a reasonable degree of protection from encroaching incompatible land uses. For example, it will be completely pointless to invest thousands of dollars in an area of reforestation only to see that

area allocated to some other use before the trees mature.

Mechanisms will have to be put in place to provide a reasonable degree of assurance that areas silviculturally treated today - and the Member from Humber Valley will have an interest here, particularly as it applies to his interest in agriculture and the desire for farmers to continue to expand their land base - will be available for harvest in the future.

To summarize, Mr. Speaker, the following are the policies the Department of Forestry and Agriculture is committed to and guided in by carrying out its mandate. The Department is committed to the concept of sustainable development; the Department is committed to the concept -

Mr. Tobin: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: You have a quorum call?

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: Don't be silly, we got a quorum here. Mr. Speaker, there are fourteen people in the House.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, to that point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

There is a quorum in the House.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, this is

absolutely disgraceful. There is a quorum in this House., This is an attempt on the hon. Member to disrupt the workings of this House, Mr. Speaker, and you should name him for doing this to this House.

An Hon. Member: Terrible. Terrible.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, in summarizing I will just very quickly summarize the main points of this legislation. The department is committed to the concept of sustainable development. The department is committed to the concept of sustainable yield management. The department is committed to the integrated use of the forest resource for various uses. The department is committed to intensive management of the resource to increase its productivity. The department is committed to allow for a full public consultation process on forest management issues. The department is committed to the protection of the land base under forest land cover. The department is committed to provide adequate protection from wildlife, from wildfires, forest insects and diseases. The department is committed to adequate utilization of the forest resource. The department is committed to provide a fair and equitable allocation of the resource to all users, and the department is committed to seeking adequate funding for the achievement of the principles of these policies.

As I have already explained, Mr. Speaker, the Forestry Act contains

many provisions which support an aggressive forest management program, and the Act consolidates all existing forestry legislation into one act obtaining them and introducing new provisions. Over the course of preparing this bill, extensive consultations have been held with all departments of Government as well as with the major participants in the forest industry. Wherever appropriate the bill was modified to reflect these consultations. In addition, Bill 11 has been reviewed by the Legislative Resource Committee, Chaired by my colleague, the hon. the Member for Bonavista South, Mr. Aubrey Gover. This committee has recommended some amendments as follows: A public consultation and review process prior to approving district forest management plans and prior to issuing timber licences and designating - now I am reading the amendments - a land base for timber production. And, Mr. Speaker, to indicate the level of co-operation that I have displayed in this Act, is that every amendment recommended by the review committee, who took this Bill out for public hearings, was acceded to. And I will be introducing the amendments in Committee when the bill goes to Committee.

Another amendment, Mr. Speaker, or a clarification of the circumstances under which forest access roads may be closed and the circumstances under which forest travel may be restricted.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: I am reading amendments, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member certainly would not expect me to remember -

An Hon. Member: How can we understand what you are saying?

Mr. Flight: - to remember the amendments.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

Mr. Flight: -explicit reference to Governments commitment to sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is reading amendments to the legislation.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Flight: A system of district forest management plans for all areas of the Province -

An Hon. Member: Check with the Chair.

Mr. Flight: Mr. Speaker, I have sat in this House with the hon. Member for Port au Port for the best part of fifteen years. I have never heard him make a speech in this House, Mr. Speaker. He is not capable of making a speech unless he has notes or a written speech. And nobody is more familiar with that hon. member's performance in this House of Assembly than I am, Mr. Speaker, since 1975 - or his non-performance.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)
kicked out in 79.

Mr. Flight: - a system of district forestry management plans for all areas of the Province, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to advise this House that these recommendations from the committee have been accepted by Government and that I will move acceptance of them during debate by the

Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, the following are the major provisions of the bill, some of which I have already talked about: it enshrines in legislation Governments commitment to the principle of sustainable development and integrated resource planning within the forestry sector. It provides for the establishment of a forest land base for long term timber production. It enunciates a timber allocation policy to ensure that the available timber resource is allocated in a fair and equitable manner, not like in the past, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. members opposite were allocating timber. It outlines that forest land tenure agreement, which will be implemented as and when the current 99 year timber licences begin to expire in the year 2000. It establishes the principle that all industrial and commercial users of timber resource must pay an equitable royalty rate on all timbers harvested. It makes provision for successively high levels of taxation for land holders who continually mismanage their timber holdings. It streamlines the forest fire and forest travel legislation and brings it up to modern standards. It affirms Governments responsibility to protect the forests of Newfoundland from forest insect pests. It makes provisions for the licencing of all mills involved in the primary conversion of trees in to saleable products thereby giving Government better control over industrial and commercial timber requirements. It enhances the enforcement authority of forestry officials and makes provision for the issuance of violation tickets. It provides legislative authority to restrict travel on forest access

roads during specified periods. It provides for the expansion of the authority of the timber scalers board to include all matters related to timber scaling. It requires that all timber cut for commercial and industrial usage must be scaled by licenced scalers.

Mr. Speaker, my department had earlier this year prepared a twenty year development plan for forestry which identified forest management requirements in considerable detail. We have used that plan in negotiating a new Canada - Newfoundland Co-operation Agreement on Forestry Development. We hope to sign this agreement very soon, Mr. Speaker. And that particular agreement will secure significant funds for some of the programs that I have outlined. In addition I will set in motion the development of a number of initiatives for submission to Government.

Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in having introduced this particular piece of legislation. A piece of legislation that has been wanting and needed by the forestry industry in Newfoundland for year and years, Mr. Speaker, and it is with some sense of pride that I move second reading.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, what we have just witnessed is a sorry sight, when a member who has been in this House for twelve years gets up and reads his speech. But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask: what if we all did that to start off with? Mr. Speaker, we over here could not follow it. It

was embarrassing, it was scandalous and it was boring. Mr. Speaker, there is a rule, and I know this will be in Hansard tomorrow, but my question to the Speaker is, there is a rule that if a Minister quotes from a document he should table it. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to have it, because, I mean, we could not follow it over here, it was read incorrectly, too fast, and it was too boring to listen to. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the Minister table the document so we can have a look at it and carry on debate. That was the most scandalous thing that I have ever seen in this House.

Ms Verge: Talk about boring.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible).

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber Valley, are you on a point of order?

Mr. Woodford: No, no!

Mr. Simms: Take it under advisement.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it under advisement.

I will recognize the hon. Member for Humber Valley in the debate.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simms: Listen to this now without reading it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Woodford: No, I will not be reading a speech, Mr. Speaker, but I will probably be referring to a

few notes that I have as I go along. I do not know if you are calling it dubious or copious notes, but I will be referring to a few notes as I go along and a few quotes.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express my concerns in a constructive way on the member's speech we just heard. I think it was about a forty minute speech. I could not remember at any time during the Minister's address referring to copious notes. In fact, the only time the Minister took his head up was when there was a point of order. So if that is referring to copious notes, then I guess we are going to see a lot of speeches read from now on.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker: getting back to Bill 11, this is the bill we are on now and I acted as vice-chair on that Committee, the Legislative Review Committee, in particular to Bill 11, this new Forestry Act. We have had some considerable debate on this particular bill over the last number of months. Fairly constructive debate, I must say as we went along. There were some legitimate concerns, and some legitimate questions asked by different people in the industry, the two paper mills in the Province, namely, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, commonly known as Kruger, and Abitibi-Price, some concerns as we went along but nothing that could not be addressed in the bill, I must say. And some concerns by sawmillers around the Province who, no doubt, and the Minister I guess can confirm this as well, that the next biggest industry in the Province, next to the pulp and paper part of it, with regards to the timber supply, is in

sawmilling. The other part of it, with regards to the domestic use in the Province, we all know how important that is today, especially with the price of oil and other fuels, the people's accessibility to the domestic markets when it comes to woodcutting is very important, especially now. Always had been in Newfoundland but more especially now during those difficult times.

But, Mr. Speaker, on the bill itself and how important Forestry is to this Province. I do not think any Member in this House would have to be reminded of the importance that forestry plays in this Province. The Minister also referred and alluded to some questions that were asked by Members opposite, and namely I suppose myself and the Member for Port au Port, and the Leader of the Opposition, the last number of days.

We were accused at one point of fearmongering, Mr. Speaker. I did not consider it fearmongering. I never did and never will ask a question in this House to try to cast aspersions or to try to incite or leave in the minds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a sense of insecurity, especially when it comes to the forestry industry in this Province. It is not only important to the people of the Province as a whole, but very very important to the people of my district in Humber Valley.

One of the biggest industries in Humber Valley is in forestry, Mr. Speaker. And I think I, as an Opposition critic, have that right, and should make sure that I ask questions that are very pertinent and important to the people of my district and the

people of the Province as a whole. In questions we asked the other day, Mr. Speaker, where any Minister or anybody in this Province or in Canada, all they had to do was pick up the paper. I did not read anything or ask anything that was not public knowledge. It was in an article from The Globe and Mail by two of the most reputable bond rating agencies in Canada. Dominion Bond Rating Agency out of Toronto, and the Canadian Bond Rating Agency that rates all companies in this country no matter what it is.

But this specifically related to the pulp and paper mills in eastern Canada. Now that is specific and to carry it a little further, Mr. Speaker....

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: But, Mr. Speaker, to bring it a little further, the comments were also not only referring to eastern Canada but also named two particular companies in eastern Canada that are very important here, and they are Abitibi-Price and Noranda. Noranda, a little further west of us, in Quebec, and Abitibi-Price, very important because two of the three paper companies in the Province are namely Abitibi-Price. One mill in Stephenville and the other one in Grand Falls.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister could take a page out of the report by those people. They usually do their bond ratings on a twelve to eighteen month forecast. They look ahead twelve to eighteen months down the road and try to determine if there is going to be some trouble in the industry or if it is going to be positive for the industry. Much

the same I guess, as APEC, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council. So they usually, it is usually a forecast of the economic viability of a certain industry. This one in particular was the pulp and paper industry.

So the Minister, in consultation with his staff and the people that are responsible for Abitibi-Price in the Province, could probably take a page out of their report and do the same thing. Talk to those people, talk to the paper companies in a matter of communication and consultation to try to avert a catastrophe down the road. And two of the main - well, there are four or five main reasons. But two of the things they were talking was the access to a good wood supply - it is commonly known in this Province that the mill in Stephenville, in six to eight years, ten at the most, would have a problem with regard to accessing good wood fiber. The other big question asked, Mr. Speaker, is about the accessibility to a good energy source in the Stephenville mill. That is not there now. Every time the rates go up in this Province, the mill in Stephenville becomes a less profitable operation. And that is not fiction, that is fact. Everybody knows that, Mr. Speaker, including the comments that came from the President of Abitibi Price only last February and again in the last week. If that is scaremongering, then more questions should probably be asked over the next few days and weeks pertaining to the Abitibi mills in this Province. The Minister mentioned a number of things, but I could not really hear them all. I would appreciate very much, Mr. Speaker, if I could have a copy of the Minister's comments, because on the end -

Mr. Flight: You can have them tomorrow.

Mr. Woodford: Mr. Speaker, on that note I do not think it is right. I think it is incumbent upon members of this House, if they are going to stand and read a speech in this House, that it should be tabled. If he wants to leave out his comments pertaining to the forestry industry in this Province, at least do me the courtesy of knowing the amendments. I do not have a copy of the amendments, I am the critic for forestry, and I think I deserve that right. Mr. Speaker, having served on the Committee as Vice-Chairman and after going through it in a constructive and meaningful way with other members of the Committee, I think I deserve the courtesy of having the amendments to this Bill No. 11. If I do not, Mr. Speaker, I cannot do my job as a Committee member. If the Minister wants this bill to pass second reading this evening, then I demand copies of at least the amendments. He can cut the rest off if he wishes, I do not care, but I want a copy of those amendments. If not, I will debate this like the Senate, I will go on until this time next year.

Mr. Speaker, talking about some of the things in Bill No. 11, with regard to environmental concerns, sustainable development and so on, and some of the other areas of the Province, that is very important to all of us. I just mentioned the pulp and paper industry in the Province, but I will not go into it in any more depth except for the fact that accessibility, the one I touched on before, the accessibility of a good wood supply for the Stephenville mill. I think the Minister is cognizant of that, and where we are going to

turn a few short years down the road to obtain that wood supply. There are areas of the Province where that can be done. It was sad to see over the years that most of the rights for timber in this Province have been tied up by two companies, and it is one of the reasons why we had problems in this Province over the years in trying to have a good sawmill industry. With the resources we have in the Province pertaining to forestry and the trees we have in this Province, both industries could be going hand in hand and both could be successful.

The Minister alluded to the age problem with regard to trees, and that is very important. We have so many areas in this Province whereby the paper companies of the past took what was easy. Bowaters just put in roads and took what was closest to their operations in Corner Brook, and we have places around this Province today where we have timber that is so-called over-matured and bug killed. Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of thousands of cords of timber sitting around this Province today that could be utilized for the sawmill industry. One of the reasons why we have not had that particular supply of timber accessible to the sawmills in the Province was because of the fact that the timber companies did own it; they could harvest what was closer to their operations, and they could leave the other supplies. Today, because of the harvesting methods of years ago, it is coming back to haunt us, Mr. Speaker, and that is one of the reasons why that Abitibi-Price in Stephenville do not have a good wood supply today.

But we have made some movements. In the last administration, right

on the end of it, and I am glad to see, and I have to give credit where credit is due, that this administration and the minister has kept up the new access road policy with regard to the agreement between Government and Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, especially in the White Bay area of the Province. What they have done is that stands that are owned by, in this case, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper that were not going to be harvested by the company, the Government made an agreement to put in the access roads and the sawmillers in the area would have first call on that particular resource, over-matured wood that was not going to be cut by the company anyway. They go in, take whatever is fit for a sawlog, and the rest goes to the paper companies. So, in turn, about 60 per cent in some cases, 70 per cent in more went to the sawmillers of the Province, and in one case the community of Hampden, Mr. Speaker, this probably accounts for about 60 or 70 per cent of the employment in that community. So that just shows you how important that particular agreement is to the people of just one community, and I can name many more.

But the most important thing, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this wood would have died. Some of it is over-mature now. It would never have been cut, there was no way in the world for it to be cut, because of the accessibility of other stands in the Province. And the fact that we got this agreement, and I think there are other agreements that can be worked out in the Province so that those areas can be salvaged. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest places in this Province, one of the biggest areas in this Province for

development, and I am sure the Economic Recovery Commission will notice it as they move along - if they do not, they will have to have blinkers on - is in the sawmill industry. There are no new jobs. I said it before and I will say it again, there are no new jobs in the cutting of pulp for the mills in this Province. They need x number of cords of wood in Corner Brook, they need x numbers in Stephenville and Grand Falls, and that is it. Whether it comes from Clarendville, whether it comes across the Gulf, no matter where it comes from, they can only use a certain number of cords of wood. But in the sawmill industry, Mr. Speaker, we can cut forever and a day. There is approximately - I do not know, I think it is a 150,000 or 175,000 board feet of lumber coming into this Province every few days. I do not know if that is a bit high or not, but even if it is 100,000 a week, can you imagine? The Member for Port aux Basques has no trouble to tell, because they had a fellow do a survey out there a short while ago, just counting the tractor trailers coming off the boat. So that is an area of the Province where there is some real employment, an increase in employment, because for every cord of wood that comes out of the woods that can be utilized at a sawmill, we take out the raw product and we use it as lumber.

And, furthermore, the sustainable development clause in this bill is very important. Because if everybody, not only the sawmills, but the paper companies in this Province were forced to debark everything in the woods and it was not to be taken out, and some of the other timber chipped, we could be utilizing that, especially in some of the mills around the

Province, as well as in hospitals and everywhere else. Some 40 to 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of a log is just garbage, it is just chucked out as slab and sawdust and shavings. If it was chipped it could be used as an energy source in this Province, let alone supplying the paper mills in this Province.

Some of the concerns, Mr. Speaker, addressed by people who appeared before the Committee, we only had - the response from the paper companies was not that great. They had some concerns and they were more or less addressed, I believe, by correspondence. The Sawmillers Association in the Province had some concerns that they took up with the minister and they were addressed. A lot of the concerns of those people could also be looked at under the regulations part rather than in the actual bill.

But some of the concerns expressed: There was a number of concerns of the Federation of Agriculture. The minister in his response to them somewhat, I suppose, allayed some of their fears, but they can also be addressed in some amendments down the road - nothing serious enough to hang up the bill.

The most important thing I noticed in talking to every interest group we talked to was the importance of having an act such as this, a new Forestry Act. That was one of the comments that came from all groups: we have to have certain things in this Act and this is a chance to get them, and a lot of their concerns could be addressed and looked after under the regulation part of it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the competitive

bidding that the Minister brought up under the new bill. I do not know if he is going to institute that all over the Province, but I would say as a word of caution, that in certain areas of this Province, besides the Clarendville area, that that should be looked at very seriously. We have some areas in this Province today and one of the areas that comes to mind is in the Roddickton area. We have a very large wood supply of Crown timber in the Roddickton area of the Province that could be utilized in the sawmill industry today. And most importantly, in the Member for Stephenville's district, in the Stephenville mill.

We have got an awful lot of timber tied up in the Roddickton area of the Province today that is supposed to go to the new hydro plant in Roddickton. But if anybody asked the question of how much wood chips have been used in that plant they will tell you, nowhere compared to what was supposed to be used and this is one of the reasons why the accessibility of that timber should be made available to the operators of the Stephenville mill. They are willing to truck that timber right from Roddickton to Stephenville, no problem. But they can't get access to it and for different reasons.

So I have not have had a chance to go through all the amendments that the Minister read out, Mr. Speaker, but the one on the - clause 2 of the bill is further amended by adding immediately after the paragraph on sustainable development. On the sustainable development one means in relation to forest resources and so on, and subsection (3) clause 2, on the sustained yield forest management area. Now those two particular

areas, Mr. Speaker, were addressed - those were two concerns that the Committee had as a whole. Not only Opposition Members on the Committee and some other people who appeared, but most - even Government Members.

So, Mr. Speaker, on the - I do not know if the Minister could confirm this, on Section (3) - to provide for a public consultation mechanism with regards to the affected public. Must be carefully drafted to elicit public support. Issuing timber licences and timber sale agreements. I think that remains the same under Section (3), I did not go through the amendments.

But the other one, the main section 93 (1). The Minister may, by order declare an area of forest land to be a restricted travel area for the period set out in the order. Now, this particular section, Mr. Speaker, is almost identical, as far as I am concerned to the concerns, the concerns raised under Bill 53, now Bill 25, but I think they are being addressed and they should be addressed where the bill may state precisely the circumstances under which a restricted travel area may be ordered. Is that in the-

An Hon. Member: It is amended (inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: It is in the bottom part of the amendment, because part A, said to reduce the probability of a man-caused wildfire during periods of high fire hazard and to restrict entry upon lands which are to be sprayed by insecticides or herbicides, so those are two of the amendments, Mr. Speaker, that would -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: - yes that is - subsection one of clause 93 of the bill is deleted and the following substituted, so those two concerns are addressed and the other one, Mr. Speaker, would be section 118 and this will still give the Minister and Government broad powers and as was seen with Bill 53 could lead to a spirited public debate.

It is suggested that section 114 be amended by adding section 114 (3) stating, that access roads may be closed for the purpose of public safety in preventing damage to the road bed or such other reasons directly related to good forest management.

So, Mr. Speaker, if that is included in the amendments, section 114 (1) for the purpose of ensuring the safety of the public and to prevent damage to the road bed and other reasons directly related to good forest management. Those are two of the biggest concerns that were addressed by the Committee. The main thing, Mr. Speaker, is putting the reasons, it is one thing to say we have to close an access road or have to do something else but it is another thing to put in the reasons and I am glad to see, Mr. Speaker, that those amendments have been made to address that and the reasons have been put in, so, Mr. Speaker, I could go on for some time talking about the forestry industry in the Province and some of the ways we could address some of the faults in it, but I think that this is important and it gets back to what we were saying earlier, Mr. Speaker, about co-operation.

We here, as Members on this side of the House, have no problem to identify with what is important

and what is not important in this House when it comes to bills. We have no problem in identifying the bills here that the people of the Province would like for us to have some say into and would like for them to have some say into, and bills that we feel are going to be detrimental to the people in the Province and the way they live. In this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, some of the concerns have been addressed, they have been addressed in a constructive way by members of the Committee, they have also been addressed in a constructive way by members in the industry. And it is proof, Mr. Speaker, that this side here, any day, will co-operate with the administration of the day in putting together something that is vitally important to the people in this Province and to the livelihood of the people of this Province when they are asked in a constructive way to make some amendments that will help the industry grow and will help each and every individual in this Province. I think the House Leader should probably take this as an example. This is one of the most important pieces of legislation to go through this House in some time, and I think the House Leader should take note of the co-operation shown in passing a bill such as this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If the Minister speaks now, he will close debate.

Mr. Flight: How boring, Mr. Speaker. How terribly repetitious and boring. In the interest of time I will point out to the hon. House, and out of a desire to be seen as a person who co-operates without being forced to, I sent across the House to the hon. member, half way through his

speech, a copy of the amendments. I was a little surprised, Mr. Speaker, that he needed them, because he admitted himself that he was the Vice-Chairman of the Committee that suggested the amendments anyway. I have told him on three or four occasions that we addressed every amendment they recommended and included.

Mr. Speaker, having said that I also want to say that every issue the hon. member raised is addressed in detail in the legislation and, of course, will be addressed in more detail if necessary in the Committee. I want now, Mr. Speaker, to give this hon. House and this Government a reason to feel good. In less than eighteen months, we managed to put together a piece of legislation that the hon. member just admitted was long, long overdue, seventeen years overdue, Mr. Speaker, and that legislation will now enable this Government to do the kinds of things in forest management so that the industry, that the mills the hon. member is so concerned about, and the wood supply can be addressed. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading. Thank you.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Revise The Law Respecting The Management, Harvesting and Protection Of The Forests Of The Province", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House, on tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two reminders to members on both sides. Firstly, the Private Member's motion to be debated on Wednesday will be the one introduced today by the Member

for Bellevue. It had to do with education, if you remember, primary, secondary education.

The other thing I would like to remind hon. members, Mr. Speaker, is that tonight is the Christmas Lights Across Canada Ceremony. It is going to take place in front of this building at 8:00 tonight. If the weather is particularly bad it will take place inside in the main lobby, but, if not, we hope it can take place outside, where the lighting of the lights in the hedge across the building plus the floodlights on the building will be done. So, Mr. Speaker, I invite all hon. members with their families, if possible, to come along to the ceremony which starts at 8:00 tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House at its rising do adjourn until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow and that the House do now adjourn.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 2:00 p.m.