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VERBATIM REPORT
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Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker (Lush): Order, please!

I would like, before we get into the routine business, to welcome to the galleries today officials of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. The Centre is Canada's National Institute for information on occupational health and safety. The Council sets policies and guides the Institute to ensure that it is the authoritative and unbiased voice of occupational health and safety in Canada. The Council is represented by Maureen Shaw, Chairman, Council of Governors; Mr. Arthur MacDonald, Governor, Council of Governors, Prince Edward Island; and, Mr. David Clark, Governor, Council of Governors, Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Also on behalf of hon. Members I would like to extend a warm and cordial welcome to forty-five grade seven and eight students from the Clarke's Beach Elementary School, Port de Grave District. They are accompanied by their teachers Bill Ivimey and Walter Dawe.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

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

Mr. Efford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to announce the new Community Development Program on behalf of

the Department of Social Services.

The Community Development Program has been in existence within the Department of Social Services since 1972. This program was initiated to address the problem that social assistance recipients were not able to obtain jobs in the community. The rationale for this approach was based on the belief that by providing some work experience, social assistance recipients would be assisted in breaking away from their dependency on social assistance funding.

This Program has been well received by social assistance recipients. The degree of acceptance is borne out by the fact that during the last fiscal year, approximately 11,000 clients have been serviced throughout this Program. What has been disappointing however is the short-term nature of the work provided.

Mr. Speaker, this is an area that has been a concern of mine since becoming Minister of Social Services and has also been, I might add, a concern of my colleagues in Cabinet. To try to address this situation I initiated a comprehensive review of this particular program. The findings suggest that while the economy undoubtedly affects the success of the program, another factor affecting it relates to the lack of appropriate employment counselling, training and long-term employment being provided.

The report suggested that clients employed on many projects are not given sufficient opportunity to develop vocationally to their fullest potential.

I am happy to report today that I have been successful in obtaining the support and endorsement for the recommendations of this review from my colleagues in Cabinet. I believe that this endorsement clearly shows Government's commitment to improving the quality of services provided to social service recipients residing in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, the Community Development Program operating from the Department of Social Services will change its focus heading into the 90s and expand its mandate by placing more emphasis on the vocational rehabilitation of social assistance recipients. This new approach endorses the principle that social assistance clients should receive support to improve their marketable skills which in turn will assist them break the social assistance/unemployment insurance cycle of dependency.

My staff in the Department of Social Services are excited about the course upon which this program is about to embark. I am sure that once implemented it will be positively accepted by our clientele as well. Our new approach will be based on the cornerstones of, assessments, counselling, training, and employment, and will be supported by an ongoing follow-up. To achieve our goals, the Department of Social Services will hire ten vocational counsellor positions who will have experience in assessing new techniques. These positions will provide the service required to make social assistance recipients more employable. In addition to this, the Department will provide support and incentives to allow social assistance recipients to upgrade

their academic qualifications and skill levels.

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that this new direction is a rational approach to investing in this Province's most valuable resource, namely its people. We believe that for the benefit of our clients, this new approach must be a co-operative effort with the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Labour Relations. We also see a major role in this new endeavour for the training institutions, Canada Employment, the Economic Recovery Commission and, of course, the clients themselves. To achieve this change in focus, my Department will commit funds for the upgrading of three hundred social assistance recipients during this fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that striving for the goal of long-term employment for this clientele is the right approach to take and I further believe that we will make significant gains in improving the quality of life of those who take advantage of this program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the Minister for giving me a copy of the statement. I got it a few minutes before, today.

Mr. Speaker, there is not as much new in this as the Minister would like to make out, and most of what the Minister said was verbiage rather than fact. I will say to the Minister that I am pleased that he is announcing that there will be ten vocational counsellors hired. That is a forward

movement, however, Mr. Speaker, the fact that there will be only 300 social assistance recipients, when you consider the number that need this type of help this year, that is only a drop in the bucket to the need.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say that the Minister has had community development projects frozen since last January, and I would like to say to him why has he been so long coming up with so little?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister is trying to pretend that this is something new. When the community development projects first started we had some very innovative projects on the west coast - blanket making, etc. But what happened on a lot of those projects, which are still in existence, which will not change according to this, but what happened to a lot of these projects is the women who learned to make these beautiful blankets were back on the project the next year, and the year after, and finally they did not see any need for what they were doing.

But, Mr. Speaker, there was some very innovative projects and I would suggest to the Minister that he should take his community development money and spend it in education. There were a number of projects which I am -

An Hon. Member: It is only 300 (inaudible).

Mr. Hodder: And it is only 300 that we are talking about. But I would say, Mr. Speaker, that the best way that the money can be spent is in education and this is not a new idea. This has been done on a number of occasions and

the Minister could have been doing it ever since this Government took power because that was the trend.

I can tell the Minister that there were a number of projects that went on in my own District -

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

Mr. Hodder: - where people were taken to the Bay St. George's Community College and they had all of these skills to talk to them, including life skills, counselling, various courses and that sort of thing. So, this is not a new idea.

What the Minister has done is he has held up core projects all year and now - cut back all year - and now he is going to give 300 social assistance recipients the benefit of what was already on the go before.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health made some startling statements in this House as it relates to Government's view of health care facilities in St. John's, particularly as it relates to the Grace, St. Clare's, the Janeway and the Children's Rehabilitation Centre. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health whether or not he will release for immediate public consideration the St.

John's Hospital Council options which were presented to the Government on the renewal of hospital facilities in St. John's. Will the Minister release that Report for immediate public consideration?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I will have to take that under advisement. I do not see any reason why I would not do that. But I will certainly have to take advice from my Department, as well as from the St. John's Hospital Council. But I will certainly take it under advisement and let the House know in the course of time.

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I would have no quarrel with the Minister taking the question under advisement. But let me ask the Minister this: Will the Minister release for immediate public consideration the new option developed by the Department of Health as it relates to hospital facilities in St. John's? That certainly is within the Minister's discretion, and he would not have to consult with anybody to release the option considered by the Department of Health?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what is left to release. The only place it is written, I suppose, is in a Cabinet document, as well as a letter to the St. John's Hospital Council, a copy of which, I understand, was given to the Member for Corner Brook East.

So honestly I do not know what the hon. Member is looking for. Option 10 is just that. It is an option. We are looking at another way, Mr. Speaker. And despite the alarmists, and the fearmongering from the Opposition, trying to make a political point of this, it is the duty and the obligation of Government to see if there is a less expensive way to deliver health care at the same high level that it is being delivered. And I do not see what all of the fuss is about. Why the fearmongering? I do not see why they are trying to make this a great, big political issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Minister of Health to get up out of the political gutter and answer the questions.

Mr. Simms: Right on!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Health this: Has the Minister of Health rejected the unanimous recommendation of the St. John's Hospital Council? Has the Minister rejected that? And why has he done that, Mr. Speaker?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, the Government has not rejected anything. Now let us put this back into perspective. The previous Administration knew, and this Administration knows, that the 300 beds which are in the Grace General Hospital are in a

facility which is below standard. It is not up to standard. That is a known fact. Now, these 300 beds have to be replaced; the city needs those 300 beds and the Province needs those 300 beds. The option which was presented by the St. John's Hospital Council, Option 7, suggested that it could be done at a cost of somewhere in the vicinity of \$300 million to the Province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are not even sure that figure is going to be right. Usually when you start something it runs over, so it could go to \$400 million. We need hospitals in Goose Bay, we need a hospital in Stephenville, we need numerous chronic care facilities throughout the Province, and before we commit the Province to spending \$300 and perhaps \$400 million on Option 7, we have gone back to the St. John's Hospital Council and said, Look, surely goodness there is nothing wrong with having another look to see if it is possible to find a way we can put those 300 beds in the city at a cost which is substantially or even a few million dollars less than Option 7. Mr. Speaker, I call that responsible Government, I call that responsible spending of the scarce resources of this Province.

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

Mr. Rideout: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that it won't be the St. John's Hospital Council who will be looking at this new option, it will be bureaucrats of the Government, dictated to and dominated by the Government, who will be looking at this new option put forward by the Minister. This morning, on CBC, the Minister also

indicated that the Government was considering removing the Sisters of Mercy from the St. Clare's Hospital. Can the Minister confirm that the Government is, in fact, considering that particular option?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, the Government is not removing anybody from anything. The Government has the same concern to deliver health care as the Sisters of Mercy have, a tremendous concern, and nobody would underestimate the contribution they have made. But, Mr. Speaker, if Option 10 proves to be capable of delivering health care to the St. John's area at a cost that is substantially less than that which is being proposed in Option 7, I would think the Sisters of Mercy and the Salvation Army would be only too happy to facilitate that saving in any way they could. That is certainly the experience I have had with them in the brief stay that I have been Minister. It is a matter of trying to save what we can, but we have to maintain the integrity of the health care system. It has to be a quality which is the best we can afford, and that is what we are trying to do.

Mr. Warren: Yes. Cars first, health second.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health stop skating and answer this direct question? Is it the agenda of the Government to remove the Salvation Army and the Sisters of Mercy from

health care delivery in this Province, where they have dedicated decades and decades of years of service to the people in health care in the Province? Is that the agenda of the Government, Mr. Speaker?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, like the Leader of the Opposition, I have to acknowledge the tremendous contribution the Salvation Army has made and is making to health care in this Province, for the past sixty-seven years. Anyone who doesn't recognize that doesn't know very much about health, Mr. Speaker. They have made a tremendous contribution, and they have made a tremendous contribution to the St. John's area with health care delivery. No one denies that.

Now, does the Government have an agenda to take the Salvation Army and the Sisters of Mercy out of health care? No, Mr. Speaker. The Government does not have an agenda to do that. The Government has an agenda, Mr. Speaker, to deliver to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and St. John's, the best possible health care we can deliver according to our fiscal means, according to the fiscal reality; and we are dedicated to doing that, as are the Sisters of Mercy dedicated to doing that, as is the Salvation Army dedicated to that, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to continue to do that. That is why we were elected. It is not to take anything from anybody, it is just the opposite, to give things to the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms Duff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By way of preamble, I would just like to make it clear to all Members that the St. John's Hospital Council is not just a group coming out of left field, but it is an umbrella group which represents every major health care agency in this city, plus Government and plus consumers. It was given the mandate to rationalize the delivery of health care services in the Province and, after five years of unprecedented collaboration and consultation, they made a unanimous recommendation to Government that Option 7 was the most cost-effective, least disruptive and most efficient option.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms Duff: I ask the Government, after all this process of consultation, why did they suddenly and arbitrarily, on Friday past, inform the Hospital Council that it was considering a radically different option, without any prior consultation with St. John's hospitals or the Hospital Council?

Secondly, I ask, since the Hospital Councils and the affected councils were excluded from the process of consultation on this Option 10, who is advising the Government on the development of this new option?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. Member is getting her information.

Ms Duff: From very good sources.

Mr. Decker: Well, maybe she can ask her sources why they did not advise her that on Friday past I met with the St. John's Hospital Council. Maybe her sources can tell her that I did not tell the Hospital Council that Government had thrown out Option 7, had thrown out other options, and that we are saying now here, etched in concrete, etched in stone, was a new option. That is not how it took place, Mr. Speaker. It was a consultative approach, in consultation. This, Mr. Speaker, is a wide-open Government who listen to people when they talk about health care or whatever they talk about.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Government I met with the Hospital Council last Friday and I said to them, we have examined Option 7, we have looked at Option 7, it will cost about \$300 million. Mr. Speaker, that figure is questionable, and the Council realizes that figures is questionable. Now, we said to them, is it possible that there is a less expensive way for us to deliver health care to this Province? Why not, for instance, we said, look at the possibility of putting 120 beds onto the General Hospital, which can accommodate that without any extra kitchens, without any extra laboratories, without any major improvements to the basic core of the hospital? We said, look at that. And, we said to the Hospital Council, would you look at putting 180 beds onto St. Clare's, without any major acquisition of land and all that sort of thing?

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member were sitting in my position as Minister of Health, surely she would consider it her duty, before

she lodged into a massive building program of \$300 million, and probably \$400 million, surely she would consider it appropriate to look and see if there wasn't another option, especially considering the federal cutbacks in transfer payments and considering the fiscal reality of this Province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

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

Ms Duff: I would assure the Minister that any option I would develop would certainly be done in consultation with a body who has been working on it for the past six years.

Now, the Minister is making a big issue of cost, and he has implied to the public that he might save \$100 million, that the cost is \$300 million, and he is certainly linking it to a replacement of the Grace. Will the Minister confirm that the actual cost identified by the Hospital Council is \$225 million not \$300 million, and that this cost includes not only replacing the Grace, but the Janeway, the Children's Rehab Center and a major renovation of St. Clare's, and it is over ten to twenty years, first of all? And I would like to ask him if any cost benefit analysis has been done, and how he comes up with that cost saving of \$100 million without eliminating beds or downgrading services?

Mr. Warren: He don't know the answer.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of details in the hon. Member's question. Now the amount, whether it is \$300 or \$225, was in last quarter 1988 dollars, and everyone knows that figure, even in that term, was soft. Maybe the hon. Member would like to know just what was involved in Option 7. One of the places we had to buy and destroy was the Knights of Columbus. We had to destroy two schools. We had to buy up blocks of property on LeMarchant Road South, about \$25 million to \$30 million in land acquisition. That was part of Option 7. The General Hospital, the Province of Newfoundland has sufficient land there, if that facility could be used to put an appropriate level of care back there, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member seems to forget that there is not a bottomless pit of money in this Province. Now she is talking about comparing \$100 million to \$300 million, or what have you. Part of this Option 10 is to answer some of these detailed questions which the hon. Member puts forth. That is why Option 10 is there, to look at the savings.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we might find out that to go with Option 10 would cost more than to go with Option 7. We might find that out. If we find that out, Mr. Speaker, then, of course, we are going to have to see where in the name of goodness the Province can get enough money to go with Option 7. But if we could save \$75 million, or \$100 million, or \$50 million, it could give us enough money to meet the needs in St. John's, plus build a hospital in Goose Bay, which we need, plus build a hospital in Stephenville, which we need, plus address some

of the problems we have with chronic care throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe that is a rational, reasonable approach to Government, and I am proud to be part of the Government, as I am sure the St. John's Hospital Council will be proud and pleased to know that we are looking for a less expensive way to deliver health care in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

Ms. Duff: If the Government had concerns about the cost of Option 7, why did it not refer these concerns back to the existing Hospital Council rather than set up a new bureaucrat dominated committee? And would the Minister agree that this action is highly discourteous to the Hospital Council and to the hospital boards and will seriously undermine any trust and goodwill in terms of these agencies dealing with Government in the future?

An Hon. Member: A good question.

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, the committee which is being put in place will have eight or ten people on it. The Government has asked the St. John's Hospital Council to put five people on it. The reason there are what the hon. Member refers to as bureaucrats, or the Opposition Leader referred to as bureaucrats, is because we feel we need an engineer on that committee. And rather than buying the services of an engineer, we are going to use the services of one of the engineers who already

works with the Government to try, again, to save some money.

There is a certain level of expertise which the people in the Department of Health have achieved over the years, a certain amount of experience as well as qualifications, and we do not want to lose that expertise, Mr. Speaker. So there is no intent to undermine the St. John's Hospital Council. If there had been any intent to undermine the Hospital Council, Mr. Speaker, they would have read about this in the newspaper or would have heard it on radio. Instead, it was done in a very logical, civilized manner, where the Members were called in.

I should also say, Mr. Speaker, that just over the last couple of days I have met with the Chairman of St. Clare's Hospital, and spent an hour talking with that gentleman; I spent an hour and so many minutes with the Chairman of the Grace Board; I have meetings set up on Monday and Tuesday of this week with chairmen of the hospital boards, as well as with the chairman of the Hospital Council, and it is proceeding in an open consultative process which I am proud to be part of, Mr. Speaker. I would think if the hon. Member were over here she would be delighted if she could have such an orderly, reasonable, and civilized way to deal with the health care needs of this Province, Mr. Speaker. It is something I am very proud of.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

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

Ms Duff: I have a very quick question, Mr Speaker. Since the assets of St. Clare's Hospital and

the Grace are owned by the Salvation Army and the Sisters of Mercy, who have poured millions of dollars into these facilities, if Government goes with Option 10, is it their intention to compensate these agencies for the loss of these assets, or will Government be compensating for these assets by expropriation without compensation?

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, you talk about hypothesis. Of course the Sisters of Mercy own that hospital, the same as I own my house or the hon. Member owns her house. Of course the Grace Hospital owns that institution, the same as hon. Members own their houses. That is their property, Mr. Speaker. And this is not Cuba, this is not some communist banana state. And it is pure hypothesis, it is hypothetical, Mr. Speaker. If we had the faintest hope or desire to do that, Mr. Speaker, we would have to negotiate a settlement. That is pure hypothesis. We will have to wait and see what the members of the St. John's Hospital Council come with, and what the members of the new Committee come up with, Mr. Speaker. I do not know what kind of state she would live in if she would see the Government going in and taking things from a group of people who, for nearly 100 years, have made a great contribution to health in this Province.

Let no one try to tell me what a poor contribution they made, because I know the contribution they made and I am very happy to acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Duff: Well, they are not very

happy with you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. John's East Extern.

Mr. Parsons: Mr. Speaker, I want to explain why the confusion. It is because we have so many speakers so willing to rise.

My question is to the Minister of Health. Because of the Minister's statement, and assuming that the Sisters of Mercy are involved in this takeover by Government, in my view, under this Government policy, it seems like the Government is removing all religious organizations from Government sponsored health institutions. My question to the Minister is, is he going to continuously use this Government policy towards senior citizens homes throughout the Province, removing the religious denominations from senior citizens homes such as Glenbrook Lodge, St. Patrick's Home, Agnes Pratt, St. Luke's and the other interfaith homes right across this Province?

Mr. Warren: A good question.

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

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, I have to correct an assumption, because that is the kind of assumption that gives rise to those terrible headlines. Nobody is talking about a takeover.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Increasingly, Members have been shouting back and forth when Members have been answering questions, and I ask, again, for the courtesy of the House. The House would operate, in Question Period particularly, with much more fluidity if we didn't have these interruptions.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

The Chair just made a ruling, and the Chair is not going to tolerate these kinds of interruptions before the Speaker takes his place.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No one is talking about a takeover. We are talking about a fiscally responsible Government looking for a way to deliver health care to the people of the Province in a way which we can afford, and in a way which will give a high standard. We are doing that in co-operation, in consultation with all the experts in health care, including the Sisters of Mercy, including the Grace General, Mr. Speaker. So there is no assumption of takeover; the word is misleading, the word is a misrepresentation of what is happening; it is simply the exploring of another option. And there could be an Option 11, 12, 15, 20, whatever, who knows? Our only concern, Mr. Speaker, is to deliver health care.

Now, to the second part of his question, the answer is no.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Education.

The Integrated School Board in Corner Brook has decided to close S. D. Cook School, which is a beautiful, well-equipped building, and add Cook students to Humber Elementary School. To accommodate the projected enrolment at Humber Elementary in September the school board had intended to use a portable classroom, but the City of Corner Brook has refused permission for a portable structure. Now the school board is planning to alter the interior of Humber Elementary - some would say chop it up - and squeeze in students in an arrangement that will fall far short of Department of Education guidelines. Will the Minister intervene to stop this regressive plan, and will he ensure the school board meets Department of Education guidelines?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, yesterday morning I flew to Corner Brook for a speech to the Superintendents' Association. While I was speaking, a note was passed to me asking me if I would be able to meet with representatives of parents of S. D. Cook. And being the very accessible Minister that I am, always available -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Warren: - I met with the parents.

Ms Verge: They only found out you were there because I told them.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Warren: Everybody knew I was going to be there, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Chair has previously ruled that if hon. Members want the answer to the question, let us please do it with as little interruption and interference as possible.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

Dr. Warren: I had a very frank and open session with the representatives of the parents of S. D. Cook, an excellent discussion. I confirmed my earlier decision, not to intervene in a matter which is entirely, strictly a school board matter. In fact, I thought the parents understood where I was coming from. I was very surprised at the end of the conversation, they said they rejected the decision but they understood the position of the Minister, because that has traditionally been the position of the Minister.

With respect to the guidelines I did say to them, Look, if you have evidence that some of the guidelines for closing the school have not been followed, or if you have evidence that there are firm minimum standards that are being denied by this board in this process, please let me know and I will write the board and bring these things to their attention and ask them for an explanation.

That was the situation yesterday, and I intend to write them in the next couple of days, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Verge: Mr. Speaker, not much indication of pro-activity there. My next question to the Minister of Education is, in Corner Brook, many parents consider proximity to home a more important -

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

A moment ago, I reminded hon. Members to my right not to interfere. The same rules apply to hon. Members to my left.

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms Verge: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education, in Corner Brook, many parents consider proximity to home a more important factor than religious affiliation in choosing a school for their children. If S. D. Cook school closes at the end of the month, some Cook parents would prefer that their children attend the nearby Roman Catholic school, St. Gerard's, in September, rather than the Integrated alternative, Humber Elementary, which is much further away and across a four lane arterial road. However, Mr. Speaker, the Catholic School Board is refusing to take any of the Cook children, regardless of their religious affiliation. The Catholic Board has even said no to Catholic parents whose children now attend S. D. Cook. Will the Minister do more than mouth cliches about interdenominational sharing and parent involvement in education? Will the Minister forcefully defend the right of

Cook parents and other parents in the Province to have their children attend the school of their choice?

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

Dr. Warren: I might say, Mr. Speaker, before I answer the question directly, in my speech yesterday to the Superintendents of Education, one person got up and said thank God we have a Minister who does what is right and doesn't intervene, and I can assure you the applause was like this, unanimously! Unanimously he will support it. He will support it by superintendents saying, this Minister does what's right. And the Minister is not getting involved for a few cheap political votes.

Now, in answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to intervene in a matter which is strictly a school board matter by law. Certainly the students of S. D. Cook have rights and the parents have rights, but, also, there are rights the Roman Catholic School Board has with respect to who they accept into their school, legally, constitutionally protected, and this Minister is not going to intervene in that. The Minister and this Government will, over the next few months, develop a position on interdenominational sharing and the public will have every opportunity to react to that. Because we feel that in the 90s it is appropriate in this Province that we maintain the

integrity of the denominational system and, at the same time, make better use of the limited dollars we have in providing quality education for all our students.

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

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I had a question for the Minister of Transportation but, for some reason or other, the Minister of Transportation seems to have skipped the House for Question Period. I do not know why, Mr. Speaker, but he is never here for Question Period. I will probably direct my question to the President of Treasury Board. I think the President of Treasury Board buys cars rather than selling them.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, my question to the -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burin - Placentia West.

Mr. Tobin: My question, Mr. Speaker, to the President of Treasury Board is I would like to find out from this House whether or not funds were approved some time ago, and if so, when, by the Federal Government to put a telephone system to the Winterland Airstrip, and when can we expect it to be put in place?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to point out that the

Minister of Works, Service and Transportation was speaking at a luncheon dinner somewhere in town, and he did not get back in time. He is, in other words, doing his job but in a different place, and that happens sometimes. Unfortunately, the Member had a question for him and it could not be answered.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if money has, in fact, been approved for that phone system, I believe it is, the Member referred to. I shall certainly find out. I take it under advisement.

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

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, let me say to the President of Treasury Board that apart from the telephone system, on the 16th of February, 1989 there was a paper submitted to the Cabinet based on the recommendation of the Burin Peninsula Air Feasibility Study, and it was recommended at that time - that is February 16, 1989, well over a year ago, Mr. Speaker - that the Provincial Government and the Federal Government enter into an agreement to upgrade the Winterland Airport. Could the Minister tell me what happened to that report?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: No, Mr. Speaker, I cannot. But, again, I will try to find out and try to get back to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the

Minister of Fisheries, my question, as well, is to the Government House Leader. There has been considerable gear damage around the Province over the past number of weeks, where fishermen have lost lump roe nets and lobster traps.

In my own District there has been approximately 2000 lump nets lost and 1500 lobster traps. The field office staff of the Department of Fisheries has done an analysis on it. I am wondering if Government is seriously considering a gear replacement program or some form of compensation for those fishermen, because most of them have only earned about \$1000 so far this year - that is \$1000 gross. They have lost all of their gear and, consequently, are finding it very difficult to re-enter the fishery. Is the Government seriously considering some kind of compensation program for those fishermen?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: My understanding of that situation, Mr. Speaker, is that the analysis has been done. There have been some requests to come back and do a further look at the damage in some areas of the Province. So that is in the process of being done. I assume the Minister is in the process of assessing the damage reports. I really do not know what is going on internally in the Department of Fisheries, or what papers may come or may not come to Cabinet in the near future.

Mr. Speaker: Question Period has expired.

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

Mr. Speaker: A point of order, the hon. the Member for Port au Port.

Mr. Hodder: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out that as of the end of April there were 22,000 cases on social assistance in the Province, which represents 48,000 beneficiaries.

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

When the Speaker rises the Member speaking should take his place immediately. The Chair got up to call order, and because the Chair did not know it was a point of order, and the Chair -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

When the Speaker is speaking, there is supposed to be silence.

The Chair did not hear the point of order and hon. Members to my left were shouting out 'not a point of order'. I would like to point out to all hon. Members that the Chair will rule on whether it is a point of order.

I will hear the Member for Port au Port.

Mr. Hodder: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out to hon. Members that there were 22,000 cases of people on social assistance in this Province of which 48,000 were beneficiaries. Now this would translate into about 35,000 who could avail of the Minister's program, when the Minister announced only 300 recipients today would have his program that, Mr. Speaker, shows what a farce -

Mr. Speaker: When a Member rises on a point of order, he should specifically state what the point of order is. The Member for Port au Port was not on a point of order and I do not know what it was.

Orders of the Day

Mr. Baker: Order 2, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, the following Bill, "An Act To Amend The Newfoundland And Labrador Hydro Act, 1975", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper.

Mr. Baker: Order 3, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There was a question asked by the Opposition Leader - I believe it was the Opposition Leader - concerning this particular Bill. I said I would try to do some research on it and get back to him at this point in time. All I can discover, and I have tried to make contact with people who were signatories to, and part of negotiating the original Bill, is that both parties to the various agreements, including Government, are all parties to the agreement. Wanted for some reason to say that the agreements that were then being struck between Kruger and the Newfoundland Government, that these particular agreements, and any associated agreements, would not become part of the bill, and not become part of a bill that was passed in the House for reasons that I could not really discover.

Perhaps it had to do with the

changing of the agreements and if any changes would be made that it would require changes in the Bills or whatever, for some reason both parties, and this was a condition of the original agreement, both parties did not want the agreements that were struck between the parties to become part of the Bill in the House.

However, the ordinary process of law would apply to the parties in the agreements, and it would have weight in law, this is the question I asked: Does this have anything to do with the diminishing the force of the agreements? And I was informed that no, that it did not diminish the force of the agreements, that they were enforceable under law just the same as if they had gone through the House. But apparently by saying that the agreements were not a part of the Bill you would make it easier to deal with the agreements.

Now that is as much of an answer as I can get from anybody. I have talked to a number of people about it, and I had a little note done up on it. There is some mention in the note of agreements affecting The Financial Administration Act, The Public Utilities Act, which I do not understand, to be honest with you, the only thing I can get was that both parties wanted to, simply because you would make it more cumbersome.

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, we are not going to make a big item out of this and we are prepared to accept the response from the hon. the President of Treasury Board. And we fully acknowledge that the

same clause was in the original legislation that was passed when we were Government. But I find it passing strange, just as I would have at that time, had it come to my attention or had I noticed it. I find it passing strange that we cannot find a reason. I do not know if it is a reason of confidentiality or what it is, but I find it passing strange that having asked a very innocent question, we cannot find, from all the legal brains within the bowels of this Building from the top to the bottom, a reason for the particular Clause as it exists.

Now we are not worried, Mr. Speaker, there is plenty of collateral for the Government's \$50 million loan guarantee to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. The value of the power facility alone in Deer Lake, which is secured under the agreements, is many, many times the value of the loan guarantee. So we are not worried in that sense. It was just a kind of an innocent question, I suppose - why would it be? The question was prompted, Mr. Speaker, by my observation of why it would be necessary to do a separate Bill. Even in our own case, when we did it, why was it necessary to do a separate Bill, if the agreements were not part of the Bill, therefore, the loan guarantee, if that is all it was, could be done under The Loan Guarantee Act. So that was what prompted it. In parliamentary terms, I suppose, it is kind of a sloppy way to be doing business, but we are prepared to let it go, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: I say, if the Premier was in Opposition he would keep this going for about three -

On motion, a Bill, "An Act To Authorize Certain Agreements

Between The Government Of The Province And Other Parties Respecting The Future Operation Of The Corner Brook Newsprint Mill" (Bill No. 30), read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper.

Mr. Baker: Order 4, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, a Bill, "An Act To Amend The Mineral Holdings Impost Act" (Bill No. 27), read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper.

Mr. Baker: Order 5, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, a Bill, "An Act To Amend The Retail Sales Tax Act, 1978 with Respect To Offshore Petroleum Development" (Bill No. 34), read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper.

Mr. Baker: Order 6, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, a Bill, "An Act Respecting A Reduction In The Newfoundland Offshore Area Corporate Income Tax" (Bill No. 33), read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper.

Mr. Baker: Order 8, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is moved that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on a Bill, "An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Certain Employees In The Province" (Bill No. 14).

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

Committee of the Whole

Mr. Chairman: Shall Clauses 1 and 2 carry?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have had an opportunity to speak on this Bill already and I do not think we need to take a great deal of time dealing with it. Simply to point out that we in fact support this piece of legislation. I think it is a positive step. It was initiated by the previous Administration and will provide pension opportunities for a large number of part-time employees, seasonal employees, and those in fact who have a disruption of service. It provides women, for example, with the possibility to have a disruption of service for family responsibilities and things of that nature. Fully portable and provides an opportunity for people who are working part-time or on a seasonal basis to move from different Government agencies. It also allows a large number of small Government agencies who have three or four employees, who can now participate in this plan, whereas it would not be reasonable for them to have a plan of their own. So with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, we support the particular piece of legislation.

A Bill, "An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Certain Employees In The Province." (Bill No. 14)

Motion, that the Committee report the Bill without amendment, carried.

Mr. Baker: Order 9.

On motion Clause 1 carried.

Shall Clause 2 carry?

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

Mr. Hearn: Once again this is a Bill that we certainly support and one, as I mentioned earlier, was conceived by the former Administration for all the right reasons, and basically besides the housekeeping in Clause 1 a couple of the other clauses are of extreme importance to teachers in the Province, improvements to their Pension Act, because if the Bill is passed, becomes legislation, at least for awhile their pension plan is protected. I asked earlier if the Minister would confirm whether or not he is going to support improvements to the pension plan as has been done in the past and is verified here in this Bill. Also, it does give substitute teachers the opportunity to use the time that they spend in school for pension purposes which is extremely beneficial.

Maybe the Minister will have a few words on it also and reiterate the stand that the Department of Education has taken in support of teachers over the years, especially when it comes to standing up for them in relation to their pensions. We did have the opportunity a couple of years ago to go to Ottawa to make sure that the 2.2 was protected and also we have laboured with them, I say with them, to make sure that the 'thirty and out' became a reality, and agreed also that it would be something, if successful, could be improved upon in the future.

It has been very successful and

has had wide acceptance and has led to an improvement in the overall feeling that teachers have about going into the schools knowing they can get out a bit earlier. They are not there for years and years when they get to the point where they want to get out. Hopefully, the Minister will improve, as I say, upon that pension plan, so I would like for him to give some indication of that.

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I had to accept a phone call. Would the hon. Member repeat his question, please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Chairman, in summary I said that we support the Bill, Bill 5, wholeheartedly, because it does all the good things that are listed. All of them are positive moves but in relation to the improvements in the teacher's pension plan, I had said the tremendous improvement that was in relation to the atmosphere it has created in the teaching profession for teachers who have been there for a considerable amount of time, and now realize they have a chance to opt out a little earlier. It is extremely beneficial to them and we had in relation to improving the pension legislation, and arriving at the Bill that we have here before us, worked very closely with the teachers. They realize that this was basically an experiment, the 'thirty and out', and it has proved to be an extremely successful one.

The feeling was there right along

that if this were successful then the pension plan could certainly be improved upon, and I was just hoping that the Minister would indicate that in present negotiations they will continue the good work started in the past to improve upon the teacher's pension plan, so that teachers can continue to work the way they have in the past, realizing that the Department of Education, in particular, forgetting Treasury Board and Finance, will be solidly behind them in achieving such an important stage as the true 'thirty and out', the twenty-six years with their four years of university buy back, so that many of them who want to opt out at that time will have that choice. And I presume the Minister is going to indicate that he will be supporting that wholeheartedly.

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. Member for answering the question for me in the way he did. I am not going to say it precisely as he suggested. But he is right that this provision was a provision for two years and that provision was to be assessed at the end of two years 'thirty and out', and it is now being assessed.

As far as the future is concerned, certainly I have every confidence that this Government will treat teachers fairly, and I would not want to comment, to do anything about the collective negotiation that might interfere in any way with what is now going on with Treasury Board.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr.

Chairman, I was absent from the House a few days ago, I am afraid, when this bill was debated in second reading. So I did not get an opportunity to participate in the debate in principle. But I am certainly going to take advantage of the opportunity now in Committee to speak for a few moments on the legislation, specifically one of the amendments in there that talks about legislating the 'thirty and out' provision, benefit, teacher's benefit, that was provided to the teachers during the last collective agreement.

And the reason, of course, I want to have a few words is that I am very proud to say that I played a significant role, I guess, as President of Treasury Board, but in constant consultation with my colleague the Minister of Finance then, now the Member for Mount Pearl, as well as my colleague the then Minister of Education, the three of us played a significant role in negotiating the 'thirty and out' provision for the teachers in the last collective agreement. So we are quite proud of that achievement. And I might add and point out, of course, we did not give the teachers 'thirty and out' we shared the cost of allowing them such a benefit.

The teachers as I recollect were quite prepared and quite willing after lengthy discussions, consultations and negotiations I met with them frequently, the Minister of Labour now, who was then the President, I guess, is the individual I spoke with on most occasions, along with their chief negotiating officer and others in the teaching profession.

Mr. Hearn: The Parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Simms: Well I not sure, I might have had some discussions, but he was not then President I do not believe, not that year. No. The Minister of Labour. But they were quite prepared to pay their share of the cost, I believe we increased or they agreed to increase the premium 1 per cent, wasn't it? I believe we matched it by 1 per cent, for a two year period.

Dr. Warren: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: The Minister of Education is quite correct, and that is what was agreed to.

The intent at that time from the NTA, as I recollect, was a fair number of teachers were in a position at that time who were quite anxious, quite interested to participate in such a plan, an early retirement plan, and we thought it would be valuable because it opened up opportunities for new teachers, young graduates, and all the rest of them, the kinds of things that would go with it, all the rest of the benefits that would go with it.

Now the question that I guess needs to be asked once again, and my colleague has already asked it, but the question that needs to be asked once again, and I have not spoken to anybody in the NTA to find out lately or recently, I am wondering if now they are interested in seeing this early retirement pension provision continued, at least for the duration of the next collective agreement, whenever it might be two years, three years, one year or whatever. Is the NTA or have the NTA made representation to the Government asking that the early retirement provision in this current collective agreement be in

the next collective agreement? In other words, do they still want that? That is the question. I know the last time it was for two years because they felt many teachers would take advantage of it, but that did not help the newer teachers, the younger teachers, of course, it was of no benefit to them. But I suspect the younger teachers then, two years ago, have now two more years in the teaching profession and they would probably be quite interested and anxious to see that provision continued, so that one day they may be able to take advantage of it. I have not spoken to anybody directly about this particular point, so I am wondering if the NTA has, in fact - and I presume there is bargaining going on; I am not really quite sure what stage it is at, I know there are some concerns and problems with what is happening. But without divulging anything of a collective bargaining nature, it would be a reasonable question to ask, Are the teachers, or the NTA, still hoping or looking for that 'thirty and out' provision to remain in the next collective agreement, for example? I presume it is a benefit they wanted to continue.

Maybe the Minister could elaborate for me, or give me some idea of whether or not he is aware that the teachers - and he would be in communication with the NTA frequently - whether or not he is aware if there is an interest by the NTA in maintaining that benefit that is there now, that 'thirty and out' benefit, or was it just negotiated the last time for the two years and the NTA now doesn't have the interest in seeing it carried on?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: Just negotiate - I am listening to (inaudible). I am quite serious.

Ms Cowan: (Inaudible) serious like (inaudible).

Mr. Simms: I am quite serious.

Mr. Chairman, maybe I missed something. I am not quite sure. Is the Minister of Labour suggesting my question is not serious?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: Oh, maybe she didn't hear the question. I am asking if the NTA are asking for the 'thirty and out' provision which is now in the collective agreement as a result of the last agreement. Are the NTA anxious to see that benefit remain in there, or are they prepared now to go on to other things? The one that was reached two years ago was really for that period of time, just for that two years, because there were a number of teachers looking for it at that time. That is a reasonable question, is it not?

An Hon. Member: You know the answer to that.

Mr. Simms: I do not know the answer. I honestly do not. I have not talked to the NTA or anybody in the NTA to ask.

Mr. Reid: I am a teacher, ask me.

Mr. Simms: Okay. Well, perhaps the Member can tell me. What is the answer?

Mr. Reid: You know they want the 'thirty and out'.

Mr. Simms: Well, get up and tell me. They do want the 'thirty and

out'. Okay. The Member for Carbonear has confirmed it. I say to the Minister of Education, there is no need for him to worry about it, because the Member for Carbonear has now just confirmed, yes, the NTA do want it in their next collective agreement. So that is one benefit that teachers will be pursuing, it seems. I understand also from other sources, teachers, not necessarily those involved on the negotiating team, are receiving strong signals from the Government, through Treasury Board I presume, that the Government is anxious or interested in making some major changes, some significant changes to their existing pension plan. I only hear this via the grapevine. I haven't had anybody in NTA officially tell me this, or anything else, but I hear that teachers are very, very concerned that they have gotten some kind of a signal, from Treasury Board I presume, that the Government is attempting, or is interested in making major, significant changes to the teachers' pension plan. Now, that is on top of the 'thirty and out' provision, which I now have had confirmed by the Member for Carbonear that the teachers do want that. But there are other items, I understand, with respect to the pension plan that they have a lot of concerns with. So I would be interested in hearing from the Minister of Education or the President of Treasury Board, whether or not these rumours are unfounded or, if, in fact, the Treasury Board people are suggesting to the NTA they want some major concessions on pensions. Can he confirm that, perhaps? I would be interested in hearing.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the President of the Council.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to take a few minutes to simply comment on some of the points raised just now by the Opposition House Leader, but raised by a number of Members opposite in the last few days. I suppose it is relevant here, in the sense we are talking about a pension plan, an amendment to The Education (Teachers' Pensions) Act. It is probably an appropriate time to comment on it.

A pension plan is a plan that is in place to ensure that people, when they retire, have a certain level of income and that they can live their retirement years in relative comfort, without suffering from lack of necessities. This is the purpose of a pension plan.

Down through the years, Mr. Chairman, teachers, in particular, have contributed to a pension plan that in reality did not exist and the money went into the Consolidated Revenue Fund and was used by the Province to do road work, public buildings and whatever, the business of the Province. I suppose, in essence, there is nothing really wrong with that if it were looked upon as a loan from a fund. So, for quite a number of years, money that was contributed by teachers in the Province and was not matched by Government was used to do general Government business.

Then, Mr. Chairman, in 1980 I believe it was, Government made a decision to put an end to that situation and it was because of concern by a lot of people. At that point in time, there was a great concern expressed by teachers about their pension

plan. They were very concerned, and their concern essentially was this: We have been paying into a pension plan, we assume we have a pension plan, but will we ever be able to collect the money when we retire? This was their concern. They wanted to see a fund developed that represented the teachers' pension fund so that they knew when they retired they could count on getting their pension payments.

So, the Government of the day decided to have what they called a funded pension plan, where teachers and Government would put aside a certain percentage of money into a fund and allow that fund to grow so that teachers could be assured and have certainty that there was a fund there to pay their pensions.

Unfortunately, the Government of the day made no move to put the money in they should have put in; they made no move to replace the money that had been spent in previous years; they made no movement to guarantee that that pension fund would, in fact, exist. They did not live up to their obligation to fund the past service cost of that plan, they sat on it.

In that regard, I believe the teachers of the Province were misled, and were very seriously misled. And I was one of them at that point, Mr. Chairman. I assumed I had a funded pension plan. I was told I had a funded pension plan. I did not have a funded pension plan - I did not have a funded pension plan.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) Smallwood (inaudible).

Mr. Baker: Smallwood was gone in

1972. A lot of years since then. You had a lot of time to straighten all this up and you made no move to do it, no move at all.

Mr. Simms: We started it. We started it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: All you could do was mislead the teachers of this Province. That is all you did.

Mr. Simms: What happened in 1980? You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr. Baker: Now, then, Mr. Chairman, in 1980 there was a pretense on the part of Government that there was a funded pension plan. There was not a funded pension plan. It did not give any assurance to teachers that money would be there in the pot to pay their pensions. And over a number of years teachers began to realize that, that there was a certain amount of money being put aside, and, for some reason, when they did their analysis of the fund they discovered that fund is not going to last and that there is no guarantee in what was put in place in 1980, that there would be money there to pay the teachers' pensions later on. They discovered this after proper analysis.

So, the first thing they did was come to Government and say, Government, you owe us money. You owe us a lot of money. Put the money in. Where is the green stuff? Put the money you owe us into the plan. Government refused to do so. In the last collective agreement -

Mr. Simms: That is not true.

Mr. Baker: It is true.

Mr. Simms: It is not true.

Mr. Baker: It is true! How much money did you put in, tell me?

An Hon. Member: Stand up! Stand up!

Mr. Baker: In the last collective agreement, and it may have been in the one before that, but what the Government did was they said to the teachers, we will assume the past service, the past liabilities of that plan and they made a promise to teachers they would. That's good. That's good. It gives some assurance to teachers. However, there was no plan for putting back all this money, but the teachers assumed, yes, that's fine. We will give them the benefit of the doubt and someday, we have the guarantee of Government, they will cover this past liability. In actual fact, even at that point, Mr. Chairman, what was happening was that the money that was being put aside by teachers and by Government did not cover the current service cost of the plan. Even assuming, even assuming the Government of the day had had the foresight and the common sense to put in this money they owed, even assuming that, Mr. Chairman, if they had put in all this money, the payments into the fund would still not have been adequate to provide that pension to teachers that they were promised.

We have come to the point, Mr. Chairman, where we are in a mess, and that comes back to my statement, my statement they keep quoting, that teachers should be concerned about their plan. I'll change that now. The teachers are concerned about the funding of

their plan. They are very concerned about it. They are smart. They should be. Now, Mr. Chairman, we are in a mess. We are in a mess with regard to that pension plan simply because Members opposite were always willing to say oh, we can do anything. Let the people ten, fifteen, twenty years down the road worry about paying for it, we will promise anything! Let them worry about that fifteen years down the road. If it takes a couple of billion dollars in the year 2005, so what? That's none of our concern, we don't have to make sure the money is there! Because of that attitude, Mr. Chairman, we are in one heck of a mess and right now we are trying to find a solution to that mess that's acceptable to Government and to the teachers of the Province.

The teachers recognize the seriousness of the situation. They recognize that there is a mess that has to be straightened up now, they recognize it is going to be. But out of all this, and it is not going to be easy, it is going to be, perhaps, amongst some of the more difficult things done at a bargaining table, but out of all this we are going to come out with an arrangement that is satisfactory to Government and teachers, that will ensure that the Teachers' Pension Plan, the money will be there when the teachers retire. The money will be there, their plan is safe, their money is safe. It is a solid plan, it's a good plan, and what is on the surface is in reality what exists under the surface, and that's an assurance they have never had before!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, it reminds me of the old adage when I listen to the Government House Leader: The best defence is an offence. I have never heard such a wide-ranging answer to my question which was, do the teachers have reasons to be concerned about pension provisions they already have being eroded? That was basically my question, and as is the wont of the Government House Leader, he will speak for ten minutes all around it, gives a big history, and tries to paint a few political points by saying, 'if the previous Administration...' He neglects, however, to say if the Liberals, for the twenty-three years they had been there, had -

Mr. Baker: I said that.

Mr. Simms: Oh, no, you didn't. If you said it, you said it very quietly. Because I distinctly heard the hon. Member say 'the previous Administration, the Government of the day.' That's what he kept referring to. Now, let's face it, the reality and honest answer is, if the Government, back in the Liberal days of Mr. Smallwood, had taken those contributions and put them into a fully funded pension program as opposed to putting it into general revenue, which is where it started, and it was discontinued by successive administrations, then the pension plan itself would not be in the shape it is in. I understand that. I know all that. To suggest teachers were not aware of it, I mean, we had discussions with teachers for the last couple of years about the pension plan. I remember it when I was there, so

that is a year and a half ago, at least, or probably two years ago. We had meetings in the collective bargaining board room where we talked about it. We knew what the problem was, and they knew what the problem was. The big difference was, Mr. Chairman, that our Administration was trying to negotiate through consultation with the NTA a way to get around the problem, and this Administration is going to lay the heavy-hand on during collective bargaining.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible) seventeen years.

Mr. Simms: We will see.

Mr. Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Simms: The Member for St. John's South may very well eat his words in the next little while. Within the next few months, I would say, come around September or so, we will see what transpires and how good an agreement you get. I hope you are successful.

Mr. Murphy: I guess you do.

Mr. Simms: I say to hon. Members, I absolutely do. The last thing I would want to see is a strike by teachers. Who would want that? Nobody wants it. But I fear, from the words I get, the fear I have from talking to teachers, is that it is going to be a very difficult challenge for the President of Treasury Board. I simply asked him the question do they have reason to fear, and he has now answered and confirmed yes, they have reason to fear major changes in their pension plan. That is what I asked. That was a simple question. He did not have to get up in a big tirade and berate me and berate the previous

Administration. He did not have to get on with all of that. It was absolutely unnecessary.

I asked the other question about the 'thirty and out' provision. He did not mention that at all, but the Member for Carbonear confirmed that yes, the NTA want the 'thirty and out' provision in this next collective agreement. They are looking for it, and I presume the Member for Carbonear has the authority to speak on behalf of the Government - I presume he does. He is pretty knowledgeable. He speaks on other education matters down in his own area, in Carbonear. I saw him quite vocal about issues affecting education in his area, so I assume if he tells me today, yes, the NTA want this in their current agreement, then that is a fact, too. We shall see what transpires, Mr. Chairman. In any event, the Bill here, the amendment to the legislation, is to legislate something that was put into the last collective agreement by the previous Administration, in co-operation and consultation with the NTA, and it is something we should feel very proud about.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

I have recognized the hon. President of Treasury Board. If the hon. Member for Grand Bank wants to speak he can speak, but I recognized the hon. President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I need protection from that hon. Member, Mr. Chairman. He is losing control of himself. I would like to make a comment in terms of the 'thirty and out', something that was very surprising to me. I believe the Opposition House Leader was President of Treasury Board at the time that was handled and done, negotiated, and I believe the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes was the Minister of Education at that time and they both, for some reason, keep referring to the 'thirty and out' as a pilot project kind of thing for a couple of years, and now wondering if the teachers want us to put it in their next agreement. I believe the former Minister of Education, the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes, indicated that this was a pilot project. That really surprises me, because the two hon. gentlemen who should know differently, obviously do not. If, in fact, they intended this as a pilot project, that is not what is written in the agreement. If these hon. gentlemen who were negotiating assumed it was a pilot project, and obviously that is what they are assuming, that is not the way it is. The 'thirty and out' was an improvement, something that was put into the pension arrangement as a separate item, was financed separately, and was not a pilot project by any stretch of the imagination.

Mr. Simms: I do not know what you are talking about. I did not say that.

Mr. Baker: Well, that is what you people were referring to, so it really surprised me.

Mr. Simms: I did not say that.

Mr. Baker: The only comment was that at the end of two years there would be a look at it to see if you need the increased premiums. But there was no pilot project of any kind, so that is part of the teachers' pension arrangement right now. It is not a matter of whether they want it included in the new agreement or not, it is part of their pension agreement. That is part of the agreement. Mr. Chairman, there is probably some confusion about the 'thirty and out' because of some of the terminology used by Members opposite who, I believe, should know better.

Mr. Chairman: Shall Clause 1, carry?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: If he wants to keep the debate going that is fine with me, but I have to respond to that. I did not say it was a pilot project. I have no idea what the President of Treasury Board is talking about, I do not have a clue. It is in a collective agreement. Everybody who has a click at all understands that. I indicated that in the days of the discussion leading up to the 'thirty and out', there was an indication from the NTA we would put it in this agreement for two years and see what happened. Now, that is a fact. But I did not make any reference to it being a pilot project. I understand it is in the collective agreement. The question is, is the Government going to remove it from the collective agreement?

An Hon. Member: Are you going to strip it from the contract?

On Motion, Clauses 1 through 6, inclusive, carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the Bill without amendment, carried.

Mr. Baker: Order 10, Mr. Chairman.

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Judicature Act, 1986". (Bill No. 8).

On motion, Clause 1, carried.

Mr. Chairman: Shall Clause 2 carry?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Just a brief word, Mr. Chairman. I think our Justice critic, the Member for Humber East, made the points she wanted to make on behalf of our Party and our caucus during the second reading debate. As I understand it, one of the things in this legislation gives Cabinet, rather than the panel of judges that now exists, the authority to set fees that would be collected, and I think the Member for Humber East wanted a caution put in there, which she did, and I will repeat it now at this stage, and that is all I will say about it. Since Cabinet rather than the panel of judges now have the authority to set the fees collected, the caution is that Cabinet not abuse this power. And I see the Minister of Finance perking up as soon as he notices this, because there is another fee, another one that can be increased from time to time, another chance for him to get more money. I suggest strongly to the President of Treasury Board that he keep this particular Bill low key, keep it away from the eyes of the Minister

of Finance so that the Cabinet does not be unduly influenced by his obvious power, seen in his Budget with all the increases he got in fees and taxes. He obviously has a lot of influence and power within the Cabinet circle. But do not let him understand or read this bill too much, because the next thing these fees could be jumped considerably. That is the only comment we make, and the only caution we want to throw out.

On motion, Clause 2 carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the Bill without amendment, carried.

Mr. Baker: Order 11.

A Bill, "An Act Respecting Enduring Powers Of Attorney". (Bill No. 40).

Mr. Chairman: Shall Clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, just a brief comment on it, nothing else. This is a Bill, of course, that really was recommended by the Law Reform Commission I think, back in 1989, as I recollect. I do not have a knowledge of everything that was going on in the Government around the Cabinet table, but I do recollect it was the previous Administration's intention to bring in this particular piece of legislation. I believe they put the wheels in motion to do so, so we really have no difficulty with it. I believe that is the expression of the Justice critic on our side. So if there is no other comment, we would be happy to move that all

fourteen clauses be carried rather than go through each one individually.

On motion, Clauses 1 through 14, carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the Bill without amendment, carried.

Mr. Baker: Order 12, Mr. Chairman.

"An Act To Amend The Small Claims Act." (Bill No. 41).

Mr. Chairman: Shall Clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a brief comment.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: No, three Bills. So this is my third comment on the third Bill. I cannot just let this go through without making some comment or observation. No legislation should go through this House -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: I beg your pardon? Did you get another scrum today? Did we get you another scrum? The Minister of health is pretty delighted about -

Mr. Decker: When Bill Marshall wanted (inaudible).

Mr. Simms: When he wanted to get it through, he smiled.

Mr. Decker: (Inaudible) Bills put through (inaudible).

Mr. Simms: Well, you do not see

the President of Treasury Board smile. No way! He would not be in Treasury Board if he was smiling, I guarantee you. He has no reason to smile in Treasury Board.

Anyway, Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a comment on it. As I understand it, "The Act To Amend The Small Claims Court," I think, is a very positive initiative. I believe this may be an initiative of this Administration. I have been trying desperately to find some initiative that actually is an initiative of this Administration, because many of the other pieces of legislation, and the one we just passed in fact, was an initiative of the previous Administration. The next Bill we will debate, when we rise the Committee now to get back into second readings, is another initiative of this Administration, that is to combine the two Departments, Career Development and Education, a very important piece of legislation. Other than those two, I cannot see many others, so I thought I should take advantage of the occasion, then, to heap praise on the Government - heap praise and accolades on the Administration for a very positive initiative. I mean this sincerely, by the way, in the case of this particular piece of legislation.

Dr. Kitchen: (Inaudible) guarantee you.

Mr. Simms: The Minister of Finance had better be careful with his comments. He knows how easy it is to upset me. He attacks me normally, but I would ask him to settle down and relax and we might get through some work today. The Government House Leader will give you a sly look very shortly, and

tell you to sit back and be careful.

This particular piece of legislation will be very positive for the people of the Province. As I understand it, it increases the jurisdiction now in Small Claims Court from the amount of \$1,000, which exists, up to \$3,000. I think that is one of the main features of the Bill. Presently, anybody who goes to Small Claims Court and has an amount in excess of \$1,000 - \$1,500 or \$2,000, as I understand it, would have to go to the Supreme Court because there are no more District Courts. I think that is the way the process works now. The Government House Leader will have as much knowledge as I do on these Justice matters, but my understanding is that is what happens in the courts. Maybe the Minister of Finance is aware. Somebody goes to the Small Claims Court now and the limit is \$1,000, correct? If your claim is, say, for \$1,500, you have no choice but to go to the Supreme Court now, because there is no District Court anymore. So this Bill will be very, very beneficial to the general public. It increases the amount from \$1,000 up to \$3,000, and you will be able to do it in Small Claims Court. I think that is a positive initiative, one I hope the Government will make the public aware of. As small as it might sound, as minor as it might sound, it is very important to those people who are important, and that is the people of the Province.

Mr. Chairman, we have no major difficulty with it, in fact we endorse it; we heap praise on the Government for bringing in this initiative. It is an important initiative. We believe, as an

Opposition, in giving constructive criticism, and giving praise where praise is due. I am taking advantage of this occasion to heap praise upon the Government and the Minister of Justice for his initiative in this regard. I want the House to know, Mr. Chairman, that this Opposition does not just oppose for the sake of opposing. It opposes, as is our constitutional obligation, and we try to do it in a constructive way. That means that when there are very positive advantages put forward by the Administration then our opposition - this Opposition will praise the Government for those initiatives. I want to do that here today without reservation, without equivocation, without hesitation, Mr. Chairman. I have no hesitation at all in praising the Government for this initiative and I look forward to more initiatives coming forward in the near future.

Anyway, Mr. Chairman, I could not let the opportunity go by without adding those few comments.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a brief comment. I believe the Opposition House Leader is correct that that is an initiative that we have acted very quickly on, but I would also like to make the point, Mr. Chairman, that whereas Members opposite keep indicating that this bill and that bill and that bill was an initiative of the previous Government, I would like to go back a little further than that, Mr. Chairman, and point out that many of these bills and many of the pieces of legislation that we are now bringing in were things that have been thought of and

considered and so on perhaps back to the previous, previous, previous Government, but we have taken the initiative to bring them in. Now, Mr. Chairman, that is really what counts.

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Small Claims Act." (Bill No. 41).

Motion that the Committee report having passed the Bill without amendment, carried.

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. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred, and have directed me to report Bills No. 14, 5, 8, 40 and 41 passed without amendment.

On motion, report received and adopted, said Bills ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

Mr. Baker: Order 21, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order 21.

Motion, second reading of a Bill, "An Act Respecting The Department Of Education." (Bill No. 3).

The hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

Mr. Hearn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I concluded debate or adjourned debate on Bill No. 3 a few days ago, and the Bill itself is An Act Respecting The Department Of Education, and what it is, it is a Bill that brings both Departments together. It is supposed to be a Bill that brings

both Departments together, the former Department of Career Development and Advanced Studies and the former Department of Education. Maybe it should be referred to as the Bill that destroys the Department of Education as it was known, because as we mentioned in our preliminary remarks on the Bill, that since both Departments have been brought together, it seems that the Department formerly known as Career Development and Advanced Studies has received all the attention in relation to person power, funding, publicity, and the former Department of Education seems to be lost completely. Now the people in the field, the parents, the school trustees, the superintendents all of them are extremely upset with what they see happening. The Budget was brought in showing absolutely no increase in their funding for that section of the Department, whereas the other Department received quite a lot of funds. On the employment side, if one looks at the figures, you will see in relation to the salary Bills severe cuts in the Department of Education, whereas there are good increases in the other section of the Department.

There is no doubt about the fact that whoever is calling the shots now in the Department of Education, certainly is looking after the post-secondary side and not the primary/elementary and secondary. The unfortunate thing about it, is, that a lot of people who should be very concerned about this are very quiet about it. Most notably so, the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, and the Parliamentary Press Secretary, who, as former Presidents of the Newfoundland Teachers Association, were extremely vocal when they came to

primary, elementary and secondary education as they should have been.

Ms Cowan: You're very boring.

Mr. Hearn: The Minister says I am very boring. Not half as boring as the Minister is in her lack of representation on behalf of the teachers, and it is going to be a long, hot and I guarantee you, not a boring summer for the Minister in particular, when she is asked to stand up and account for her lack of representation on behalf of the teachers, whom she represented so well when she was President of the Newfoundland Teachers Association.

Even though I did mention to her, in order to achieve a settlement on the last agreement, that was achieved so peaceably and amicably, the executive of her association sent her away on a trip to Australia, knowing that she would be long enough gone to get the agreement in place which is what happened. However, the lack of representation by the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary at this time is a real concern, and I haven't heard them stand in the House - you don't expect them to be too vocal outside because they can't afford to disturb the Government. The Minister of Employment and Labour Relations knows she is on very thin ice anyway, and it wouldn't take too much for the Premier to flick her out of Cabinet, and the Parliamentary Secretary on the other hand is trying to get in, so he can't very well displease the Premier, either. Unlike the Member for Placentia, who doesn't mind taking on the Premier and Government, when they do something with which he doesn't agree, these two Members haven't said a word, but the teachers in the Province

are going to be asking where are our former Presidents who directed us, who told us how bad Governments were and that we must yell and fight and scream to get attention and they yelled and fought and screamed and they got attention, they got some good contracts, and made some tremendous gains. Now the teachers see these gains are being taken away from them by the Minister of Education and the President of Treasury Board, or the attempt they made to take away the gains, and they are asking where are our staunch supporters in Cabinet. They came to us and they told us that if we can get elected, if we had some people in there, if our fellows were in Government, then we would have no trouble getting the good contracts, so they got rid of their friends and elected what turned out to be their enemies, and the people who led the fight originally, have now turned their backs on the teachers of the Province.

So it is going to be interesting to see if either one or the other or both stand up and speak on this Bill, and express their concerns about what has happened to the Department of Education in the Province.

I sympathized with the Minister the other day. I said, he is a tremendous fellow who has a great following around the Province, people have a lot of respect for the Minister of Education. You won't find a better person anywhere in the Province. The unfortunate thing about it, is, the poor Minister is not allowed to do anything. He can't make any decisions. He has people in his Department reporting directly to the Premier, who are running

roughshod over any ideas the Minister might have.

When it comes to looking for dollars, his friend, the Minister of Finance, squeezes the purse and refuses to give him any and the poor Minister ended up with a Budget with no increase at all, not enough money going to the school boards to keep even with last year, no increase in the equalization with which they campaigned, their big plank in the election platform. Full equalization, the Premier says, on a front-page story from out in Lewisporte. Full equalization all the Members chimed in over the last year or so. And, once they get in what happens? They freeze the amount of money that is into the tax equalization scheme. The other big problem that would affect the Department of Education was to abolish the School Tax Authorities. The President of Treasury Board led the fight there. School Tax Authorities must be abolished. The Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Government Services now, whose only commercial during the election campaign is, we will get rid of School Tax Authorities, not a peep out of them now because they realize School Tax Authorities provide a tremendous service and a lot of money to the Province.

An Hon. Member: Now, he is getting rid of truckers.

Mr. Hearn: Now, the Minister is getting rid of truckers instead of School Tax Authorities. That one is not over yet either. Mr. Speaker, it is going to be very interesting to see who stands up and objects to the Bill. It is certainly not a Bill we can support because what it is doing

is destroying the Department of Education, the primary, elementary and secondary division, which is so important to the future of Newfoundland. We cannot start preparing students at the post-secondary level. They will never get there if there is not a sound foundation, and we have extreme concerns with some of the things the Minister is not allowed to do out around the Province, because he is prevented by his colleagues in Cabinet who strong-armed the Minister, and being such a nice fellow he does not want to object, scream, or shout around the Cabinet table.

But I say to the Minister, you have to. To be heard you have to assert your authority and your knowledge, especially as it pertains to education in the Province and the need to put money there. If they are going to overlook the primary, elementary and secondary section then the Minister, over the next year or so, is going to find himself in very, very hot water, from the school trustees, from the superintendents, from parents' groups, and maybe even eventually from the teachers. One of the most notable things that has happened in recent months has happened to the Bulletin from the Newfoundland Teachers' Association.

If one would go back to the days of the presidency of the Member for Exploits, the Parliamentary Secretary, and the Member for Conception Bay South, the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, and pick out the bulletins that came from the Newfoundland Teachers' Association while they were presidents, you would see in the bulletins a section usually done by the chief executive officer, an editorial

basically, nailing Government, day in and day out, month after month, or issue after issue, a section nailing Government.

It would not matter what it was about, whether it be teacher negotiations, pensions, salaries, educational funding in particular, then nobody did more than the past Government for teachers in relation to pension plans, educational funding, re-establishing them in the priority place in the Province they so much deserved, and yet issue after issue they were nailed by the partisan crew who were involved with the Newfoundland Teachers' Association.

Since the two past Presidents came into Government there has not been a peep. Issue after issue was there and nothing about Government, nothing about educational funding, not a sound. We had a Budget this year which was the worst Budget, as far as the Department of Education went, and the people involved in the field of education, in living history. It was the worst Budget that ever came out affecting the primary, elementary and secondary sections of education and not a peep from the Newfoundland Teachers Association. Why? Because they are probably being told by their past Presidents, don't say anything now and we will take it up for you when negotiations come around.

The problem is negotiations have come around and the two Members find that they are fighting a brick wall. Like the Minister of Education they are butting their heads against the wall when it comes to making a dent in Cabinet.

The Minister of Employment and

Labour Relations has no effect at all on the Cabinet in relation to getting any benefits for her own Department not to say the teachers of the Province. They took away all the funding she had for programs. A Minister of Employment who is supposed to create jobs in the Province - they stripped her budget. Not a cent left to create any jobs. And they are even starting to whittle away at the budget of the Minister of Social Services now also.

But the parliamentary secretary, of course, as I mentioned the other day with the Meech Lake issue on, cannot even get his memos into the Premier's office anymore. The only thing that is accepted is a memo regarding Meech Lake. Maybe now when the Premier comes back after being embarrassed up along in the Meech Lake discussions and put in his place, and after being educated to the fact that his interpretation was wrong. The Premier basically admitted last night that his interpretation of the Meech Lake Accord was wrong. Finally he began to see that the distinct society really did not mean what he thought a distinct society meant. He also began to realize that the Senate is not the be all and end all.

If you remember a few days ago I asked the Premier -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Hearn: I asked the Premier if he thought the United States Senate was a Triple 'E' Senate and after some deliberation he said yes it was. Then I asked him what effect it had on the social economic benefits of the people in

the different states and he said he did not know. But you know what happened, the Premier -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: No, no. I asked him about Mississippi compared to Connecticut, but then I asked him about the rest and he said, well you know, that might be the one exception, but it is not. And anybody who looks at the personal income of people in the different states knows that there is just as much diversions as there is in Canada, from Connecticut right down to Mississippi you have the whole spectrum, you have changes in the socioeconomic well being of the residents in the different states.

The Premier said he would research it, and true to his word he did. The Premier went back and he began to look at the socioeconomic base in the United States and he realized that the Triple 'E' Senate really does not have that much effect. So, he said to himself, you know, what the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes said must be true. So, he went up to Ottawa and he realized, thanks to the information that I gave him, that his interpretation of the distinct society was incorrect and that the Triple 'E' Senate was not the saviour of Newfoundland at all.

So, after listening and learning and after, of course, being educated by his colleagues up there, the Premier has done an about face and is now saying, well, perhaps I was wrong in the beginning. Now he does not say it in those words, but if you read behind the scenes that is exactly what he is saying.

So, the Premier will agree with

the other Premiers and they will pass Meech Lake because it is the right thing to do, and it will be interesting to see how he explains it when he comes back into the House. That is what I am interested in seeing. But whether he does or not let us hope it is out of the way, let us hope that Meech Lake can be put aside so that the parliamentary secretary - he wants to talk about relevance - it all affects Meech Lake. The Meech Lake discussions have a tremendous effect on whether or not the parliamentary secretary got to see the Premier. And he has not been able to see the Premier in recent weeks because he knows nothing about Meech Lake and the Premier was only talking to the Member for Pleasantville, who is the parliamentary expert.

So, consequently, when he gets back the parliamentary secretary might be able to get in to see the Premier to say to him that teachers in this Province are being railroaded by the Minister of Education, and by the President of Treasury Board, and unless you do something, Sir, we are going to have trouble with the teachers. The unfortunate thing about it is he knows if the teachers do get upset, as they are presently, that the people who will get the blame for it will be the parliamentary secretary and the former president of the Newfoundland Teachers Association, the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations. So, he is going to have to make sure he gets back.

So, there is the relevancy, because it ties in the future of the Department of Education; whether or not teachers will obtain good pension benefits; whether or not teachers will obtain a raise; whether or not

substitute teachers will be allowed to continue to teach in our schools - a number of them will be axed; whether or not our hospital schools will continue to exist; whether or not the school boards out there get full tax equalization and can put money into the schools; whether or not all these things happen will depend perhaps on whether or not the parliamentary secretary can get in to see the Premier.

Actually, I have taken the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations to lunch in the past, and she took me to lunch. I am not sure whether the Parliamentary -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: I am not telling, if she doesn't.

I am not sure whether the Parliamentary Secretary ever took me to lunch. I really do not know. I do not recall. But I must say we did have a number of very enlightening conversations, perhaps, we revolutionized education in the Province. If there are two people who, perhaps, working closely together, changed the whole education philosophy as it depended upon employer working with employee et cetera, it started with the Member for Exploits and myself, because that was a complete turnaround.

The unfortunate thing about it, of course, was before the message really got out, we were into elections and you had politics paying a part and you had people behind the scenes not getting the true message out, et cetera. It is only now, it is only in the last couple of months that it is all coming back to them. They saw

how good they had it and now, of course, everything is regressing and they are saying, oh! my, if we only had our time back. If we only had our time back, and we had people in who would listen to us, who would talk to us, who would consult with us, who would call us up behind the scenes and say, look let's get some of those things off the table. I know you have concerns but let's cut through the red tape.

But when a Minister of Education has two big Departments to look after, when he has a bunch of civil servants who are dictating to him and going off on their own and getting him into all kinds of trouble, then the poor Minister has very little time to think about negotiations. He has very little time to talk to his teachers. Consequently, relations between the teachers and the Department are at an all-time low.

So, Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate thing about this Bill is what it does really is destroy the Department of Education. It does not build, solidify, bring together two Departments, where you have a continuancy right up through, it really eliminates. What we are seeing is the destruction of the Department of Education. Unless, the Minister of Education asserts his influence. Now, the Minister has the ability, he has the knowledge, and certainly he can stir up the goodwill to do it. The only problem is has the Minister got the intestinal fortitude to take on all of those who are against him? He is like Cervantes out fighting windmills. Because they are coming at him, you know, the wheels constantly spinning and he is there trying to protect himself

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: No, he wrote the book, didn't he, Miguel de Cervantes. What was his name, the guy - Don Quixote. Right. Or, as we used to say in the old days - as the Member for Mount Scio - Bell Island probably said back before we had the french pronunciation Don Quixote, who rode up and charged the windmills. That is way the Minister of Education is now.

So maybe it is time that he got some support. Undoubtedly, one of his allies will have to be the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations. It is unfortunate that the Member for Exploits is not in Cabinet with him. It is unfortunate. Because looking around at the others, who are there, he cannot appreciate what it means to be in the position that the Minister finds himself in. He cannot appreciate how hard it is to explain to people who have not come up through the field; who do not understand what small schools are; who does not understand the extra cost delivering education to rural Newfoundland; who does not understand what specialist teachers mean; who does not understand what special education is all about,- special needs; who does not understand what burnout means, and anxiety means.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

If the hon. Member will take his seat I will announce the questions for the Late Show.

Question one: I am dissatisfied with the answer given by the President of Treasury Board to my question for the Minister of Transportation concerning the

independent dumptruck operators and wish to debate it on the Late Show - the Member for Grand Falls.

I am dissatisfied with the answer of the Minister of Health concerning my question related to the recommendations of the St. John's Hospital Council concerning the rationalization of the health care services in St. John's. - the Member for St. John's East.

I am dissatisfied with the answer to my question on the Outer Ring Road by the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation, and would like to debate it on the Late Show - the Member for St John's East Extern.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

I only have a few concluding remarks. I just want to say again that our concerns are deep and I would suggest to the Minister of Education that when it comes to standing up for education in the Province, if he feels he is going to have to take a strong stand on such things protecting the Department of Education and helping the teachers, especially in relation to their pension plan, their deserved increase in salary, and whatever, that he can rely on the Members on this side. Perhaps, if he can find a few allies on his own side, coupled with us, we will gladly support him in some of the initiatives that he wants to take. Certainly, in relation to this present Bill that is before us we do have some real concerns, because it is effectively creating a senior Department of Education at the cost of eliminating the primary,

elementary and secondary section, and unless that is addressed soon, it is going to be too late to recover from the damages that have already been done, not only in the field, but within the Department, and within areas such as the Denominational Education Councils, the School Trustees Association, and Superintendents association in particular, because the Minister has been led down the garden path by a number of people who are not close to the scene.

The Minister had, as I mentioned before, in his Department, top-notch people who were very familiar with the workings of the educational system. Unfortunately the Premier chose to axe the Deputy Minister, one of the Assistant Deputy Ministers, and now we see some others moving out because they just know that they are not being listened to, and the expertise that they have is being bypassed, and the Department is being run by people who are not really familiar with the nitty-gritty concerns that you find in the primary, elementary, and secondary section.

That is extremely important because, as I said earlier, you have to be there to realize and to understand the workings, the mechanisms, of working in the system at the local level, particularly around the rural parts of the Province. The Minister is well aware of that, but he is left entirely alone to try to fight the battle, and it is tough going, and unless he can hold his troops together - and we see a tremendous fragmentation now of the Department of Education and the education system - unless he can hold his troops together then he is going to have a long, hard battle, because the people on the

other end are probably not going to be too concerned with what happens out in small schools around the Province. Let us hope, Mr. Speaker, that if the Bill goes through, as it undoubtedly will, because the Government will ram it through, and we end up with the one Department of Education, that hopefully the Minister will assert that influence to make sure that it a solid Department that serves all the people in the Province, especially the students who are in the primary, elementary, and secondary levels around the coast of Newfoundland.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

I have some bad news for the Minister of Education. I know he is anxious to close debate on this particular Bill, but the Minister cannot speak next, Mr. Speaker, because under our rules when the Minister speaks he closes debate. I did not see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier try to get into the debate, Mr. Speaker. I looked around, because normally, of course, debate flows back and forth across the House. Before I attempted to rise I looked around and I did not see any Member on the Opposite side trying to rise except the Minister, so I obviously could not wait any longer, because if the Minister was recognized we would be in trouble, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say a few words on this Bill before it passes, and I suspect there will be other Members on this side of the House who will want to say a few words

on the Bill before it passes. I think it is timely, very timely, even though I believe this Bill might have been put on the Order Paper months ago now, but I think it is very timely that the debate is occurring at this particular moment, because having witnessed the Budget brought in by the Minister of Finance in March, I believe it is very, very, timely that there be a debate on education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now the first thing I want to say, Mr. Speaker, and say it clearly, is that I believe the present Minister of Education has come to the Department of Education with a great deal of ability. I think he has come to the Department with a great deal of commitment, and I think he has come to the Department with a great deal of sincerity, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: And I believe that fully. I also believe, Mr. Speaker, that other people, particularly people involved in the education sector, whether it be in primary, elementary or secondary or whether it be in post-secondary education, I believe an awful lot of people had a lot of great expectations from this Minister, probably more expectations from this Minister than they have had in sometime, because this Minister had years of high profile association with education.

This is the first time it has been at the elected level. But the Minister had been in the education news, I suppose, to put it that way, in Newfoundland and Labrador, I guess, probably in a high profile way for the last

twenty-five or thirty years: going back to the royal commission report which he did for the former Liberal Government, going back to specific assignments that he did for us when we were Government, some of which he made commitments which he did not keep, Mr. Speaker, but that is another story. I might get into that some other day.

But the fact of the matter is, is that the Minister has been associated - the last appointment that the Tory Government gave the Minister, Mr. Speaker, I remember specifically asking our colleague, the then Minister of Education, now what about if there happened to be an election before the task force on education financing is completed? I say I would not want as a former educator to have it dropped. I mean it was out of concern for the financing of education that I was prompted to ask the question around the Cabinet table. And a good friend of mine, Bill Dickson, was being appointed to the task force as well and I believe there was one other, wasn't there?

Dr. Warren: Cec Roebotham.

Mr. Rideout: Cec Roebotham. All three eminently qualified to carry out the task which Government was about to ask the Lieutenant-Governor to convey onto those three individuals, a very onerous task, Mr. Speaker, to look at all aspects of financing of education in Newfoundland and Labrador and to make recommendations to the Government about new innovative approaches for the financing of education.

An Hon. Member: A good idea.

Mr. Rideout: I think it was a

good idea and I think that the three choices that the then Minister of Education brought to the Cabinet were possibly the three best choices that you could find in Newfoundland and Labrador. But out of my concern for ensuring that the job be completed, Mr. Speaker, in case certain events might catch up with the time frame of the task force, I remember specifically as one Minister around the Cabinet table, not to give away Cabinet secrets, it is not in that light, I remember asking will Dr. Warren finish this task?

An Hon. Member: Will he chair it.

Mr. Rideout: No. I believe the recommendation to the Minister was that you would chair it.

An Hon. Member: No, he did not agree to chair it.

Mr. Rideout: No, he did not agree to chair it, I see. I said will Dr. Warren finish this task if there happened to be an election before the work is completed? I remember specifically asking that. Because I was so concerned and the job given this task force was so great and needed to be done, I was worried that it might be delayed for months and months and months. And, Mr. Speaker, our colleague the Minister of Education -

An Hon. Member: What did he say?

Mr. Rideout: - swore on a stack of bibles that high, that Dr. Warren, the present Minister of Education, had guaranteed him without any uncertainty that he would not abandon this task force under any circumstances. Elections, no elections. He would not abandon. This was his last,

you know, great contribution to education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rideout: And he was not going to let down the task force, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: A swan song it was.

Mr. Rideout: It was his last swan song, and he was not going to let down the task force. But anyway, we all know what happened.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I got sort of taken off track there for a minute or so, but I had to let the Minister know that my memory is very acute when it comes to that kind of thing and I remembered it very specifically.

But what I was saying, Mr. Speaker, is that I do believe that this Minister brought a great deal of expectations from a lot of people to the field of education or involved in the field of education when he was appointed Minister of Education because of, as I have outlined, his past involvement, high profile involvement with education over the last twenty-five or thirty years in Newfoundland and Labrador.

But what people have come to see very, very quickly over the last twelve or thirteen months, Mr. Speaker, is that expectations are one thing and performance and deliverance is something else. This Minister, Mr. Speaker, is now into his second year and people in all sectors of education have had an opportunity to judge him. They have had an opportunity to meet with him, to judge his performance and what I am hearing, Mr. Speaker, from people in the NTA,

people in the school trustees, PTAs, school boards, what I am hearing all around the Province, is that it must have been easy to sort of pontificate from the ivory tower, but it is much more difficult when you leave the ivory tower and come to the real world, and the Minister, Mr. Speaker, is now in the real world. He is not in the ivory tower of the university, where he is able to pontificate without anybody wanting to knock him off the throne of pontification.

But now he is in the real world and the real world, the Minister has found out is far, far different, far different from the ivory tower just a few blocks down the street. The people who are in education have found out that the Minister is a far, far different person from what they had anticipated the ivory tower Minister would be. I have had people tell me, who have been to superintendents meetings and school trustees meetings and so on, that the Minister does a fantastic political job of glad handling himself around the room, to the extent that after he gets around the room, he turns to certain people and says: I don't think I have missed anybody, have I? I don't believe I missed anybody.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that there are certain people involved in education in Newfoundland and Labrador now who have developed another strategy, and the Minister had better watch for this because I know there has been a new strategy developed by people highly involved or involved in high places with education in Newfoundland and Labrador. They have seen the Minister for twelve or thirteen months, they know he

comes into the meeting halls and that he glad hands himself around the room and he makes certain, absolutely certain to the point of being absolutely accurate, that he didn't miss anybody. That word has gotten out and, do you know what is happening now, Mr. Speaker? They are lining up for the second time. People are now starting the receiving line a second time around. I have been told that by people involved in education in this Province that when they go through the line the first time, the Minister is so bubbly, the Minister is so giving of everything, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes no problem, no problem, no problem, I agree with you, I agree with you, and the hand is shaking and by this time the person behind is really pushing the person ahead of him so they go on. But they have figured out what to do. They now go back to the end of the line and start all over again.

The Minister was so taken up in the first time the line goes through, he forgets who went through, Mr. Speaker. So, by the time Superintendent Such-and-Such gets up to him the second time, he is able to ask, what about school financing? He is able to ask, what about the new school down in Gaultois where we have problems with Newfoundland Hydro? He is able to ask, what about the freeze on equalization? He is able to ask, what about the school tax authority that you talk about? They are now getting the hard, substantive questions in the second time around, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: They don't have time the first time, is that the problem?

Mr. Rideout: Oh, they can't get

anything in the first time.

Mr. Simms: Aha!

Mr. Rideout: The first time, the receiving line is, 'Oh, how are you? So good to see you? The hands going like this, yes, yes, yes. You need not worry, we'll take care of you.

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible). You never got that off (inaudible).

Mr. Simms: They have caught on to you. They have a new strategy now, to go through the second time.

An Hon. Member: They didn't go through this before, did they?

An Hon. Member: No they didn't.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, there is no Minister of Education who has travelled and associated more with the education sector in this Province, than the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes. I know that for a fact, because I served in Cabinet with him.

Ms Verge: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: I don't believe I served in Cabinet when the Member for Humber East was Minister.

Ms Verge: Well, I got around a lot.

Mr. Rideout: I know she was down to Pacquet, in my District, and opened up a new school.

An Hon. Member: She opened up one in my District.

Mr. Rideout: She opened up one in your District, in Frederickton.

Ms Verge: I used to have a lot of dealings with the Member for St.

John's West, the Minister of Mines and Energy.

Mr. Simms: Right on!

Mr. Rideout: There you are. He was chairman of the school board.

Ms Verge: (Inaudible) Provincial Association of School Tax Authorities and a great reformer of the school tax system.

Mr. Simms: A good Tory.

Mr. Rideout: The point I was making, Mr. Speaker - and it might have sounded a little bit jocular - I have been told from meetings that it is, in fact, happening.

Mr. Simms: Strategy.

Mr. Rideout: This new strategy is now being devised by superintendents and others involved in education, that they are going to get their point in to the Minister, but they know they won't get it on the first round. They know they'll get it on the second.

Dr. Warren: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the Minister talking about yesterday.

Mr. Simms: One unanimous superintendent.

Mr. Rideout: I don't mind a bit of banter back and forth, but I don't want the Minister to get too excited, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister looks at yesterday with a great deal of delight, telling the Member for Humber East today that he went to Corner Brook, almost making the House believe that he went to Corner Brook and would not come out of

Corner Brook without meeting with a concerned parents group out there. He never even offered to meet with them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: When he went over there, he had no plans.

Mr. Rideout: When he went over there, there was a call waiting for the Minister. Mr. Speaker, there were two calls -

Dr. Warren: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Let me tell the House, Mr. Speaker, so the Minister will know the facts. There were two calls made to the Minister's office yesterday morning; one was made at 9:00, I believe, and the other was made at 9:30. The 9:00 call to the Minister -

Mr. Simms: He doesn't even know.

Dr. Warren: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Okay, good. I am glad the Minister - I know that.

Ms Verge: Nobody else knew it.

Mr. Rideout: Nobody else knew it.

A parent from Corner Brook, Mr. Speaker, having been tipped off by the Member for Humber East, who does her homework, her research, knew where the Minister was going to be -

Ms Verge: Or suspected.

Mr. Rideout: Or suspected. A parent from Corner Brook call the Minister's office at 9:00 a.m., Mr. Speaker, and the person answering the phone said, 'I am sorry, the Minister is not in.'

Ms Verge: 'Be in in three or four

minutes.'

Mr. Rideout: The person answering the phone said, 'I am sorry, the Minister is not in. We expect him in, perhaps in three or four minutes. In five or ten minutes, the Minister might be in.' So, that parent - I will tell the Minister again, now - at 9:00, a parent from Corner Brook called and was told the Minister wasn't in his office, he was expected shortly, perhaps three or four or five minutes. The parent waited until 9:30, called back the Minister's office again and asked, 'I wonder would you be able to tell me what time Dr. Warren arrives in Corner Brook?' And the same person who took the first phone call said, 'I think he should be there by about now.' And, Mr. Speaker, that is how the concerned parents in Corner Brook knew the Minister of Education was coming for sure.

Dr. Warren: Everybody knew.

Mr. Rideout: Everybody knew, Mr. Speaker. Everybody knew.

Mr. Warren: How did everybody know?

Mr. Simms: There was no announcement or anything that you were speaking out there.

Dr. Warren: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: You don't announce where you go?

Ms. Verge: Well, how come you haven't met with the Great Humber Joint Councils?

Mr. Furey: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: That is totally relevant to Bill 3, I say to the

Acting Government House Leader. I don't know if the Minister of Development, the Acting Government House Leader, wants to call Division on my relevancy on this Bill, or if he would raise a point of order. But, if he were to raise a point of order, I would argue with him, Mr. Speaker, that anything relating to the Minister of Education, his activity, his work, is totally related to this Bill. This Bill is "An Act Respecting The Department Of Education," so I would argue, with a fair degree of confidence, that the Speaker would sustain my right to talk about anything under the sun, Mr. Speaker, as long as it relates to education.

Mr. Simms: Adult education, anything at all.

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services can become bored, he can fall asleep, he can hook over the side of his chair, he can get out of his chair and go out in front of the bench and lie on the floor if he likes, Mr. Speaker.

I had an hour to speak on this bill. I intend to speak as long as I want. And the Minister of Social Services can yawn and groan and moan and do what he likes, but it is not going to make me stop until I am finished, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: And you might move an amendment after the first hour.

Mr. Rideout: And after the first hour I might move a six month hoist amendment, which would give me another hour, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: If you keep doing that -

Mr. Rideout: And if the Minister of Social Services keeps making those animal noises, Mr. Speaker, if he keeps groaning as he does when everybody is on their feet over here, I just might be tempted to move a six month hoist which will give me another hour, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Efford: I want to go four or five o'clock to (inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Pardon?

Mr. Efford: I want to go to Mount Pearl before 5:00 o'clock.

Mr. Rideout: Well go on, boy. I am not keeping the Minister here.

Mr. Simms: You are not going to be missed here for sure.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simms: For what you contributed -

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, this is the \$100,000 pickle man, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: Yes, all he talks about.

Mr. Rideout: All he can talk about is a pickle book or going out to look at land. He will not talk about stoves or anything like that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: Tremendous contributions.

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible) \$500,000 (inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Yes, Mr. Speaker, one of the richest men in Newfoundland and Labrador is the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Simms: Rolls Royce.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: You can understand the compassionate that is in that man's heart for the poor, Mr. Speaker, of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Simms: He has shares in Rolls Royce.

Mr. Rideout: Shares in Rolls Royce and all of that.

Mr. Efford: No, that is not fair.

Mr. Simms: What is not?

Mr. Efford: I might have the shares, I might have the money, I might have the Rolls Royce, but I am concerned about the people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I had to laugh one morning this week, I do not remember which morning it was now, listening to the Minister of Social Services on a radio program for which -

An Hon. Member: Maudie Whelan.

Mr. Rideout: Maudie Whelan.

- they taped, - it must be gosh, I cannot - it must have been five or six weeks ago.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: It was good this morning, boy.

Mr. Rideout: Oh, you were on this morning, were you?

Mr. Simms: Bill Rowe, boy! Open Line.

Mr. Rideout: Oh, he did a fantastic job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Boy, if that is what you call slaughter, we can take a lot of that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rideout: We got the usuals, Mr. Speaker. He got the usuals. You get them everytime you go on, but it was a good program.

Ms. Verge: (Inaudible) compliment everyone (inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Well, anyway, Mr. Speaker, I have been sidetracked by a half a dozen Members on the other side, and I want to come back to the Minister of Education.

Mr. Simms: What about the Minister of Social Services? You did not finish that story. You heard him on the radio or something.

Mr. Rideout: Oh, the Minister of Social Services. I cannot remember. That interview was done five or six weeks ago and they only played it Monday morning or whenever, it is totally gone out of my mind. All of a sudden I hear himself, Mr. Speaker, his Royal Highness on, slapping himself on the back and praising himself about how good a Minister he was and all that kind of stuff and how nobody in the Opposition would take him on except the Leader of the Opposition and all that kind of thing.

An Hon. Member: No, that is wrong.

Mr. Rideout: Well he said it in

his own voice, Mr. Speaker, that nobody could deny, and I mean I really had to go to some length to point out that the halo around the Minister's head had to be sort of shattered, Mr. Speaker. I could not let him go on thinking that he was the greatest gift ever presented to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I could not do it. I did not like to do it, a new Minister and so on like that, I wanted to let him enjoy the sun, enjoy the halo, but I had to crack the halo around his head, Mr. Speaker. And God knows there has been enough reason to do so from Christina now to everything else that the Minister had his - refugees -

Mr. Simms: Refugees.

Mr. Rideout: - refugees, that the Minister has had his finger in over the last twelve months, Mr. Speaker. But I know I am being irrelevant now, Your Honour, so before Your Honour -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rideout: I was baited into it, Mr. Speaker, by the hon. gentlemen opposite, particularly the Minister of Social Services. But I will have to come back to the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker.

So as I was saying all of those great expectations that were out there for the Minister had been shattered in one twelve month period. One twelve month period every organized education group in the Province have been glad-handed by the Minister, they are sick and tired of the Minister saying, yes, to everything, Mr. Speaker, and making decisions about nothing. Sick and tired -

Mr. Grimes: Watch your back.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Exploits should not worry about my back. That used to be the way that Oppositions used to perform.

Mr. Grimes: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, that is the way Oppositions used to perform. So the Member for Exploits will never be here long enough to see something sticking out of my back, that I can guarantee him.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Never. I do not care what the Minister has been told.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rideout: He will never be here long enough, Mr. Speaker. In fact, there are more knives on the other side than there are on this side, Mr. Speaker. A lot more. A lot more knives, Mr. Speaker. A lot more knives on the other side and there are a lot of people over there waiting for Ministers to stumble, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of people over there waiting for Ministers to stumble.

An Hon. Member: Combing their hair.

Mr. Rideout: Combing their hair, including the Member for Exploits, Mr. Speaker, waiting for the man who on the night of the election said he was going to become Minister of Development. He told his campaign workers out in Bishop Falls that his expectation was to be Minister of Development, Mr.

Speaker. And in a radio interview that same night said he fully expected to have a substantial Cabinet post. All he got were the crumbs of the eighth floor, Mr. Speaker. The crumbs of the eighth floor.

And Mr. Speaker, to add insult to injury, here is the Member for Pleasantville, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Pleasantville up in Ottawa now in that pressure cooker since Sunday carrying the suitcase, ordering the hamburgers, bringing in the pizza, Mr. Speaker. And on top of that giving tremendous constitutional advice to save Canada, Mr. Speaker. And the parliamentary secretary is left home.

The traditional role of the parliamentary secretary is to attend those great intergovernmental meetings, Mr. Speaker. I attended numerous such meetings when I was parliamentary assistant to the Premier. I served a great purpose, Mr. Speaker. At least I could order the pizza. But the hon. Member hasn't even got to touch the hem of the garment, Mr. Speaker. He cannot lay his hand on the garment, but he is ready to knife any colleague so that he can have a crack at that election night expectation which he was so loose mouthed as to impart to the media and his constituents, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: We will be playing that in the next campaign.

Mr. Rideout: So, the next time around, Mr. Speaker, I would advise the Minister of Development to watch his back. The Member is after - move your seat quickly. The Member for Exploits is still sore, Mr. Speaker. He is still totally upset that he did not get

that Cabinet appointment, Mr. Speaker. I have a full half an hour yet, Mr. Speaker, so on that I will adjourn the debate and carry on tomorrow morning, Sir.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: It being as close as possible to 4:30 I will call on the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Debate on the Adjournment
[Late Show]

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

Mr. Simms: What is this? Oh! The Late Show.

Mr. Speaker: Do you want to know the question?

Mr. Simms: I am sorry. No, I believe it was my dissatisfaction with the Minister of Transportation - no, the President of Treasury Board who answered for the Minister of Transportation on the issue of the truckers dispute.

Mr. Speaker: Right.

Mr. Simms: Well, Mr. Speaker, the reason I placed the question on the Late Show is for obvious reasons. It gives you an opportunity to speak -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Simms: It gives you an opportunity to speak at least for a five minute period to elaborate on some of the points that you cannot really make during Question Period because you are restrained in Question Period by having to ask 30 or 40 second questions, and then the Minister is restrained by

giving 10 or 15 minute answers - no by giving a similar length of answers.

So, I wanted to put it on the Late Show, because I wanted to highlight the issue once again. And I want to say to the Minister in all sincerity, I know he may be paranoid enough or suspicious enough to think that I am trying to play tough politics with it, but I assure him I am not in this instance. I happen to know a number of the truckers personally and their families, as does he, and I don't know what their politics are, I am not interested in their politics.

Let me just say that the President of the Association is a former Liberal MHA in the House. Let me just say that - Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Speaker, what we have is a situation where those families, the husbands and wives, last year, in fact, had a demonstration and a protest, out in the Central Newfoundland area, and the Minister is quite familiar with it. On that occasion, I believe, they were so disturbed and upset because they were not able to get jobs with their own trucks on a Government project, and I think there was something like twenty-six, twenty-odd, who were taken to jail. That is how strongly they feel about the issue.

Now if a group of twenty-six, or twenty-odd, whatever the number was, are prepared to go to jail in protest over lack of work, then obviously there is a problem. Now whether it was a problem caused by lack of action by the previous Administration, or something, I do not care. You can throw all the blame you want on the previous Administration, but the point now

is that it is the present we need to be concerned with, and I offer a suggestion to the Minister in all sincerity. It may not be any help at all. I, by the way, went out to the pit last Friday, the Badger pit, and I met with some of the truckers that were there, and I also, on my way back to St. John's spoke to the spokesman for the group in Bishop Falls, Mr. Faulkner, and I discussed the situation with him. Long-term I can see a way out. Long-term their own suggestion of a Committee of the House, or Cabinet itself, whatever initiative they want to take, to have a look at legislation and just see if there is any way of providing some kind of restriction in the legislation that would -

Mr. Efford: What would you do.

Mr. Simms: Would the Minister of Social Services not interrupt because I only have two minutes,

If they could have a look at the legislation to include in the legislation some provision, I do not know if it can be done, the Minister can tell me, include in it some provision where on tender calls there is something specified that local truckers, to some extent, or whatever, would have to be given first opportunity, or first choice.

I think some legislation similar to that exists in other jurisdictions. I am not sure. The Minister can tell me. The Minister will comment. That is a suggestion. Maybe it is not worth the paper it is written on but that is a suggestion. Now, that is really long-term, and it is not going to solve the problem today, immediately. The immediate solution that I can think of, and

I am not sure if that would be a solution, but it is a suggestion, is to call the three parties in around the table. I have made this suggestion publicly, as he is probably aware by now. Call the President of the contractor, the Lundrigan's people, the President of the sub-contractor, and the President of the Trucker's Association, sit down around the table with them for a day or two, however long it takes, and see if you cannot work out some kind of an immediate solution to ease that situation, because the day before yesterday there were forty RCMP officers out there and there were three people arrested. There was a chartered bus brought out to haul away the protestors and that kind of a situation has the potential to be serious and to be explosive.

I am sure the Minister would not want to see that kind of situation develop. The only thing I can think of is to perhaps get them all together so that everybody airs their differences at the same time, as opposed to meeting with them individually. Maybe that might be a suggestion, and the Minister can tell me if that is all wet too, that's fine, but it is a suggestion, at least. But it is a serious situation and I hope the Minister, while I recognize it is not necessarily his direct responsibility, I suppose he could argue that, but I am sure he does not want to see that kind of a situation occur. I ask him to tell us what it is he is hoping to do or going to try to do to resolve it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation.

Mr. Gilbert: Thank you, Mr.

Speaker.

As I told the Member for Grand Falls when he raised the question earlier in the week, I had meetings with both parties during the winter months and pointed out that it was something we really did not feel we should be involved in from, you know, legislating the thing. I now have officials of my Department looking at the legislation. I know that in Alberta there was legislation put in saying they had to hire so many local truckers, but I do not know the details of it. I know the Alberta Government are now trying to get out of it, because it drove up the cost of providing the work or doing the work.

This is an annual sort of a controversy, and it is one that has gone on. This week I had a meeting with the Newfoundland Road Builders' Association, pointing out that this situation could occur in any part of the Province where contracts are let unless they get together with the Truckers' Association and work out some sort of an agreement. I had a meeting with the Truckers' Association, Mr. Bennett and his group, and pointed out the situation and how we sympathize with the cause he was espousing. I pointed out that something should be done, because it was really employee/employer related, and something should be done to work together with them. He told me, when I had the meeting with him on Tuesday afternoon, I guess, that he could not get Lundrigans to meet with him, because we were talking particularly about the situation that evolved in Grand Falls.

So what I have done now, is during the last two days I have been in

the process of trying to set up a meeting between the groups affected. I have talked to Provincial Carriers, who are the subcontractors Lundrigans have given the contract to, I have talked to Lundrigans, and I have talked to Mr. Bennett. Now, what has happened as a result of that is that Lundrigans and Provincial Carriers have agreed to meet with the Truckers' Association to discuss the problem. Lundrigans and Provincial Carriers have told me they are right now, and have tried for the last week, to hire twelve to fifteen trucks, and are prepared to put twelve to fifteen trucks to work right away as a start-up, and this could carry on to more as the job progresses.

As a matter of fact, I was down talking to Mr. Bennett when the Member started, and what Mr. Bennett, from the Truckers' Association, has said to me is they are not prepared to meet with the subcontractor, Peter Cook, they are not prepared to meet with Provincial Carriers, even though the contractor, Lundrigans, have agreed to be there.

Mr. Bennett has now gone back to his Membership to see if they will give him permission to sit down at this meeting I have arranged between the subcontractor and the contractor, Lundrigans, and the United Truckers' Association.

An Hon. Member: Is the Minister going to be there?

Mr. Gilbert: The Minister is at their disposal. As I have told them, I am quite prepared to sit there with them, no problem at all. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I have done everything that is humanly possible to resolve this problem with the dump

truckers in Grand Falls, and with Lundrigans. I would be only too happy if anyone has any more ideas. But until they agree to meet, realizing that it is - as the Member for Grand Falls said, he realizes it is not part of my normal job as the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation, but because I realize the seriousness of the situation, I have arranged and tried to arrange a meeting. I am now waiting for a call from Mr. Bennett, when he gets permission from the members of his Association to sit down and meet with Lundrigans and Provincial Carriers. That is the best I can do for them at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

Ms Duff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to deal with some more points related to the whole question of the Option 10 and the Government's dealings with the St. John's Hospital Council. There is not always time or the ability in Question Period to get the answers to the questions that are being asked.

The first thing I would like to do, and I am sure the Minister knows, but I am not sure all Members do and I am not sure the general public do, is deal a little bit with the credibility of the Hospital Council itself. This group has been working diligently but very quietly, and when this issue arose, I think many people felt it was just one more of many groups involved in the health care system in the city. But, in fact, the Hospital Council was established as a part of the

recommendations of the 1984 Commission on Hospital and Nursing Home Costs, and its mandate was to establish a long-range plan for the rationalization and delivery of health care services in St. John's, which serve not only the public of St. John's but are the tertiary facilities for the entire Province. So it was a very extensive mandate that we had. This Council, in fact, is not just another group, it is the umbrella group consisting of representatives of all the major health care agencies, including the acute care, chronic care and home care agencies, the Waterford hospital, the Provincial Government, with good solid consumer representation, and in the process of their six years of studying, they have had numerous outside consultant studies done on various aspects of their mandate.

Now this six years of work involved a process of unprecedented level of consultation and collaboration, for which they have received national recognition. In the process, there were almost, I think, 200 key people in health care delivery consulted directly and almost 500 consulted indirectly. So when that report went to Government last year, in June of 1989, it went not just from a group involved in health care, but basically as the unanimous recommendation of almost every significant body involved in health care in this city. And the entire process was done with the knowledge and tacid consent of the Government, because along every step of the way, Government was consulted before they moved from stage one to stage two.

Their recommended Option, Option 7 - it is called the shared-site

Option, on the north of LeMarchant Road - was recommended as the least disruptive, most cost-effective and efficient option. The cost was \$225 million, and the implementation was long-range, over ten to twenty years, accepting the principle of consolidating hospital services on two sites. Now one of the points I would like to make, and I don't think this was intentional on the part of the Minister, but it has been very disturbing to people at the Grace Hospital and the Council and various other agencies, is the misimpression that has been left in the public mind that this is a Grace Hospital issue, that we are talking about a huge cost of \$300 million to replace the 300 beds at the Grace, and that there might, in fact, be a \$100 million cost saving if the Government's Option 10 were considered. Well, I am sure the Minister knows, but I am not sure the public know, that this \$225 million is not just for the Grace; it is for the replacement of the Janeway, the Childrens' Rehab and a major expansion and upgrading of St. Clare's, not to be done tomorrow or the next day, not even next year or within, necessarily, the next ten years, and that these four facilities will have to be upgraded or replaced, regardless of where the Government decides to locate them.

I would certainly support the right of Government to review and consider any options it likes, but I have real problems with the process the Government has taken, especially coming from a Government who puts so much emphasis on fairness, and so much emphasis on courtesy and on consultation. Because I think it is very clear that the most appropriate body to consider

Option 10, this new Option that came out of left field on Friday, is the same body that considered, over six years with incredible levels of consultation, the other nine Options. They have all the models, they have all the input into that, and they are very disturbed that they were called in on Friday and had a bombshell dropped on them.

The Minister speaks of consultation, but this came right out of left field to all those bodies who were brought in on Friday, only to find that the Government was actually seriously considering a real slap in the face to two of the organizations who were providing health care in this Province long before the Government was ever able to do it, the Salvation Army and the Sisters of Mercy. Well, I can assure you the Minister may think it is all hunky-dory, but none of the major players in this particular scenario are at all pleased with the Minister at this time, and they find it very difficult to understand why the Minister had to set up a new committee, heavily weighted in favour of Government bureaucrats, not that I have anything against bureaucrats, but instead of using the agency that already existed, had already developed the credibility, the expertise, and was already consulting with all the major players in this, they feel, and I feel, that it signals a lack of trust on behalf of Government.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Ms Duff: What a pity, because I had so much more to say.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the

Minister of Health.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Speaker, let me put the health care in this Province into some kind of perspective. For the last ten years, the health care system in this Province has been totally neglected. During that term, there was a three year freeze on hospital construction in this city, there were cut-backs, maintenance was not properly done, and the whole system was allowed to fall into the ground. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of needs in the health care system in this Province. Right now, we need a hospital in Goose Bay, we need a hospital in Stephenville, we need health centres in Burgeo, Port Saunders, and Harbour Breton. We need chronic care facilities throughout the Province. That is the mess we inherited when we took over the Government and tried to bring some fiscal responsibility to the governing of this Province, about a year ago.

Mr. Speaker, in St John's, just like the rest of the Province, there is a need to build new physical structures. The St. John's Hospital Council was in operation for five years, Mr. Speaker, and during that five years there was a freeze put on by the previous Administration. The previous Minister of Health sat down with the St. John's Hospital Council and said, Look, forget Option 7. It is a pipe dream, you are wasting your time, give it up, and that is what they did. But they were allowed to continue on that, Mr. Speaker, for two reasons, they were nearly finished, and the previous Administration let them finish. The second reason was because we took over, of course, and asked

them to continue on. The St. John's Hospital Council, like the churches who have been running the institutions, is held in the highest esteem by this Administration. The Social Policy Committee met with the entire St. John's Hospital Council, and the Cabinet met with the total St. John's Hospital Council. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Hospital Council presented nine options to Government, and they came down heavy and recommended Option 7. Option 7 would be a super hospital at a cost, and the cost is somewhere in the vicinity of \$300 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no guarantee that that \$300 million is a firm figure. Anyone will admit that there is no guarantee, and if hon. Members would consider construction jobs of that magnitude which have taken place in this Province over the years, they would be the first ones to admit that a \$300 million price tag can very quickly rise to \$400 million or even \$500 million.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member for St. John's East was given an opportunity, and I think we should let the Minister of Health have the same opportunity.

Mr. Decker: Thank you.

Three hundred million dollars for 300 beds, Mr. Speaker, is \$1 million a bed. Being a fiscally responsible Government, concerned with the way we manage this Province, from a reasonable, rational approach, the Government did what it thought was absolutely proper and correct, and we went

back to the St. John's Hospital Council and we said now, look, we want to have one more look. We want to see if there is some way we can maintain the integrity of the health care system, deliver the same high level of care which the Salvation Army has done for sixty-seven years in this Province, which the Sisters of Mercy have done; we want to deliver that same level of health care, but we want to see if it is possible to do it at little expense to the Government of this Province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, I am sure, will accept that that is the wise, reasonable way to approach this. And I am sure that in their own hearts, everyone of them, when they forget trying to make political points on it, they know in their own heart of hearts that what we are doing is absolutely correct. And the people of this Province would turf us out of office if we were negligent enough not to spend their money properly, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of what we are doing, because what we are doing is fiscal responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. John's East Extern.

Mr. Parsons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words today to the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation.

An Hon. Member: Do not take pity on him, will you?

Mr. Parsons: No, I will not take no pity on him. Mr. Speaker, I

have said over and over in this House that he is anti-St. John's.

An Hon. Member: Anti-Confederate.

Mr. Parsons: Anti-St. John's. He believes in doing whatever he can to the detriment of the city and its environs. I have said it and I repeat it.

The other day, when the Minister stood in the House and said the Outer Ring Road is going ahead, I said, well, Kevin, boy, there we are. I should not have said all of those things.

An Hon. Member: So I have to apologize (inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: But I was really going to get up and do the manly thing and say, look, boy, I am sorry. But then I started thinking and looking across at the Minister, and I said, there is no way he can be straightforward as it pertains to the City of St. John's and the surrounding area. There is no way. There is something wrong with this. There is something fishy about it. The only word I could come up with was he 'hookwinked' the people of St. John's and the surrounding area, but he also hoodwinked the Cabinet Ministers - St. John's South, St. John's Centre, St. John's West -

Mr. Murphy: Mount Pearl.

Mr. Parsons: - the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, and the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations. All those people. And your colleagues, you hoodwinked them. Now, I want to say to those hon. gentlemen, the honourable thing to do is go to the Minister and say look, this cannot happen. We are not about to let you

hoodwink the people of St. John's and surrounding area. You are not going to get away with it.

An Hon. Member: You did it.

Mr. Parsons: That is what I didn't. I never did. Why the change of heart? Why did he change his mind, Mr. Speaker? Very simple. A very strong Liberal, the Mayor of St. John's, had asked all the Mayors of the surrounding area, twelve all together, to come together and go to the Minister and the Premier and get this Outer Ring Road straightened up. And, I suppose, influenced by the Premier, fairness and balance again, the Minister said well, let's do it. We do not need to do anything really, we will tell them we are going to build the Outer Ring Road.

But let me tell the Minister that he went to Ottawa to try to change the deal but he could not change it because Mr. Crosbie told him that provision was there when the Rails to Roads deal came about and there was no way they were about to change it. And he came home with his tail between his legs and said to the Premier, okay, Mr. Premier, there is nothing we can do about this. We are going to have to go ahead with it.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: I would not doubt it. The Minister of Health, perhaps, played a role in this. Some of the Ministers over there are naive, along with the Minister of Transportation, naive, out telling the people they are going to do something for them when, in fact, they are not. Do you know the end of this agreement? I think 2002, is it? That means it would take at least four to seven

years to build that Outer Ring Road. If that Outer Ring Road is not started until 1995, it will be 2002 before that road is finished.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman was saying there are more causes of concern in other areas of the Province. And I say to him, yes, certainly there are areas of concern; certainly there are areas which need to be looked at; certainly we need four lanes from here to Whitbourne. I never said anything else. But the point remains the provision for that Outer Ring Road was there. That was in the deal, and this Government should stick with it. In 1991, that road is supposed to start, and there is no conceivable way that Minister should be allowed to get away with it by his colleagues. They should not allow him to get away with this skullduggery.

Mr. Murphy: You should not have let them give away the railway.

Mr. Parsons: The railway was a losing, gone cause, and the Member for St. John's South knows it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Parsons: Yes, I agree with it. It should have gone years before it did.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. gentleman's time has elapsed.

Mr. Parsons: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Speaker, after

that barrage and after I got the Member for St. John's East Extern thinking about what I had said, I am glad I excited him to the point that he wanted to bring it up in the House at this time and debate it for five minutes.

We debated the railway agreement and the Outer Ring Road for quite some considerable time in this House, because when the Agreement was signed we were then over there and I was the Transportation critic. I stood and said it was a terrible deal for Newfoundland, it was not enough. The \$800 million in 1988 dollars, if you take it over the fifteen years it is going to spent, is only about \$360,000 when you consider the inflation rate.

However -

Mr. Efford: \$360 million.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Gilbert: Million. Okay, million if you want to. Thousand would be the same thing, \$800,000, but we will take million and go down for your benefit.

An Hon. Member: Hundreds, thousands and millions.

Mr. Gilbert: That is right. That is the one thing about it. In politics, what does it really matter?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gilbert: It was the worse deal since the time the Indians sold Manhattan Island. There was never another deal that bad.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Gilbert: But anyhow, what we have done, Mr. Speaker -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

There is too much conversation going on by Members to my left. I cannot hear the hon. Minister of Transportation.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Gilbert: What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is confirmed that there is no doubt a need for the Outer Ring Road, and it shall be built during the terms of this agreement. The thing we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is look at the priorities for the projects that are under construction now along the Trans-Canada, and the areas of the 900 kilometers of Trans-Canada which have not been repaired for twenty-five years. But the Outer Ring Road, Mr. Speaker, will be done during the terms of that agreement, and my officials will be putting forward a priority. Now, it is interesting that one of the headlines the next day, after I announced it, was to the effect that the people who opposed the Outer Ring Road said my decision to build it was shortsighted. Yet, the Mayor of this city, where this House of Assembly is sitting right now, came out and said it was a marvelous plan I had and was supporting it. Mr. Speaker, I rest my case with that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Mayor Shannie Duff. Mayor Duff.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

Ms Uerge: Mr. Speaker, before we

break, and I am not going to suggest that we come back tomorrow afternoon, I would like to ask the Government House Leader what he plans to do tomorrow morning?

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow I am hoping to be able to introduce Motion 1, which is the payroll tax. I am hoping to be able to introduce that tomorrow morning. If that is not ready, then I will do some third readings of the Committee stages we did today, and get on with the second readings.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Yes, that one. But I am hoping that the payroll tax one, Motion 1, will be ready for tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 9:00 a.m.