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***PRELIMINARY REPORT***  
*(Hansard)*

*Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush*

Thursday

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker (Lush): Order please!

### Oral Questions

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, we have received recent copies of letters written to the Premier and other ministers from the Retired Teachers Association expressing concern about the failure of the Government to provide for increases in pensions this year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the Budget where the Minister of Finance said the following. He said: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the Commission of Inquiry report is not yet available, Government has decided to defer for the time being any decision regarding increases to pensioners. The subject will be addressed in the near future after reference to the Pension Commission and in the context of possible indexation of Government's pension plans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the Government received this report in March, almost eight months ago, and in view of the fact that some 7,860 retired teachers, retired public servants, retired members of the constabulary, fire department and correctional services, are waiting on an answer from the Government, I want to ask the Minister of Finance today, when will the Government be in a position to advise Government petitioners whether or not they are going to receive an increase in their pensions this year?

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

Dr. Kitchen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not yet, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rideout: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, now that is a penetrating insight into the obvious, "not yet". But what we are asking the Minister is to give the House and those pensioners some indication of when the Government will be ready. Is it impossible for the Minister to tell the House today whether it might be one month, two months, no increase this year, or it is going to have to wait until the next budget? Can't the Minister tell those pensioners something, Mr. Speaker?

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

Dr. Kitchen: No, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, on April 1 past, management employees received a 4 per cent increase in their wage levels. Now it has been the practice every other year that the increase received by management employees would be the same increase given to pensioners in this Province - retired Provincial Government pensioners. Now Mr. Speaker, is it the intention of the Government this year to raise pensions for their retired employees to that level or is it their intention not to raise pensions at all? What is the Minister up to?

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

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition is obviously not aware of how this operates. Every time a million dollars is given in ad hoc indexing this has to be paid every subsequent year. Which means we really are committing ourselves to paying about ten times the amount. So if we give \$1 million this year that takes \$10 million out of the Government. And then if we raise it again next year it is not only the same one it is the next one also.

So there are very serious considerations to be taken. I know the previous administration did not give a hang about the unfunded liability. That is why it is up over \$2.2 billion now. That is why it is there. And we do care. And we are not yet ready to release our decision on this matter.

An Hon. Member: Bring in the television cameras.

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

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker I say to the Minister of Finance that the previous administration gave a hang about the pensioners of this Province, unlike this Government.

An Hon. Member: Right on, right on.

Mr. Rideout: Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister has obviously indicated in his answer that there will be no increase for retired Provincial pensioners in this Province this year. Now will the Minister have the gall to get up in this House and say, no there

will not be an increase, or is he planning an increase? What is it?

Mr. Simms: Tell them, b'y.

Mr. Rideout: Tell them.

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

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to make any statement at this moment about that matter. But let me tell you this, the whole question of pensions and the indexing of pensions is a very serious matter that Government has to be careful of. We are in a very serious financial pickle in this Province as a result of the uncaring, drunken sailor spending attitude of the crowd opposite. When they started in Government a few years ago we had virtually no debt, and when we took over we had a debt of almost \$5 billion and an unfunded liability of \$2.1 billion. We had a system of municipal financing that was out of whack completely. We had all sorts of irresponsible methodologies of handling the Province's funds. We had all types of irresponsible ways of handling the Province's funds when the critic opposite for Mount Pearl was Minister of Finance, and while he was with the Government, and while he was a member in the previous Government before that. What I am saying is that this Government will not be fiscally irresponsible.

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

Mr. Rideout: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the pensioners of this Province are interested in buying groceries and paying for

their light bills, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister of Finance saying today that he is going to attack the horrendous deficit problem that this Government created, a made in Newfoundland deficit, on the backs of those least able to pay, in other words the pensioners? Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance, in his usual crass, arrogant way, saying to the pensioners of this Province today, I got you by the short and curlies? Is that what he is saying, Mr. Speaker?

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

Dr. Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, we care for people who are without funds, and I can tell you now that there are a lot of people in this Province who are without money. Part of the problem we have in addressing the needs of the people who have serious needs is the fact that the money is not in the Government. It is a very serious question and we have to come to grips with it. Every day members opposite are telling us, do not cut here, do not dare release it here, do not do it on the backs of this group - by all means reduce the deficit, but do not do it on our backs. What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is to come to grips with our financial problems, and the financial problems are these - now I know the time is not here for me to give a speech on this but we have a very serious financial problem in this Province, largely as a result of things that have happened in the past, and as a result of the Federal Government cutbacks and restraints and the recession and depression that is in Canada at the moment, and their mismanagement of the fishing industry. All these Tory chickens are coming

home on the Liberal roost.

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today the Newfoundland and Labrador School Trustees Association said that any reductions on school board revenue would have disastrous effect on school board programs and the education of our children. I wonder if the Minister of Education would tell us if he agrees with that statement?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I think in an area such as education any reductions would have an impact. However, Mr. Speaker, there are ways and means of dealing with the serious financial problem that my colleague the Minister of Finance just discussed. There are ways and means of doing it without seriously damaging the education of individual children in the Province, and this Government is looking for creative ways of doing that.

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

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Speaker, the school trustees said that boards were only given one week to respond to the freezes and reductions - now they are using the words, 'freezes' and 'reductions' - and to talk about such cutbacks is ludicrous and is inviting a disaster of great magnitude. Does the Minister agree that is a fact?

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

Dr. Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity of meeting with the executive of the trustees, and Dr. Vokey, the Executive Director. We discussed their brief and all the suggestions they had. I think, at the end of the meeting, there was even a better understanding than at the beginning, that we have these serious problems.

I think the executive would admit that we have been meeting with them and with others around the Province for the past month, more than a month, and what the hon. Member is referring to, the period of a week in which to respond, that was at the conclusion of regional meetings; that was after about a month of consultations. This Government wanted to consult. We are looking at all of the options. No decisions, Mr. Speaker, have been made about any reductions. My friend from Bellevue, yesterday, indicated that just before this Government came to power, a letter went out saying there was going to be a 2.5 per cent decrease in the budgets of post-secondary institutions. I did not see that letter previously. Nobody knew about it. Certainly, there were no consultations. Before this Government decided to make any changes in funding of programs for education, we consulted, but no decisions, yet, Mr. Speaker, have been made.

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

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Speaker, one of the options mentioned to boards was a reduction in school board grants. The School Trustees Association say that any

reductions of funding will lead to layoffs in support staff, as well as a quick deterioration of facilities that are in dire need of improvement. Will the Minister verify that that is also a fact?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I hate to repeat something that I have said so many times.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Dr. Warren: But I need to repeat it, Mr. Speaker. These suggestions were put on the table by a whole range of people, including the people who attended the meeting or who helped plan the meeting. These meetings were planned by a committee that included representatives from other agencies. Now, I have not come in here and tried to blame anybody else for these options, but these options resulted from a whole series of meetings and they were put on the table for discussions. These are options. No decisions have been made, Mr. Speaker; all options are being examined and, in due course, we will make the announcements that we as a Government do.

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

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary.

The Minister, once again, is skating; he is extremely uncomfortable, as we have seen over the last few days, and it is because the Minister came into the Department and his portfolio with

a tremendous and well-deserved reputation in the field of education. How can he continue to participate in what is the biggest attack on education in this Province? When is he going to make the right decision, by resigning from this uncaring -

An Hon. Member: Yes, for sure.

Mr. Hearn: The Minister is a very principled person, who can only go along with this for so long.

I ask him once again, when is he going to make the right decision, by resigning from this uncaring and headstrong Government?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I have been getting a lot of compliments in the last few days, but I do appreciate the compliments I got last night when I attended the meeting, a major meeting. I do appreciate the compliments of my hon. friend, and I do thank him for giving me the opportunity, when he was the minister, to serve this Province by working on a very important committee on educational finance. As a result of that experience, I feel I know something of the problems in education in the Province and educational finance.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that I will send him a list of all the things we have done in the past sixteen months in education, and it is a long list of very positive things. Let me assure the member that this Government has a vision for the twenty-first century for education. We are not going to let this lull -

Some Hon. Members: Lull! Lull! Lull!

An Hon. Member: Lull! There he goes again.

Dr. Warren: - we are not going to let this period delay our plans for the future. Within the next two or three years things are really going to improve economically in this Province, and we are going to move forward into the twenty-first century.

Education is a major means, it is a major investment for this Province and its people, and we are going to continue. We are not going to back into a corner to a fortress mentality because we have a few economic problems brought on by the Opposition when they were in Government, and other reasons, we are not going to go into a fortress mentality, we are going to move forward. We have a vision for the 90's, and I can assure you education is a major part of that vision.

Mr. Rideout: After setting it back twenty years, then you will go ahead again.

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

Mr. Matthews: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question, as well, is to the lull minister. I would like to say to him that visions do not do very much for empty stomachs in the Province. But in light of the statements made yesterday by Memorial University President, Dr. Art May, that the university will not be able to soak up the expected cutbacks in Government revenue without program cancellations, professor layoffs, increased tuition and an enrollment freeze,

all very drastic measures, Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform the House whether or not the university will be forced to implement these measures next year?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I saw the comments by the President of the university yesterday. I think he indicated that he was doing precisely what the Government had requested, and that is to examine all the options if there is a freeze next year on Government spending and Government grants to the university. He is examining all the options and, I am sure, in due course he will make his final deliberations available to us and we will put together the package which my colleagues in Cabinet will examine, and then we will announce any decisions for 1991-92.

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

Mr. Matthews: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The minister, just a few minutes ago, bragged about what he has done for education in the last sixteen months. He did not brag about the 10 per cent increase in tuition fees he has imposed upon students in post-secondary institutions. What percentage of a tuition increase can the students at Memorial University expect next year as a result of Government cutbacks?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that our tuition rates for post-secondary institutions in this Province are about the lowest in the country. Quebec had the

lowest fees, but they had a freeze on fees; they lifted that freeze last year, and it is my understanding that their fees have increased dramatically in the past year and the plans are that they will reach the Canadian average shortly.

Our fees are low, Mr. Speaker, and they should stay low - they should stay low. That is the first point. The second point is that last year the university did increase its fees by 10 per cent -

An Hon. Member: No. No.

Dr. Warren: - but look what the Government did in student aid.

Mr. Matthews: We know.

Dr. Warren: Every hundred dollar increase in tuition, every ten dollar increase in tuition is covered. I think about twenty to thirty - my hon. friend should know that. I would like him, when he gets up to ask a supplementary, to tell me what proportion of any tuition increase is covered by student grants.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) your answers.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) increase in fees, is what the question was.

Dr. Warren: The number - as soon as the fees go up -

Mr. Simms: You are all mixed up. You are getting as bad as Herb.

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, as soon as the fees go up student aid goes up. So part of the cost of every tuition increase is covered by fees. And last year, I am proud, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to list as one of the accomplishments of this

Government, a major reform of student aid, the first in ten years - the first in ten years.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) is the worst of all taxes.

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

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last attempt I saw by a Minister to try and justify something was the Minister of Finance trying to justify to the people of the Province that we were not the highest taxed people in Canada. Well, this performance equals that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: He is too close to Herb.

Mr. Matthews: A supplementary to the Minister. With the impending teacher layoffs throughout the Province, what does the future hold for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians presently enrolled in the Faculty of Education at university, and what advice does the minister have for them for the future in light of his cutbacks?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to defend my hon. colleague, he does very well at defending himself in preliminary comments.

An Hon. Member: You want more children, Phil.

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the Member is talking about, impending layoffs. No decisions have been made about layoffs. The only layoffs that come, or some of the layoffs -

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) watch

yourself?

Dr. Warren: - result from the declining student enrollments.

Mr. Simms: Did you watch yourself (inaudible)?

Dr. Warren: So declining student enrollments mean some layoffs. Let me tell the hon. member something else, that we have in this Province some special needs in teacher education, and I think we should communicate to everybody going into teaching where these special needs are.

We need more teachers in french instruction, we need more qualified teachers in early childhood, we need more teachers in science; so the opportunities are here even with declining enrollments, Mr. Speaker, for our young people to serve this Province in teaching. Some of them do go elsewhere to teach, but they come back. We are now getting, of course, students coming from elsewhere in Canada to study at Memorial and to teach here. But there are opportunities for our young people if they go into teaching.

However, I think it would be irresponsible of me not to say to them, please find out where the needs are, please look at the market so that when you complete your education, there will be job opportunities available for you in this Province, and if not here, elsewhere in the country.

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

Mr. Winsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education, as well.



Because of this Administration's announced budgetary restraints and cutbacks, can the Minister assure us that the post-secondary courses offered throughout the various centres by Memorial University, first and second year courses, will be continued next year in a fashion similar to the ones being offered this year?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I assume he is talking about first year courses in Burin, and Labrador West. These two were introduced by this Government in the past year. We implemented the Burin program and we introduced the Labrador course. Are these the courses?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Dr. Warren: These are the courses.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Dr. Warren: I know. Which you introduced.

Mr. Simms: Will you answer the question?

Dr. Warren: The answer, Mr. Speaker, is that these programs are working well, and this Government will do everything possible to ensure that these will continue, and others continue, in 1991-92.

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

Mr. Winsor: I think the Minister led us into a little insight on another cutback. Since the Minister has already announced that the Central Newfoundland College, the campus of Memorial

University has been cancelled, or deferred as he might say, can the Minister indicate if Gander is now being considered as a site to offer first year Memorial University courses?

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my friend changed the word from cancel to delay. We have delayed the implementation of that and I can assure you that -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please?

I have noticed today that as ministers are answering questions there is constant interjection from members to my right. That does not enhance Question Period; it rather slows it down. As hon. members know, we have a listening audience. So I ask hon. members to please try and restrain themselves so that people in the galleries can hear the questions, and so that it goes out over the radio in as nice a way as possible.

The hon. the Minister.

Dr. Warren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. With respect to Gander, yes, I want to inform the House that we have had a request to consider the introduction of first year courses in Gander, and I think we have had requests from two or three other communities, and in the process of developing a five year plan for post-secondary education in this Province to be built on top of the White Paper, we will be examining all these requests in due course.

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

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Some eight months ago, in the Budget of the hon. the Minister of Finance, it was announced that Government would eliminate the office of the Ombudsman, and one of the reasons besides the cost-saving measure was that the Ombudsman was not necessary because Members of the House of Assembly could do this work. Is the Premier aware that Donald Rowat, a professor at Ottawa's Carlton University and one of the world's leading authorities on the Ombudsman, has said that it is absolutely absurd to suggest that members of the Legislature can handle complaints like an Ombudsman would, Mr. Speaker? Would the Premier confirm that the Government still intends to eliminate the Ombudsman's office this year?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that in some countries in the world an Ombudsman can perform a very useful function. In this Province we have had a tremendous tradition of Members of the House of Assembly performing that particular role. And they are still performing that particular role. And if anybody were to go back and look over the reports filed by the Ombudsman over the last five to ten years, one would see that it is a total waste of the four hundred-odd thousand dollars that it costs each year.

In our present financial circumstances we are ill-advised to spend that kind of money on that function when the function can be equally effectively, or perhaps even more effectively,

performed by Members on both sides of this House. So the Government's intention is to proceed, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out to the Premier that the elimination of the Ombudsman's office came when there was a \$5 million surplus in the Budget -- \$10 million, actually. So it had nothing to do with finances at the time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the Premier's attention that Stephen Owen, President of the International Ombudsman Institute, based at the University of -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. R. Aylward: The Ombudsman Institute is based at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton. He is referring to the Ombudsman's office and he said, 'The office is seen as a fundamental democratic institution over all the world and its elimination in Newfoundland has to be seen as a backward step. If it happens, it would be a major embarrassment to Canada.' This international organization has written the Government. I wonder would the Premier table his reply to this international organization?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: I remember replying to a couple of letters I have received recently along those lines. The one the hon. Member referred to may well be one of

them. And I have no quarrel, Mr. Speaker, I will obtain the reply I wrote to the gentleman and table it.

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

Mr. R. Aylward: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Because the Government is bent on eliminating this office and it does not seem to want to change its mind, will the Premier agree to show the Members of this House of Assembly, or at least tell them, when they will see the legislation? And would he agree, Mr. Speaker, to at least give one of the Legislative Review Committees this legislation, so that they could hold some public hearings and see what the public of the Province feels about eliminating the Ombudsman's Office?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, the legislation, so far as I know, will simply be a three or four line piece of legislation, I would imagine, An Act to repeal the Ombudsman's Act, or the Parliamentary Commissioners Act, as I believe it is called. We did not give it priority over other pieces of legislation and we will produce it -

An Hon. Member: Early next week.

Premier Wells: - very shortly. Mr. Speaker, I do not see any particular need for it. The matter has been discussed now in the Province for about six or eight months, at least since the Budget was announced in March, six months anyway, since the Budget was announced in the spring. I do not see any need to waste further money sending Members of the House

travelling around the Province.

Mr. Simms: What?

An Hon. Member: The dictator (inaudible).

Premier Wells: What hon. Members overlook is that in addition to the Members of the House playing the role, there has been a very significant number of appeal boards in virtually every area where Government functions set up to do this.

There is another thing that has come into play that is far more effective, in fact, frequently, than most hon. members, on the opposite side at least, the Open Line radio shows. I mean, there is great variety.

An Hon. Member: Oh my. How pitiful!

An Hon. Member: Oh, my God!

Premier Wells: Far more effective, taken collectively. The appeal procedures -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Premier Wells: I will start again, Mr. Speaker. The variety of appeal procedures that have been implemented providing for appeals against virtually all Government decisions, the role played by hon. members on both sides of the House, the variety of access to the news media and to a variety of others, including the Open Line radio shows and all the others, provide ample opportunity for members of the public to ensure that their views are put forward far, far more effectively

than the Ombudsman has ever performed, and we are going to save the Province some money, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Aylward: If I ever heard an answer in this House of Assembly that was silly and stupid, Mr. Speaker, that is the one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Aylward: A supplementary to the Premier. The Premier now has confirmed that the legislation would be a very minor piece of legislation as far as writing it is concerned, yet, he has hidden it away for eight months. He has also pretty well confirmed today that it will not go to one of the Legislative Review Committees. How does the Premier compare that with the statement of the President of the Executive Council on October 5, which appeared in one of the papers, that the Bill to authorize Government's controversial plan to eliminate the office of the Ombudsman, an announcement made in the Budget, will be ready for reference to a review committee in a few days, and should be dealt with in the House this Fall?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: I have no quarrel at all with that, Mr. Speaker. All bills, as they are printed, automatically go to the Legislative Review Committees, but we are not going to waste more taxpayers' money sending hon. members opposite traipsing all over the Province wasting more money. We don't propose to do that. It is totally and

completely unnecessary. But the Legislative Review Committees who want to take a look at the few lines in the Bill will have an ample opportunity to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Question Period has expired.

#### Petitions

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the hon. member, I wonder if hon. members would mind if I took this time out to welcome to the galleries today, the newly-elected Mayor of Grand Falls - Windsor, who, of course, at the present time, is the Mayor of Windsor, Mayor Walwin Blackmore.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East, on a petition.

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this 100th Anniversary of The Newfoundland Teachers' Association, I wish to present petitions of teachers of the Humber branch of the NTA, the teachers at All Hallows School in the District of Humber East and the teachers of Sacred Heart School in the District of Bay of Islands, represented, of course, by the Premier.

The prayer of the petitions is as follows: 'Whereas the teachers of Humber branch are greatly concerned with the lack of effort by Government to negotiate a collective agreement with teachers of this Province; and whereas the proposed cutbacks in educational funding will have extremely negative effects on parents and

students of this Province; and whereas cutbacks in substitute teacher allocations have already resulted in cancellation of professional development activities for teachers which will have a negative impact on students in the future; therefore your petitioners urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to: (1) immediately begin serious negotiations with the intention of signing a fair and reasonable collective agreement with the Newfoundland Teachers' Association; and (2) thoroughly study the impact of present and proposed cutbacks in the education system and make full disclosure of these impacts to parents, teachers, and other interested groups.

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition. I agree with both parts of the petition. I join with the petitioners in calling on the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Education to negotiate seriously with the NTA.

Mr. Speaker, serious negotiations involve give and take. While the current round of collective bargaining has been proceeding or not proceeding, as the case may be, this Government has circumvented the leave provisions of the current collective agreement by arbitrarily and retroactively reducing the budget for substitute teacher funding. The Government is asking for, even demanding, major concessions from the teachers, yet the Government has not indicated any willingness to compromise or to give. And I say to the members opposite, serious bargaining requires give as well as take.

As to the second part of the petition, Mr. Speaker, the

Minister of Education has already studied the impact of present cutbacks and contemplated future cutbacks in educational funding. He was one of the two authors of the report of the Task Force on educational financing which was completed in the Spring of 1989, just after he became Minister of Education. In that report, presumably with full knowledge of the financial position of this Province, presumably with awareness of the legacy of the previous PC administrations, he called for a significant increase in educational funding, in funding for primary, elementary and high school education. He, more than most people in the Province, understands all too well the ramifications of the cutbacks already imposed and the options for further cutbacks.

I join with the petitioners in calling on him to share his knowledge and his assessment with the general public. More than all, Mr. Speaker, I call on the Government to honour the promises they made when they were campaigning for election a short year and a half ago. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hearn: Mr. Speaker, seeing that the Minister is not going to get up yet to respond to the petition, I would like to say a few words on it. Once again we see teachers expressing concerns about what is happening in the field of education.

The Minister, as I mentioned earlier today, is an extremely experienced person in the field of education in the Province, who has been front and foremost in many of

the studies that have been done in education, and in particular on educational finance. The latest masterpiece to be presented, an exceptionally good report, was done under the Chairmanship of the present minister and, as the Member for Humber East just mentioned, one of the recommendations was that an immediate infusion of money be put into education. The minister then moves into a portfolio and begins to start taking away instead of injecting the money he said had to go in immediately, above and beyond the equalization, \$200 million long-term to bring us up to the Canadian average, but an immediate infusion of \$15 million or \$20 million above and beyond the equalization, which had been promised by the administration during the election campaign. None of this came true.

When we started talking about the cutbacks as early as the day the Budget was presented, of course they began to say we were scaremongering and what have you. Now the effects are being felt in the field; it is not the Opposition now who is talking about what is going to happen: we have the school trustees, we have the Newfoundland Teachers' Association, we have individual teachers and parents who are finding out, due to letters which are being delivered to them from the decision-making people, that yes, the cuts are not being looked at, they are here, they are going to be in effect, and they have to start planning for them. Already we have seen the cuts in the substitute teachers, etc.

It is extremely interesting, also, that a petition is being present from the District of the Bay of Islands, represented by the

Premier. And while the Member for Humber East was up expressing concerns of his constituents about matters that affect the children in his district, the future of the children in his district as well as the children in the rest of the Province, the Premier gets up and walks out of the House. That, Mr. Speaker, does not say very much for the Premier's attention to the needs of his young constituents.

The future of this -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) now.

Mr. Hearn: It does not matter. There is no reason why the Premier could not take a few minutes to sit and listen and then respond to the wishes of his own constituents who have very legitimate concerns about the future of their children. We are talking here about the future of children, which means the future of the Province; the future of the Province is in the hands of our young people.

If the present cuts or any where near the total number of cuts suggested by this Administration take place, it is going to be the worst attack on education in the history of Canada, not to say the history of the Province of Newfoundland.

History will show, over the last fifteen years, we have made great progress, great strides in the development of educational programmes in this Province. This Administration has already done more damage in a few months than the improvements which have been made over the last fifteen years. And if they get away with what they are purporting right now, we will go back fifty years; it is not twenty. Twenty was said

originally, but the latest cuts will put us back fifty years -

An Hon. Member: Talk about what (inaudible).

Mr. Hearn: - and we will start from scratch again. We are hitting teachers, we are hitting school board funding, and the result is we are hitting the children. And that is what it is all about. I think it is terrible that the Premier walks out of the House when a petition is being presented from his own district concerning the children in his own district. He does not care enough to listen, not to say respond. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) going to be leader yet.

#### Orders of the Day

Mr. Baker: Order 33, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order 33. Second Reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act". I believe we have already started this.

The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to have a few words on this Bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act. It is a Bill which was discussed or reviewed by the Government Services Legislative Review Committee, of which I am a member.

At the time it was being discussed, I looked at it and I thought it was more housekeeping,

I guess, than anything, at first glance. And when we discussed it, the Chairman and I and the Committee, it seemed to me that it was pretty well a housekeeping item and we approved it and agreed to send it on to this House of Assembly as it was.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, and this is my fault I guess, I did not make any comparison, I did not get the old bill to which this referred. When I looked at it, I did not consider it important enough to spend a big lot of time on, so I accepted the explanation given in the Bill. And I would imagine the Chairman would say the same thing for himself, that he accepted the same explanations.

But, Mr. Speaker, since that time I have tried to dig out some comparisons, because I knew this would be coming before the House of Assembly, to compare what this Bill is today or will create tomorrow in comparison with what is presently in place, and I was pretty well astounded to see the rates of increases in the nearly 300 fines which are established or which are - I do not know how or what you would say about it, but the 300 fines which are being reviewed, I guess, under this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think the intention behind this is another one of the devious schemes of the Minister of Finance, who is now getting the co-operation of the Minister of Public Works in another tax grab against the people of this Province. Now, no one can argue against fines or even jail sentences when you talk about the safety of people on the highway. People who speed and people who break the laws continuously, certainly should be

fined.

But, Mr. Speaker, in our system of democracy there certainly are degrees to which you should be punished for offences. Certain offences are not necessarily as dangerous to the public as others. I would suggest that driving at excessive speeds, of which I have been guilty myself sometimes, Mr. Speaker, is a dangerous practice unfortunately. Drunk driving and all these things, I have no complaints. I do not know that you should be fined for something like drunk driving, you should immediately be put in jail, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker.

But there are places within these 300 different fines where I find contradictions, Mr. Speaker. You get a fine now for identification plates not securely fastened in a proper position. Now that to my mind is not an overly serious matter. It is not a matter that is going to cause anyone's death I would not say. Mr. Speaker, something like a screw rusting off or falling out of your license plate and your license plate falling down, right now, or after this legislation is passed, and it certainly has nothing to do with safety, nothing that I can even imagine, Mr. Speaker, after this legislation is passed it is possible for a person to go to jail for five days for not having a screw in their license plate.

Now for a Minister to bring that in here I think he has screws loose in his head, Mr. Speaker, because that is ridiculous. It has nothing to do with safety, with trying to protect innocent people on the highways, it has nothing to do with excessive, imprudent or any kind of driving,

Mr. Speaker. It has nothing to do with anything imaginable on a safety level. Yet section 30 in this Act, Bill No. 48, reads that: Identification plates not securely fastened in a proper position can get you a fine between \$25 and \$100 dollars. And if you do not have \$100, if the screws on the license plate are falling off, the car will probably cost you that in maintenance, you might not have \$100 to pay it. So if you cannot pay the fine they put you in jail for five days. I mean that sounds to me to be the most ridiculous thing that I have ever heard tell of, Mr. Speaker.

And obviously the fines that are in here - there are many of them in that case, I have highlighted a few of them. Failure to keep identification plates clean. Now that is certainly going to endanger lives, if your licence plate happens to be dirty. Now I do not know how clean they want, if they want it simonized every day, maybe that is what the Minister wants. He is not here. But failure to keep - as it reads - your identification plates clean, that is what it says. There is no explanation of it. You know what can happen if you do not keep it clean?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: If you do not keep it clean you could be fined from \$25 to \$100. And if you have not got \$25 to \$100 the Member for St. John's South says that his constituents, just then, he said that they should be put in jail for five days because they have not got clean license plates. What a stupid statement to make.

Mr. Speaker, this is so ridiculous, and I am partly to



blame for this. That is what upsets me more than anything. Because I had this before a legislative review committee and I missed it. Which is crazy. Mr. Speaker, I will not go back on my word, I told the Chairman that this would come before the House and that is what I would stand by - now, had I given it some more thought and I will give the rest of them some more thought, that this had gone out to the public, Mr. Speaker. If there is anything that would make this Government look so stupid as to put a person in jail for not cleaning their license plates, for five days, to have it on paper is ridiculous. It will never happen. I am not saying it will ever happen. I know it probably will never happen. But it is here in black and white, Mr. Speaker. If you do not keep your license plate clean - I am going home tonight and I am going to shine mine up that good, Mr. Speaker, because I am sure they will be waiting for me to do something like that. I will probably lose a few more points on our point system if I did not have my license plate clean Mr. Speaker and I would lose my license. I have too many right now, Mr. Speaker.

Here is another one, another point. Removing identification plate or marker without authority. Now if I go home today - and the car is parked on the side of the road, Mr. Speaker - and I wanted to take the license plate off to clean it, because it is too cold outside, I want to go into the house, because my hands are freezing. So I remove my license plate Mr. Speaker but I did not get authority from anyone, so do you know how much I could be fined, \$360 for taking off my license plate. Now, I cannot get

it cleaned outside because it is too icy and too cold eight months of the year in this Province, and if I do not have the \$360 do you know what they are going to do with me, I will have to go to jail for twenty days and then I will be making licence plates, most likely, Mr. Speaker. They will put you in jail for ten days for taking off your license plate without authority. I know the Minister did not go over this in detail but he certainly should have. Some of these fines and explanations were probably there when we were there. What the Minister should do with this legislation is go over it again and the serious safety violations should be dealt with very seriously. I have no question about that. There is a speeding one here, if a speed limit is exceeded by thirty-one kilometers and over, so if you are going thirty-one kilometers over the speed limit, and over, you could be going 131 over the speed limit, Mr. Speaker, you could get a fine for \$60.00, if you go thirty miles over the speed limit. If you are on the Trans-Canada Highway you have to be going at least 120 kilometers, and you could be going 220 kilometers, Mr. Speaker, and you could get a fine of \$60 for your first offense. So if you go 220 kilometers out the Trans-Canada Highway you could get a \$75.00 fine. If you take your license plate off to clean it, Mr. Speaker, you could get \$100 fine. Now, how silly and ridiculous is that? I never heard the like of it. Nobody went over this and compared it, Mr. Speaker, because there are at least ten different items in here on parking in an improper place, parking in an area you are not suppose to park, and it is all the same fine. It is all \$130 to \$175 in this Bill, but

why do you have 300 items in here and ten of them dealing with parking by a no parking sign? It does not make sense. Whoever made this Bill up, Mr. Speaker, gave it no thought whatsoever. That is what I say. By seeing these couple of ridiculous examples I am using, and I realize they are ridiculous examples, but by seeing them I wonder about the other parts of this legislation that are in here dealing with things such as privatization of the motor vehicle licences, giving the authority to the banks to give out licences, Mr. Speaker. Now, that does not sound too outrageous when you hear of it first off, Mr. Speaker, but is there something else in the Act that I am missing, like I missed some of these fines before, that is going to drastically affect, or ridiculously, like some of these fines, Mr. Speaker? One problem I see with that, and it has happened already, the Minister has announced the close down of Clarendville and Wabush, so technically what he is doing, what this Bill is doing, and what the Government is doing, the banks of this country, and I do not think it is any secret they have the highest profits, they have always had the highest profits, sometimes the oil companies get a boost like they are now, but the banks always have the highest profits in businesses in Canada, and they are all pretty well guaranteed those profits. What the Minister is going to do now is help them increase their profits and lay off some people in Motor Registration who are making \$15,000 a year. Mr. Speaker, again, a ridiculous, stupid move. Why would he lay off someone because there is no great cost saving. When he made his statement he is saving \$26,000 here and \$80,000 there, Mr.

Speaker, but he is going to help protect the Bank of Montreal which is a very strong good financial operation, great profits. I wish I had a few shares in it, actually. Why, Mr. Speaker, would he pick on someone who is making \$15,000 a year as a clerk in the Motor Registration office in Clarendville, fire him, and let the banks make bigger profits? It does not make sense to me, Mr. Speaker.

In this Act, again, and I question it because of the ridiculous fines that are in the back of it, I question why the peace officers and the park wardens who come under the Public Employment of Canada Act, I believe it is, are made - or I suppose they could enforce the fines that are in this Act, that is the only way I can see it. But why did that happen? I have no idea why he would make the park rangers in Terra Nova Park and why he would not make the - if there is a reason. I imagine he will say when he gets up, but I cannot imagine what the reason might be. But if there is a reason for doing the national parks, doing the wardens in the national parks, is it not the same reason, for the wardens in our provincial parks? I don't know that, but it is a question I would like to have the Minister answer when he concludes this debate, Mr. Speaker.

There are other ridiculous fines in this. Another part of this amendment is the schedule of penalties. Now, I suppose any Government, when they want to make penalties for certain offences, it is a judgement call, based on, I suppose, judges or enforcement officers, and it is based on deterrence, Mr. Speaker. These fines were in place when I was a

member of Government, no doubt, and they were based on expert advice, at the time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether it is necessary for safety reasons, to increase all across the board fines up to 60 per cent. All of them are between 40 per cent and 60 per cent increase. Now, that does not seem to be brought in as a deterrent, Mr. Speaker, it is brought in, specifically, I believe, as a tax grab, again, against people in this Province who want to remove their licence plates and bring them into the house to clean them.

An Hon. Member: Go on!

Mr. R. Aylward: Ten days in jail, you can get -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Yes, it is foolish. It is ridiculous - 'removing identification plates without authority', that is what it says here. If I don't have authority, I can't remove it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. R. Aylward: I can't take it off my car and bring it into the house. It is ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous that a person could go to jail for ten days for removing his licence plate and taking it into his back yard.

An Hon. Member: It has been there for years. That is silly.

Mr. R. Aylward: It has been there for years, I agree. I am not disagreeing with that. It is ridiculous, I am saying. That is the point I am making. Take it out. Take it out. I did not see

it there but I see it now, and if I were over there today, bringing in this Act -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: I mean, I am not criticizing the Minister. I don't expect the Minister looked at all these fines. He is probably a busy man. I am pointing out a stupid, ridiculous situation in this Act. Why don't they change it? I don't understand. What is the problem with removing -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) we did not do it.

Mr. R. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, anyone knows that if you don't keep your licence plate clean - I mean, even if you define 'clean', if it is obstructed that much, Mr. Speaker, that it can't be read by an enforcement officer, maybe a fine of ten or twenty dollars might be okay. So, we have a fine of \$100 for not keeping your licence plate clean; and you can get up to five days in jail for not keeping - I mean, even if it were blocked so the policeman could not see it at all. Mr. Speaker, I have a pickup and I have it up in the woods all the time, and maybe it is dirty. I don't go back and look at it every time I hop in the car, to see if it is clean. Probably I should, but I don't. So I make the mistake, it is dirty and I get a ticket for it. Should I get a \$100 ticket and go to jail for five days? Is it that serious that I should go to jail for five days, no matter how dirty it is?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) extreme.

Mr. R. Aylward: It is extreme, yes, but it is in here. I am not

making this up. These are only a couple of them, but, I mean, there is worse than that in here. A child riding its bicycle - now, listen, Mr. Minister, if you have little children who you don't want to go out on the road, and you live in a subdivision, as I do, in Kilbride, and they have training wheels, and want to ride their bicycle along the sidewalk, you know what they can do? They can go to jail for five days for doing that. I have never seen - I mean, it is absolutely ridiculous. It is in here, it can happen. But if you did not do that to him, what would you do with him? You would fine him \$180. Some little youngster, three years old, trying to learn how to drive a bike. I am not going to put him out in the street to teach him how to drive a bike, because he might be killed. That would be a safety problem in my mind. I think he should be encouraging parents to keep them on the sidewalk. So they would not get out in the traffic and create a safety hazard, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

An Hon. Member: Don't be so foolish. It's not foolish, it's your bill!

Mr. R. Aylward: Now listen to this. This is a man, Mr. Speaker, who is in charge of educating the youngsters of our Province, the young people in our Province, and he is saying sit down. It is foolish. Is it foolish, Mr. Speaker, that a child who is riding on the sidewalk should go to jail for five years? Does that make sense to the hon. gentleman? Does that make sense to you?

An Hon. Member: That has always been in the bill.

Mr. R. Aylward: Yes, I am not saying it was not always in the bill. Can you understand me? I am not saying it was not. Maybe I was responsible for putting it in there -

An Hon. Member: Make your point! Make your point!

Mr. R. Aylward: - but my point is that it is so foolish that it should be taken out. That is all.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Oh, I see, I see.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) again last night or what?

Mr. R. Aylward: His nose is out of joint now. He must like driving his bicycle along the sidewalk. Maybe he pedals a bicycle along the sidewalk, he is afraid to go to jail for it now.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) educators did not even get an invite.

Mr. Matthews: You know what I would say happened to him? His chain slipped off his sprocket.

An Hon. Member: Two old educators did not get an invite to the dinner.

Mr. R. Aylward: You know what, Mr. Speaker, if I went to Motor Registration today and I got in the line ups that are there - and the Minister is trying to help that, he is going to make the bank profits easier, I can go in and line up in the bank now instead of the Motor Registration - and I am up to my eyeballs in people trying to get through in a couple of hours and in a hurry, and I get my licence and I stick it in my

wallet and I go on, Mr. Speaker, the policeman stops me five minutes after and I did not have it signed, I could go to jail for five days.

I mean there is nothing whatsoever to do with any safety risk to a person of this Province if I have my licence signed or not. It is a ridiculous fine for someone who did not sign their licence. Give me a ticket for twenty bucks and say now do not do it again, yes sure. Makes sense. I should have done it, I realized I should have done it, but I did not endanger anyone's life by not doing it. I could go to jail from one to five days or I could be fined up to \$100 for it.

Mr. Speaker, nobody looked at this legislation, you know you did not look at it. Let me see if I can find another prime example here.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: That is enough now. Alright, Mr. Speaker, I was just trying to find the one about the kids riding the motorcycle, Mr. Speaker, or riding their bicycles, not even a motorcycle. I can see if you are driving a motorcycle on the sidewalk you should be strung up, yes Mr. Speaker. But I wanted to -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I can't seem to find it here right now about the children on their motorcycle. But, Mr. Speaker, some fines in this. If I am caught not wearing a seat belt that is a fairly serious offense. I do not disagree with that. That is a fairly serious offense. I do not think that I am hurting anyone else but I am foolish myself for

not doing it. But if I do it now, if I do not have a seat belt on now, I think the fine today is around \$25 whatever the rate is, around \$25, maybe a bit more. When this is passed, Mr. Speaker, if you forget to put on your seat belt, I do not even remember how many days you might spend in jail for it, I guess you get a year for that one, but, Mr. Speaker, you can be fined up to \$500 right now.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that is a reasonable, not nearly a reasonable fine for a person who does not put on their seat belt. You should have your seat belt on and you should be fined for not putting it on, I agree. But a \$500 fine for not putting on your seat belt is ridiculous, and that was one other example. We will have more.

Here is another one here that you could go to jail for ten days in, and I better get in to Canadian Tire on the way home because I do not have it. Failure to carry warning devices in vehicle. I do not even know what they are. But I mean if you do not carry them in your vehicle you are going to jail for ten days. I do not know what a warning device is but, Mr. Speaker, it is not defined in this Act. But I might go to jail on the way home if someone stops me and asks me for it because I have no idea what it is. Maybe there is one in there.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Oh, yes, it does not say anything about big trucks in here. It does not give any size or any - your vehicle, it says. It does not say what the size of the vehicle or anything else. But I would imagine there are reasons for all of these, Mr.

Speaker, and I will imagine that when the Minister gets up to speak to close this debate he will go over all of these different fines and make me look rather silly for making the comments that I did Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. R. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the Minister that when he does get up I hope he goes over all of these fines, give me a logical reason, and I would support the Bill for him if there is a logical reason for having these fines in there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Oh, you are going for a longer debate. That is great with us buddy.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to bring out a few points. You know -

An Hon. Member: I have three more people who want to speak.

Mr. Murphy: First of all I want to tell my hon. colleague from Kilbride that when this legislation came to the Legislative Review Committee, I would concur that we thought it was basically a housekeeping piece of legislation, and we did not review the schedule. But I want to remind the hon. member of a couple of points he brings up. It is all well and good to stand in your place and take a schedule, and the offences within the schedule have not changed, the previous administration had the same but now there are some increases in the fines. Now, the

one example the hon. member used in discussing this Government's attitude towards increasing a fine, was not cleaning a licence plate, \$25. Now, let me remind the hon. member that his own colleague, the Member for Humber West, stood in this House two days ago and talked about an incident of a -

An Hon. Member: A school bus.

Mr. Murphy: A school bus, exactly. And I just want to remind the hon. member how serious an uncleaned licence plate can be. A pickup went roaring by that particular school bus and nearly killed the hon. member's daughter. Now, if circumstances had allowed, he would have had an opportunity to take the licence plate down and he would have had the individual. We suffer hundreds and hundreds of hit-and-runs in this Province year in and year out causing serious and fatal accidents, and many of the witnesses have said in court that they got one or two digits off the licence plate, and the reason they did not get the full number was because the plate was not clean. And I want to remind the hon. member that the schedule of fines and jail terms associated with the offences are consistent nationally.

Mr. R. Aylward: So, passing a school bus is the same as not keeping your license plate clean.

Mr. Murphy: No, it is not.

Mr. R. Aylward: Passing a school bus should be \$1000 and not keeping your license plate clean (inaudible).

Mr. Murphy: Fine. Fine. And if we had to take this piece of

legislation to Committee, we may have been able to put a better punishment fit the crime consequence on this piece of legislation. Somebody drafted the legislation and it got by us. I admit it and the hon. member admits it, but I think it is rhetorical to stand in his place and pick out single offences in this piece of legislation.

Mr. R. Aylward: You can change it now. You have the power to change it right now (inaudible).

Mr. Murphy: If I had gotten a copy of the old Act and we had a comparison run-through, and I would suggest to the hon. member that I am prepared to do that if he so wishes, and to make some recommendations. However, this Bill is now ready to be passed, but it does not mean that we cannot amend it sometime in the future.

An Hon. Member: Do it now.

Mr. Murphy: I do not think there is time to do it. With the amount of legislation that is before this hon. House, important legislation, we are beating this piece of legislation to death. There is a way to do it. I would suggest to the hon. member there is a way to amend the schedule here, and it can be done very simply. But I think for members opposite to get up, speaker after speaker, and hang up this House with all the important legislation we have before us, is totally wrong. I ask members opposite to stop getting up and reading -

An Hon. Member: What are you doing?

Mr. Murphy: I am just making a comparison, because I think you

are entirely wrong.

Mr. R. Aylward: You are not making any sense.

Mr. Murphy: Oh, yes, you are the only one who makes any sense. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Tobin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I was not even going to rise in my place at all, but I was sort of provoked into it by the hon. the Member for St. John's South, when he got up and made that vicious personal attack on my colleague, the member for Kilbride. Mr. Speaker, I feel I should say a few words on a couple of points that certainly do not add anything to my disfavour of this Bill.

There is a lot of just plain housekeeping sections in this Bill, but there are a couple which do not jibe with my line of thinking, and I want to certainly say to the Minister that I believe, in many cases, this legislation needs to be changed. I am sorry we have come this far and there have not been changes to the Bill already. As far as I am concerned, this is an alarming situation as it pertains to highway legislation. It is a money grab, another way this Government is trying to get every cent, every nickel beaten out of people, browbeating -

Mr. Matthews: Out of the poor people.

Mr. Parsons: - poor people. Imagine! Imagine! If a bus is stopped letting out children or taking on children and some guy passes by, the fine is \$180, the

same as if he had a defaced or a dirty licence plate. Mr. Speaker, I mean, there is something wrong with whatever supposed brains were behind this legislation. I mean, there has to be something wrong.

The other thing is with the seat belt legislation. Mr. Speaker, there are people who believe that to force them to wear seat belts is against their rights.

An Hon. Member: Are you against them?

Mr. Parsons: No, personally I am not. But I want to tell the hon. gentleman that only a few years ago I had a very good friend of mine, related to me in fact, who was coming out Roaches Line and hit a moose.

An Hon. Member: John did that, too. John hit a moose.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, yes, the hon. Minister for Social Services hit a moose. But these four young men were in this small car. They were driving out the Roaches Line when they hit a moose and went into a drain. The car was damaged, written off - it went into water. Neither one of those young men was wearing a seat belt - neither one of them - when the moose landed on top of the car.

There was a skylight in that little car - it was one of those little Fords, a Bobcat I believe. But it had a skylight, and the only reason those four young men - I saw one of them in the gallery there, not now but during the day - are alive today is because they were not wearing seat belts: the car was submerged, it went under water and they escaped through the skylight.

An Hon. Member: Did they?

Mr. Parsons: Yes. They were almost unconscious, all of them were just through there when a passerby saw them. But if they had had the seat belts on, there is no doubt in my mind or in their minds, that they would have succumbed, they would have drowned in that particular instance.

Now, I am not saying that I am against the wearing of seat belts, but what I am saying is, there are some people out there who feel that it is their right to use a seat belt or not use a seat belt. I know laws and rules and regulations have to be carried on for the majority, but the point remains that some people, as I said, feel so strongly about this that to wear a seat belt is almost - say if you are one person who is driving in a car and you do not wear the seat belt, well, the only person whom you could injure because of not wearing that seat belt is yourself.

Now, every time I get into a vehicle I put on my seat belt, and everyone else who gets into that wagon with me, I make those people put on their seat belts.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: Absolutely. Everyone. My grandchildren travel with me on many, many occasions, and it is a religion with me. But what I am saying is everyone out there does not think along the same lines I do, and there are situations when people do not want to wear that seat belt. But, again, it is a private thing. It is a personal thing. And there have been cases where people's lives would have been saved if they had been wearing seat belts.



There is no doubt at all about that.

I was away on a trip this year to a foreign county, and those are countries where they speed a lot. But there was no seat belt legislation there, there was nothing to say you had to wear a seat belt. So I do not think it is nerve shattering, I do not think it is life shattering, although we have brought in a law and naturally we have to stick by the laws of the land. I do not think there is anyone arguing that point, but I am saying there are people with strong convictions as it pertains to seat belt legislation.

I remember one day I was coming down the Southern Shore and I came out from Crane's service station. I was in buying a bottle of pop or whatever, and I came out of the service station, got in my car and had my belt in my hand to buckle up when a moutie came around the corner. I knew he was turning around and I pulled in. He said, 'You did not have your seat belt on'. I said, 'No, I just left the service station there'. He said, 'You are supposed to put it on before you leave the service station,' and he gave me a \$25 ticket. He told me if I wanted to go to court it was fine with him, he did not care. But I had to go to Holyrood, so I figured out what it would cost me to go to Holyrood and I paid the \$25 ticket. But the point I am making is that I was one of the people who felt the seat belt legislation was right from day one, I felt it did save lives. But there are a lot of people out there who do not go along with that.

But when you increase the fines now, under certain circumstances

you could be fined up to \$500 for something that is a personal thing. I think the minister should look at that; I think the minister will have to take a look at this legislation as it pertains to the seat belt legislation.

An Hon. Member: It can always be challenged in the courts.

Mr. Parsons: It has been challenged in the courts. I know the person who challenged it lost on one occasion. I think that was out in western Canada. The minister says they have all lost. I am not sure. Perhaps he is right. But I want to say to the minister - I am repeating myself and I know it - that I, for one, am in favour of seat belt legislation. I did tell of an instance just previously where people, I think, would have died if they had been wearing seat belts. I suppose those situations occur, too. You know, everything cannot be perfect. But I still think the fine has gone way beyond the realms of sanity, when you talk about not wearing a seat belt and you can be fined up to \$500.

Licence plates ich are dirty. The previous speaker spoke about it, and again I think the minister has to take a look at that. I mean, we are living in Newfoundland where there are an awful lot of dirt roads.

An Hon. Member: The Southern Shore.

Mr. Parsons: Any part of any bay or anyplace: down home, in Flat Rock, Torbay, anyplace there is a percentage of dirt roads - Placentia.

An Hon. Member: Dunville.

Mr. Parsons: Dunville, yes. I left here last week and went to the service station and had my vehicle washed. Then I went to Trinity Bay, over in the hon. the Member for Bellevue's district, and looked around at all that was happening over there. There is a lot of activity; a lot of mackerel being seined over there, which I am very interested in -

Mr. Simms: And they are all mad at the member.

Mr. Parsons: And they are all mad with the member, of course. But after I travelled around those roads for a period of time -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: No. I told the hon. gentleman and the minister that I had my vehicle washed at the service station here on Portugal Cove Road. But when we came back from that little run over around the bay, there was no way you could see my licence plate. I only travelled down around Old Shop, but there was no way you could see my licence plate. What was I supposed to do, get out then and wash my licence plate? I mean, you would never think of that. You know, we are all human beings. This legislation does not take that into account.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: Yes, I can see someone having it defaced, painted or something like that. But I mean the provisions in this legislation are certainly anything but clear. And I think the Minister should look at that. I think that - what is the fine on that? Let me see now. I believe it is up to \$100 or perhaps you could get a couple of days in

jail. We have police officers out there who are very reluctant to give tickets as in the situation such as I just described. But we have them out there as well who will. And do it with pleasure. And those are the circumstances that I speak of.

I was looking at 42: driving a vehicle without identification or other plates, stickers or markers or dealers' plates. Mr. Speaker, I am not like some of the Members here who say, that is the law. You are breaking the law. I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, that I went out about a month ago or two months ago, and I do not know what the reason, I usually hook up the trailer or whatever to the back of the wagon, but lo and behold I looked at the back of the wagon, I looked at the sticker, and I saw the license had expired.

The culprit - now I should have been locked up. I should have been jailed. With all the old mail that comes, you know, to every household.

Mr. Winsor: The Minister of Social Services signed his licence here in the Legislature yesterday.

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Winsor: Yes, he signed his license here in this Legislature.

Mr. Parsons: I would not doubt but he did. And you know what I had to do when I looked at that legislation yesterday - I had to take up my wallet and look at my driver's license to see if it was signed. And I bet there were a lot of people here that did the same thing. But when I looked at the back of my wagon, I said oh glory be. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there should be any

provision that I be jailed for doing just that. Everyone gets a lot of old mail in their mailboxes now and sure enough I was sent out the application for renewal. There is no doubt at all about it. The application was there but I overlooked it, again being human, and not like the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation. He feels that the implementing of this legislation would do great things but I do not think it would. I think there are several good parts to this legislation but there are a great number of disadvantages.

And again, I think it is a money grab. Out of the poor people, out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, who have already been struck with unemployment, with the Minister of Education going out and telling them that it is going to cost more money to send their children to school. With hospitals saying that there are cutbacks, there are people being laid off in the health system. And then you find here the same Government, the Government without a heart, with no conscience, could not care less, now the poor people again. Who are the people who are going to get most of those tickets? If there is a company out there, and the driver for the company - usually the company absorbs those tickets, no problem. They absorb, they pay for the tickets. But it is the ordinary individual, the poor person who is getting hit again, that this Government is taking dollars from their pockets.

Now, for moving violations. Again I mention the passing the bus. I was in Torbay only a couple of years ago when this gentleman - I could not call him a gentleman, much less than that.

An Hon. Member: Who? Not me?

Mr. Parsons: No, this man came up and passed a school bus. And hit a child. That child was in hospital for over a year. But when I look at this legislation then I have to condemn the Minister for saying that the fine for passing a bus is \$180. The same as a dirty license plate. Mr. Speaker, there is something wrong there. There is something wrong with the Minister's idea of fair play and justice.

An Hon. Member: Out of his mind.

Mr. Parsons: He is out of his mind. There is something wrong. I mean, the man that passes a school bus -

An Hon. Member: I agree with that.

Mr. Parsons: -and, gets a \$180 fine, when his licence should be taken away from him immediately. And if it were my child that he hit, I don't know what would happen, I really wouldn't be able to say. But I saw it happen, and it is devastating. And I think the \$180 fine there - now, if we had a jail sentence, that is where it should be implemented with this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, certainly, we need rules and regulations to protect all of us, because all of us are prone to making mistakes on the highways, but in this legislation, fines have increased by 100 per cent and, in some instances, I think, up to 400 per cent for non-moving violations, for example, parking in a No Parking area. I mean, I, for the life of me, don't see a person who goes downtown, and having parked in a No Parking area, jumps out of his car for a couple of minutes and,

on returning to the car, finds a ticket for, I think it is \$60 for, say, parking in front of a loading door.

An Hon. Member: I will be broke.

Mr. Parsons: Yes. Now, Mr. Speaker, if there is someone doing something like that, then I am a culprit. Because, sometimes, if I am in a big rush and I don't see anything around, I will jump out for a minute - only for a minute; sometimes those minutes run to two and three minutes and five minutes. Again, we are looking at the humane aspect of it. Mr. Speaker, I think this is, in some instances, shocking, degrading, repulsive, crushing, callous legislation against the poor people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I really do.

An Hon. Member: Old Officer.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, I must admit that I do -

An Hon. Member: I wouldn't mind, but he was in the Police Force.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, I spent nearly six years in the Police Force.

An Hon. Member: You gave me my first ticket.

Mr. Parsons: I would not doubt that I did. I wasn't a ticket man, I must say. I was known for being down around Water Street. I remember being downtown in my heydays when I was in the Police Force and, Mr. Speaker, I was noted for going in to all the businesses down there if they had even an expired meter, and asking them to come out and put a dime or a nickel in the meter. And, Mr. Speaker, often, if I had a bit of change in my pocket, I put it in

the meter and didn't even go in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: A man with compassion.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, Mr. Speaker, because the majority of people parked on an expired meter are the ordinary poor people who are downtown for good reason.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we had to impose restrictions on those wild young fellows from St. John's, as well, especially the west end of St. John's, and we did a magnificent job. I must say, we did a wonderful, wonderful job.

Mr. Speaker, before I finish up, I would like to talk about the Minister's policy, as it pertains to the closing out of the Motor Vehicle Registration Offices.

Now, the hon. the Member for St. John's South looks at me and says, 'They are not going at that again.' Mr. Speaker, I am going at that again, because I earnestly believe there is no great savings to be made in closing out those offices. I, and every other member of the House, do some banking. And, certainly, we are not naive enough to say that whatever business we do through the banks we do not have to pay for. And I am sure that eventually, the cost incurred by the banks will offset any savings the Government now feels will come about because of the closing of those offices. I really am.

Apart from that, Mr. Speaker, with a Province like ours, where we have so much unemployment, as I mentioned yesterday to the

Premier, when he was up espousing the great things they had achieved since this Government took office eighteen months ago, our unemployment situation now is about 16 per cent. And it is Clarenville, Labrador City - how many more (Inaudible)?

An Hon. Member: Wabush.

Mr. Parsons: Wabush.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

An Hon. Member: The weigh scales in Bellevue.

Mr. Parsons: The weigh scales in Bellevue are closing, and Goobies. Mr. Speaker I believe that this Minister and this Government, they are only trying to get their foot in the door. Because I am wondering what is going to happen to the Motor Registration office in Mount Pearl. I see the hon. Member, my colleague from Mount Pearl here, I think that he is certainly beginning to wonder about this Government, because some of the things that this Government has done in the last eighteen months, some of the closures, are frightening, Mr. Speaker to say the least.

An Hon. Member: Discrimination.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, it certainly is discrimination. And many of the people who worked in those offices have mortgages and paying off on cars, and they have the same obligations and liabilities that you and I have. And, Mr. Speaker, when they became part of Government, a part of Motor Registration, who in the name of Almighty, Mr. Speaker, would ever feel that they were going to lose their jobs?

Mr. Speaker it is as simple as that. If we take away the jobs they say we save \$40,000 or \$50,000 by eliminating two jobs. But, Mr. Speaker, you can not look at it like that. It is not good economics. Because the person who is taken out of work, you may save the job, you may save that money, that \$15,000 or \$20,000 whatever that individual is paid, but, Mr. Speaker, you have to take in too what part of that money comes back to Government directly and indirectly. And, Mr. Speaker, really there is no great saving as it pertains to the closing of those offices. I have a couple of friends who work in those offices, and like I said previously each one of those men - and women, one woman in fact - have mortgages on their homes and this is devastation to them. I mean this is something that they never thought that they could realize. They never thought that a Government could be so callous as to cut their legs from underneath them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if this was something that was going to bring in millions of dollars and you know, here is a waste of people's money, then I could see it. But here I do not think we are saving any amount of money. And again, if we are going to go to the banks, if we have the privilege now of going to the banks and applying for, or paying for, perhaps a buck for our licence, but, Mr. Speaker, I have seen as many line ups at the banks as I have seen at the Motor Registration. So, I mean, we are not giving a service as such. We are not making the service better. And, Mr. Speaker, it has never been told by the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation or by the Minister of Finance as

to what the cost will be when we go to the banks to get our licence. I mean these are basic points - I mean someone has to tell us, someone has to say to us. You are taking away someone's livelihood, family, a whole disruption of their lives, at what cost and if any, what savings?

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Minister should again - I know that we are late in the stages of this bill - but I believe that the Minister should tell the House that he feels there are some inaccuracies, some injustices in this piece of legislation. And I believe that he should say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, yes I can see there is some need for changes, and we will bring in some changes, some amendments to this particular bill, at a later date.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I could go down in my district or in some of the other districts that I travel in and see some great improvements in our roads. I mean in some of the places that I have travelled, places we go where you see toll bridges or whatever, or the increasing of tolls on bridges, you see some great advances made in road construction or road maintenance. But when I travel in the East End now, we did not have one single ha'penny spent down there last year on capital works. Not a--

Mr. Efford: That has been like that for twenty years.

Mr. Parsons: The Minister of Social Services says he was like that for twenty years. May I ask the Minister of Social Services - how long have you been in politics?

Mr. Efford: Since 1985.

Mr. Parsons: 1985.

An Hon. Member: Five years.

Mr. Parsons: It is five years.

Mr. Efford: No, no, before, I mean.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)  
Randy Collins.

Mr. Parsons: Oh, well. I travel in the Minister's area quite a bit and I find that the roads over there are comparable to a great degree, or far better than here in St. John's East Extern.

Mr. Efford: The road in Port de Grave was paved in 1963, and it was not touched again until this year.

Mr. Parsons: Okay. The hon. Minister of Social Services said the road in Port de Grave was not paved since 1963.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Parsons: But you cannot compare the road in Port de Grave to the Torbay Road, over which surface thousands upon thousands of cars travel each day, and heavy trucks and whatever. You do not have to resurface a road if there is nothing wrong with it.

Mr. Efford: We paved more driveways in Port de Grave (inaudible) in Port de Grave.

Mr. Doyle: I paved the road in Port de Grave, too.

Mr. Efford: You did not.

Mr. Parsons: The hon. Member for Harbour Main was the Minister responsible for the paving of the road to Port de Grave.

Mr. Doyle: That is right.

Mr. Parsons: And the hon. Minister for Social Services should thank him; should say yes, you did a great job when you were in there as Minister of Highways. We all know what a terrific job he did. It is too bad, and the people of Newfoundland now realize what a mistake they made, that they did not continue his service. If he had -

Mr. Doyle: Make no wonder the Liberals were after me to join them, eh?

Mr. Parsons: My hon. colleague says the Liberals were after him to join them, and you can see why. When you could look across and see the Minister of Works, Services and Transportation and you try to draw some comparison with the previous Minister of Transportation, well, then, you can see why the people over there wanted this hon. gentleman to join them, just to become the Minister of Transportation.

An Hon. Member: Right. And got paid back (inaudible) indirectly.

Mr. Simms: You would make a good minister, yourself.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, I will accept that.

Mr. Simms: Honest (inaudible).

Mr. Parsons: Yes, honestly. Now, I can see that the Minister of Transportation is coming back, and I hope I can get some kind of a consensus from the Minister. If all these new fines come into being, and I am sure the legislation will pass, I am positive because of numbers not because of the credence behind the

legislation, it is just numbers, numbers, but we want to bring to the attention of all hon. Members in this House and all the people in Newfoundland and Labrador where this Government is again, and I repeat myself, trying to get more money by hook or by crook. Come what may, we are going to get every single nickel for which we can browbeat you and take it out of your pockets. Mr. Speaker, they are doing a very fine job with it, because they do have the numbers. I do not think for an instant there is one person on the other side who does not agree with me in some respects as it pertains to this legislation.

An Hon. Member: The Member for Placentia has a heavy foot.

Mr. Parsons: Mr. Speaker, there is another thing I was going to ask the Minister, and I would like him to address it when he gets up. Usually, as far as police forces are concerned - I think it applies as well with the RCMP; I know local police do it - there is tolerance. Say, if the speed limit is 90 kilometres, usually they set their radar checks 100, giving 10 per cent tolerance. You know, they will not stop you if you are doing -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Parsons: - with ninety (inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Some Hon. Members: By leave! By leave!

Mr. Parsons: Mr. Speaker, I was just getting into it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Parsons: Mr. Speaker, these were my preliminary remarks -

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

The hon. Member's time is up.

Mr. Parsons: - and I will have some remarks for a later day. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murphy: Oh, my God!

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

Mr. Rideout: The first thing I want to do is advise the hon. the Member for St. John's South that if he wishes to participate by way of banter in the debate, he should return to the corner. We cannot have him there sitting in a minister's chair -

Mr. Winsor: He lives in hope.

An Hon. Member: He should go back to St. John's South.

Mr. Rideout: He should go back to St. John's South, yes. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to make a few brief remarks on this particular Bill. Despite the banter, laughing and so on coming from members of the other side, Mr. Speaker, this is a very significant piece of legislation, this Bill 48, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, 1988. It is a very, very significant piece of legislation, and I do not really think the people of this Province know the implications of this piece of legislation for people using the highways and using motor vehicles in Newfoundland and Labrador. And perhaps it is a reflection on all

of us that they do not.

The Government has done its best to try and make sure the people do not find out what is in this piece of legislation before it becomes law, and that is probably one of the reasons why this Bill got very little publicity, if any, in the Committee stage. There were certainly no public hearings on this Bill, but this is a very significant piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there are two distinct principles embodied in Bill 48. The first principle is the principle of the beginning of privatizing services normally provided by the Department of Works, Services and Transportation through the Division of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. That is the first principle that is involved in this piece of legislation. Of course it is consistent with the budgetary freeze and the cutback announcements made by the Minister to this House several weeks ago, when the Minister announced that the Registration Offices were going to close at Clarendville and Wabush, and there were other similar announcements made about weigh scales in various regions of the Province.

I think it should become clear, Mr. Speaker, that this process, this moving along the path of privatization, whereby banks are the first people to get their foot in the door, could very well apply to other areas the Minister is responsible for. So, first of all, it should be made abundantly clear, through this House to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that Government has begun the first step along the process of privatizing services provided to the people of



Newfoundland and Labrador by the Department of Works, Services and Transportation, and the first step in that process is allowing chartered banks in this Province to process applications for motor vehicle registration.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know, quite frankly, whether that is going to improve services to the people of this Province or not. It could be argued that because chartered banks are more accessible than the regional registration offices that it might provide for greater accessibility. But, Mr. Speaker, the ordinary individual in this Province, living in rural Newfoundland in particular, will know that the lineups at chartered banks on any given day of the week, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, is no less severe than lineups that might have occurred at the regional registration offices, whether it was in Clarenville, Grand Falls, Corner Brook, or wherever. People have a tendency to wait until the last moment when it comes to renewing motor registration stickers, or when it comes to renewing drivers' licences. When it comes to renewing anything, I suppose, the vast majority of our society have a tendency to wait until the last moment, so it is ludicrous for the Minister to argue that this particular change will make it easier for the ordinary person in this Province to renew motor vehicle registration plates or stickers. It is ludicrous for them to argue that. That is not the reason for this change, Mr. Speaker. The reason for this change is to begin the process of privatization. That is the sole reason for the change, and that is a very important principle

contained in this Bill. And in second reading we are debating the principle of the Bill.

Equally important, Mr. Speaker, and in my view perhaps more significant, is the job losses that are going to result from this particular move by the Government. There are ten or eleven people involved in Clarenville, there are two or three people involved up in Wabush, and if this process continues from here, there will be other people in other regional registration offices in Corner Brook perhaps, or in Grand Falls. And who knows, if the people in the Province accept this kind of service, as somebody said here today, the provincial office itself, located in Mount Pearl, might be one that the minister might be inclined to look at, the point being, Mr. Speaker, that the savings the Government is going to incur as a result of the decision to close down those regional offices is nothing; it really is nothing in terms of the salaries for a few clerks and so on in those offices to issue registration certificates and drivers' licences and so on.

The banks are only going to be able to process the applications for motor registrations, as I understand it. I do not get any sense from here that they will be dealing with drivers' licences, for example. So, I think it is really a situation that the Government is being penny wise and pound foolish. They are going to save very, very little here if anything. They are going to deprive some job opportunities in rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador and save very, very little money.

Now, the second principle embodied in this bill, Mr. Speaker, is the massive - massive - taxation grab the minister has embarked on. I do not know if the minister really knew what he was doing. I do not know if the minister studied in detail the proposals for fine increases in this particular Bill. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it could be argued that this Bill is a tax bill. Because every time there is an increase in a fee it is, in essence, an increase in taxation, and this bill has one example after another of a massive, massive increase in fees, in other words, a massive, massive increase in taxation. And the people of this Province have the right to know that.

You know, at the present time, as I understand it, the Government collects something like \$6 million a year from fees collected under the Highway Traffic Act. Mr. Speaker, once this minister gets his way and this Bill becomes law, that \$6 million annually that the people of this Province pay for breaking the Highway Traffic Act in one form or another, is going to increase by almost \$3 million a year. It is going to increase by that amount. Every single fine in the schedule of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, increases anywhere from 50 to 60 per cent. And the minister can shake his head until his beard falls off, Mr. Speaker. That is the fact of the matter. This is a massive, massive tax grab by this Government and the people out there are not going to know about it until the Bill becomes law and those massive increases go into effect.

Let me give the minister some examples and allow him to shake his head at them, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues have given some

examples; I will give some more. Every member in this House, on both sides of the House, when their constituents find out what has been perpetrated on them by this Government with this Bill, I suspect are going to have irate constituents.

An Hon. Member: And so they should.

Mr. Rideout: So they should. I agree with the minister - so they should. The minister, Mr. Speaker, should try to shed himself of some of his arrogance and be concerned about the ordinary consumer, the ordinary -

An Hon. Member: Who breaks the law.

Mr. Rideout: Who breaks the law? I am talking about the dramatic increase for some of those stupid, silly things the minister has continued to leave in the Highway Traffic Act, Mr. Speaker.

If the Minister wanted to do an overhaul of the Bill, which might be quite legitimate, why did the Minister not have his officials go through this Bill and take out the foolishness that has been in it, perhaps, since 1949? Why did he not do away with some of the old, archaic things that have been contained in this Bill since it has been a statute in this Province, and make it a more modern Bill, a Bill more reflective of the 1990s, Mr. Speaker? Why did he not do that? But, no, he left in there every old foolish thing you can think of that has been in the Highway Traffic Act from the beginning of the Act in this Province.

Mr. Efford: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the greatest example of archaic, and foolishness in this House, is the Minister of Social Services.

An Hon. Member: Archaic, anyway.

An Hon. Member: Now, now! That is getting personal.

Mr. Rideout: It certainly is personal, flowing in the same vein in which the Minister made the previous comment.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: I am doing no such thing, Mr. Speaker. When the Minister withdraws his comments, I will withdraw mine. So it is lick and lick alike.

Mr. Efford: I think we will be there a long while.

Mr. Rideout: That is right, and the Minister will be over there until he hurts sitting in his seat. He will be over there until the mud washes off his licence plates or the moose blood comes off his licence plates, Mr. Speaker.

Now, just look at some of the examples we have been talking about in this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Under the old Bill, the failure to produce a vehicle licence carried a maximum fine of \$60, Mr. Speaker. It is proposed to increase that to \$100, a \$40 increase on a maximum fine for just that simple failure to produce a vehicle licence. Mr. Speaker, that is an horrendous increase for one example, alone.

Mr. Efford: Mr. Speaker, you are supposed to have your licence with

you.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, you are supposed to have your licence with you. You have a period of time to show it. A person who has two or three vehicles, or anything, could cause a person, from time to time - we all know we are supposed to have it with us. There are a lot of things we are not supposed to do but, being ordinary human beings, we do them from time to time. And nobody minds paying a reasonable penalty for being forgetful, for breaking laws that, even though they are laws, are not going to seriously and negatively impact on anybody else in society. Nobody minds that, Mr. Speaker. But, to make the people of the Province subject to a massive tax grab for that kind of thing is absolutely wrong, absolutely wrong.

An Hon. Member: Just like having dirty licence plates.

Mr. Rideout: I don't know. I am just talking about the fines schedule.

Failure to notify the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, for example, of transfer of ownership, Mr. Speaker, under the old bill, was \$60. This Government is now proposing to make it \$90, a thirty dollar increase for failing to notify the -

An Hon. Member: A 50 per cent increase, thirty over sixty.

Mr. Rideout: Yes, about a 50 per cent increase - a 40 per cent increase.

An Hon. Member: Fifty.

Mr. Rideout: Failure to file change of address, and I think you

have ten days, or something like that, to file change of address. Now, if you fail to get that done within ten days, the new fine will be - I have to make sure I have the same ones here now. Mr. Speaker, I made a mistake. Failure to notify the registrar of transfer of ownership is going to go up to \$120. Failure to notify the registrar of a change of address is going to go from \$60 to \$100; that is another \$40 increase.

Mr. Speaker, the point I have been making, that we all have been trying to make, is that there is a massive, massive tax grab in this particular Bill. It should actually be treated as a money Bill.

An Hon. Member: It sounds like you are arguing on the side of the lawbreakers.

Mr. Rideout: Well, Mr. Speaker, lawbreakers have rights, too, you know.

An Hon. Member: O-o-oh!

Mr. Kelland: Yes, but they have to pay the penalty.

Mr. Rideout: Sure, they have to pay. Who minds paying the penalty? The Minister of Environment is -

An Hon. Member: Is being silly and stupid.

Mr. Rideout: - is being silly.

Mr. Kelland: You are arguing to aid lawbreakers.

Mr. Rideout: What a stupid argument, Mr. Speaker, what a stupid convoluted statement. It is only somebody like the Minister of Environment and Lands who could

come up with that kind of comment. What we are arguing is that this is nothing more than a massive tax grab by the Government, and that is the principle we are arguing here. Mr. Speaker, if you take your schedule of fines here that yield you about \$6 million a year and increase every one of them by 50 and 60 per cent to yield you another \$2.5 or \$3 million that has nothing to do with breaking the law, but it has all to do with a massive tax grab.

An Hon. Member: That is silly and stupid.

Mr. Rideout: How do you call that silly and stupid, I say to the Minister?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Rideout: The last defence of a scoundrel. You should be able to identify it? Why do you not go and talk to people about the styrofoam cups? Mr. Speaker, every single fee that this Government has been able to identify, as they have gone through the budgetary process over the last year or so, have taken a dramatic increase. Some of them have been done by regulation. They do not have to bring it before this House and therefore it does not become obvious until somebody goes down to get a birth certificate, or something of that nature. Some of it has been done, for example, in registering deeds, mortgages, and so on, and people do not know about it until they go down to register something of that nature. This Bill people should know about. People should know that as a result of this Bill the Government will collect anywhere from \$2.5 to \$3 million extra in highway traffic fines over the

next full year, and, of course it will go on and on from there. It is a major piece of financial legislation.

An Hon. Member: What about (inaudible) you down?

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, removing your licence plates from your vehicle to take them in the house and wash them off is going to be some deterrent. Jacking the fine up by 60 per cent for that, Mr. Speaker, is going to be a deterrent for what? A deterrent for foolishness is what it is. That is the kind of thing that should possibly be left out of the Act altogether, Mr. Speaker. Everybody agrees with having licence plates visible, and so on, but if you happen to be driving on the highway during a period of the highway being prepared with salt and sand and so on, it is possible that between Baie Verte and St. John's you will not be able to read your licence plate numbers, because they are just covered over with slush and mud, a combination of sand and mud off the road. So, you have to pull off now two or three times between Baie Verte and St. John's to make sure the numbers on your licence plate are visible. To increase the fine dramatically for that kind of thing, the point we are trying to make to the ministry, is foolishness. It is alright to have a fine for it, of course. In the normal circumstances, in the normal scheme of things it is right and proper to have a fine for that, and it has been there for ages, but to jack it up by 60 per cent, to jack it up by 70 or 75 per cent as is done in some cases in this Bill, is just ludicrous and crazy, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: How many jobs

will it save?

Mr. Rideout: How many will it create?

An Hon. Member: Save.

Mr. Rideout: How many will it create I say to the Minister? It creates nothing.

An Hon. Member: Whether they get one conviction or one hundred, it is a silly law.

Mr. Rideout: The Minister must be out to persecute people under this proposed legislation.

An Hon. Member: Persecute and prosecute.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment and Lands has one of the weirdest senses of humour that I have ever run into so I ask him to keep quiet, Mr. Speaker.

Unless you are going to be honest and frank about it, and say, look, we are using the Highway Traffic Act to significantly increase our take from the taxpayer, if you were frank and honest about it, and came into the House and said that, that would be okay, that would be acceptable, that would be taking political responsibility on the chin, that would be telling the truth, but to hide behind safety when safety is not involved -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

I wonder if the hon. member would just permit me a minute to give the questions for the Late Show? The first question is, please be advised that I am not satisfied with the answer given by the Minister of Education, re: school

board consultations, and that is the hon. Member for St. Mary's - The Capes.

I am not satisfied with the answer given by the Premier concerning my question re: the Ombudsman, and that is the hon. Member for Kilbride.

And I am not satisfied with the answer given by the Minister of Education in response to my question on post-secondary university courses, and that is the hon. Member for Fogo.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Rideout: Imagine, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services, that great democrat, saying that using the Standing Orders of the House to debate an answer that a Member is not satisfied with is a waste of the taxpayers' money.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Well if that is the case -

Mr. Efford: Did you read that?

Mr. Rideout: Yes I read that.

Mr. Efford: And what did you (Inaudible)?

Mr. Rideout: And I have read them for the last ten years.

Mr. Efford: What did you think of it?

Mr. Rideout: I thought it was a fairly good document.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rideout: But you know what you are going to hear about the

Ombudsman now, Mr. Speaker? As a result of the answer from the Premier in the House today you know what you are going to hear after that Bill is repealed sometime between now and Christmas? You are going to hear Ron Pumphrey on Nightline, coming on and saying, to all the ships at sea and the MHAs, I welcome you through that new technostar, to the Ron Pumphrey open line show here in VOCM Valley between the two twin cities. That is what you are going to hear now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: The Premier told me to call.

Mr. Rideout: Imagine, Mr. Speaker, imagine.

Mr. Simms: The Premier told me to call you.

Mr. Rideout: Imagine the Premier of the Province - and let me say this to the Minister of Social Services, when we have the debate on the Ombudsman Bill I will be bringing it up. But just as an aside for the moment. One of the key arguments from the Government is that MHAs can do the work of the Ombudsman. Well let me tell you Mr. Speaker - I stand to be corrected on the dates - but I wrote a Minister of this Government in February on behalf of a constituent. I wrote back again in April when I did not get an answer, reminding that Minister that I did not have an answer. And what is today, November 22? From February of 1990 to November 22.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: I will name the Minister when we get into the debate on the Ombudsman bill. Because that will be a prime

example of where an MHA -

Mr. Efford: I wouldn't answer a Tory!

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please!

Mr. Rideout: Now see! Now Mr. Speaker -

Mr. Rideout: - I hope that the press gallery got that.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Now there is the weakness in the argument put forward by the Government. As articulated by a Minister of the Crown. A Member of this House, particularly a Member on this side, writes a Minister and what does the Minister of Social Services say? I would not answer a Tory. Now Mr. Speaker. So what does that do?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: I never said any such thing.

Mr. Simms: No, he said.

Mr. Rideout: The Minister of Social Services said I would not answer a Tory. Now one of the key arguments put forward by the Government on the abolition of the Ombudsman is MHAs can do the job. Now how can MHAs do the job, Mr. Speaker, if the Ministry is not going to answer the enquiry made by the MHA? How can it happen? Will the Government House Leader tell me how it can happen?

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Bring it up? Do not worry. It is coming up in the House.

An Hon. Member: Go ask your boss. The fellow you squirm at.

Mr. Rideout: So now, Mr. Speaker, if you run into a Minister, like the Minister of Social Services, who does not answer Tories, then you have to depend on Ron Pumphrey and the technostar. You have to depend on Ron now and the technostar where Ron will be sending out messages to Ministers at 12:30 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. to come on and talk about the job that the Ombudsman should be doing. How arrogant. Mr. Speaker -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Rideout: Yes, I know what it is like, I have had a number of calls from him over the last two or three months. But, Mr. Speaker, the point then, what a defense for abolishing -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) Pumphrey.

Mr. Rideout: What is he saying now?

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) punishment (Inaudible) Ron Pumphrey.

Mr. Rideout: The Minister of Environment, like I said earlier, has one of the weirdest senses of humour that I have ever run into in my life. Normally you can have a half-decent laugh at some of the -

An Hon. Member: Banter.

Mr. Rideout: - banter back and forth.

The Minister has a crude, strange, weird -

Mr. Simms: Funny.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)  
undeveloped.

Mr. Simms: You see, there it is again.

Mr. Rideout: He has a sense of humour like an elephant.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, everybody can see that the House has erupted into a fit of laughter. The wit and the humour of the Minister of Environment just breaks everybody up; the walls almost start to cave in with the roars of laughter that come from members every time the Minister of Environment opens his mouth.

Mr. Simms: Yes, a great sense of humour.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, I tell you, we have debated long and hard about whether this bill deserved to go through in its present form. We debated long and hard. Now, the Government has a right to have its legislative agenda approved, Mr. Speaker, with the exception of when we see what we think is bad legislation, and the Government has on the Order Paper now, two or three pieces of legislation that, in our view, and in the view of many, many people in this Province, is just bad legislation. The Government will get its way eventually, because it has the majority, and they will get their way, Mr. Speaker, by wearing the hobnailed boots, as they have done now on more occasions than any other elected Government since Confederation.

An Hon. Member: And coming again.

Mr. Rideout: And it will be coming again, no doubt. We could,

Mr. Speaker, force the same situation in this Bill, and there are those who would argue that we should, because this is a massive, massive tax grab in addition to the principle of beginning the process of privatizing services the department provides. We could have done that. And there are those who will say we did not do our job by not doing that. But, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to do it. This Bill will go through. We probably could have proposed a six month hoist on it and tried to force the Government to put the Bill out to committee, so that they can go into Newfoundland and Labrador and tell the taxpayer before the bill becomes law, exactly what they are proposing. But we are not even going to do that, Mr. Speaker. This Bill will go through, and after it becomes law, the people will see for themselves what this Government has done to them in terms of the Highway Traffic Act. They will see for themselves, and when they see it, and when they feel it in the pocketbook, Mr. Speaker, then, I tell you, the recipients of the Government's tax grab contained in this Bill are going to be very, very unhappy voters. So let the Bill go through if the Government wants it to go through, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simms: Truth will prevail.

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

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

Mr. Gilbert: Well, I guess that I would possibly be the happiest person in Newfoundland if nobody broke the law and we wouldn't collect a cent from the schedule



here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gilbert: But I am sort of interested when I see the emphasis that the members put on the clean licence plates. Now I know why the Member for Exploits is feeling so abused these days. They wanted to make sure his licence plates were clean so they could see what he is driving.

I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition and a couple of the speakers, when they spoke on this Bill, talked about the increase in fines. The interesting thing about this, Mr. Speaker, is that the notice of the fines was introduced in this House in the Budget. When the Minister of Defence brought in his Budget, he talked about an increase in traffic fines which -

An Hon. Member: Finance.

Mr. Gilbert: Finance. The Minister of Finance, when he brought in his Budget, talked about an increase in traffic fines. And it works out, if the normal level of people breaking the law follows, in the Province, the increases reflected in this bill would come to somewhere around \$900,000, as I understand from the estimates of the Department of Finance.

Now, I have some concerns with some of the very serious parts of this legislation and some of the acts in it. As I say, it is routine, but there are some rather important ones. The one that is going to be the most benefit to the people in Newfoundland is the one that they are downgrading and talking about that we are going to privatize the motor vehicle

registration now. Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do is provide a better service to all the people of Newfoundland by making it a lot easier to renew their licences and things like that.

They want to know some information about the park wardens: why the federal wardens are now being made peace officers. This was put in place so that now the wardens in the federal park can give you a ticket, but it has to go through court. It is not under the normal system, and so now that we have introduced the demerit point system it could never be picked up. So, the Member for Kilbride could get a ticket for speeding in the park and it would go through in the normal way. We have no way of picking it up now. By including them under the provincial laws if he gets his ticket it will be reported in the normal way and we will be able to enforce the demerit point system. There was no need of doing this for the provincial wardens because that system is already taken care of.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Gilbert: That is right. There is no more power. The same ticket that they are giving now, you can pick it up for the demerit point system.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is anything more. The important thing is the service that we are going to be providing to all the people of Newfoundland once the legislation goes through and we are able to implement this, a person can go to the bank and buy their licence the same way they can pay their telephone bill.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Gilbert: I do not know. The fees are set by the bank the same that they are set now, I think, for to pay your light bill or whatever you pay, whatever it is. It is the same process as paying your light bill or your telephone bill.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Gilbert: Oh yes, I would imagine.

Anyhow, the Opposition House Leader says he wants us to move second reading. I think that at this point it seems like I have given the explanations that the members have asked for in the last two days. They tell me I have, so I now move second reading, Mr. Speaker.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, 1988," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill No. 48).

Mr. Baker: Order No. 3, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Committee of the Whole

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Assessment Act, 1986," (Bill No. 22).

Mr. Chairman: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, just a brief comment on this particular Bill. Our municipal affairs critic, the Member for Burin - Placentia West - the Minister is not here unfortunately, but I am sure he will remember the points that the critic made with respect to this Bill. The deferment of re-assessments, which presently now must be carried out at least once every six years and now because the Minister wants the authority to be able to defer that is a matter with which we had some concerns, obviously, but I think the critic, the Member for Burin - Placentia West made those points succinctly as he could.

There is not much else you can say about it other than keep beating it over the Head of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but I do not think, other than those, that major item, you will not find my colleague who served on the committee has any additional facts, that is basically the criticism which we had on that particular bill. If the Member for Kilbride wants to make a comment -

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think in a sense, this is to legitimize what has been happening over the past number of years where, in some instances it has been very difficult to get the re-assessments done on time and the stress I believe is now on

assessments in new areas, so this is really to legitimize something that has been in existence for some time.

However, I would like to point out that it is the intention of Government to get assessments done as quickly as possible and to get re-assessments done as quickly as possible and the Minister is currently looking into mechanisms to speed up that process, so, our intention really is, to try to speed it up. I would just like to point that out. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Just a brief question, Mr. Chairman.

I do not know if the President of Executive Council can answer this, but, one problem municipalities have, especially smaller ones is that they get their assessment every six years or so.

In the meantime, they are not allowed to increase the property value, they can increase the mil rate anytime but they cannot increase the property value gradually, and what you have, if taxes are raised or if the values are raised about 5 per cent a year over the six year period, what you have with your re-assessment is a 30 per cent increase in value and the taxpayers in the towns, I noticed this happened in the Goulds, the taxpayers are faced with a 30 per cent increase that one year, whereas, if they could, if there was some way for the municipality to automatically say, increase it, if necessary, 1 or 2 per cent a year, so that in the sixth year, when they have their re-assessment, they would only

have a 10 or 15 per cent increase. But that is the problem that municipalities have and I do not know if the Minister can answer it. It might not even be the Bill to do it.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Baker: Yes. Because of my involvement in municipal politics, I know what the hon. Member is talking about and it is significant from the point of view of keeping values within the Province constant, because you do get property values at a certain level and all of a sudden, at the end of the six years the big jump could be 50 per cent or whatever, depending on the activity in the area.

Then sometimes, when you compare mil rates of municipalities around the Province you get the wrong impression, because a community that has a mil rate of twelve and has not had a re-assessment for six years, might in fact have a very low tax rate as compared to a municipality which has a mil rate of 7.5 but has recently had a re-assessment, so, from the point of view of comparative purposes, it is a bothersome problem and it is something I believe should be looked at.

In terms of the actual taxes that the taxpayers pay, I am not too worried about that aspect, simply because, when there is a re-assessment, the council then looks at its budget and attempts to make it as revenue neutral as possible by lowering the mil rate, if there is a big bump in assessment.

The councils have to operate on a budget each year and each year

there is a regular increase and they have to find that money somewhere and they do it one way or another and normally with the big bump in assessments they lower the mil rate and collect just a little bit extra, rather than a lot extra. But I am concerned about it from the point of view of consistency around the Province. It is a problem that should be looked into and perhaps there should be some automatic re-adjustment each year.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: Yes.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) the people on the people.

Mr. Baker: Yes.

I think the thing should be done.

A Bill, "An Act To Amend The Assessment Act, 1986," (Bill No. 22).

Motion, that the committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

Mr. Baker: Order No. 4.

A Bill, "An Act Respecting The Department of Education," (Bill No. 3).

Mr. Chairman: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, just very briefly again, our Education critic spoke on second reading on this Bill the other day and really all it is is a Bill to establish - oh, I am sorry, he is back, but anyway, I do not know if he had anything to add, but it is simply a bill to re-establish the Department of Education in the

eyes of this Government by putting both departments together. Basically, that's all it is. The critic, I think, pointed out that it is messing it up, but if that is what the Government intends to do, there is not much we can do to stop it. We really don't have much else to add, I don't believe.

Mr. Hearn: It is done.

Mr. Simms: It is done.

May I suggest we call clauses 1 through 46?

On motion, clauses 1 through 46, carried.

A bill, "An Act Respecting The Department Of Education" (Bill No. 3).

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

Mr. Baker: Order No. 5.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Day Care And Homemaker Services Act, 1975," (Bill No. 10).

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, again, in second reading our critic, I think, addressed the two major points in this particular bill, one, to enable the Government to increase the membership of non-governmental groups on the Day Care and Homemaker Services Board. We really have no argument with that; and I think all the second clause does is consolidate certain sections that are there

and allow a new licence to be issued for a six month temporary period.

I think whatever we had to say we said in second reading, and there is nothing new to add. It is hardly something we would violently oppose, it is not something we wish to debate at length, and we don't intend to, as a matter of fact.

Ms Verge: (Inaudible) we wanted in that bill, the Day Care and Homemaker Licencing Bill?

Mr. Simms: It will soon be time to do it now. Do you have the amendments?

My colleague from Humber East, says there are a couple of amendments we wish to propose. Frankly, I don't recall those proposals we made in second reading. If we could beg the Chair's indulgence for a second.

Clause 2.9 (5) on the last page of the bill, the Minister and the President of Treasury Board, the Government House Leader, will note the section, 'A licence issued under subsection (4) may be renewed but that renewal shall be for not greater than a total of three years', as it now reads. I think the amendment we would like to propose is that the three be substituted by the number two which, I understand, was advocated by the board, itself?

Mr. Efford: No.

Ms Verge: Yes, by the Day Care Advocates.

Mr. Simms: By the Day Care Advocates.

Ms Verge: It was fervently

advocated by the Day Care Advocates and the Child Care Committee.

Mr. Efford: Absolutely not.

An Hon. Member: Why not?

Mr. Simms: Well, whether it was or not, that may be a difference of opinion.

Ms Verge: Well, it is matter of public record. It is all recorded in Hansard.

Mr. Simms: I say to members opposite, to the Chairman, whether there is a difference of opinion, whether there were advocate voices heard on this - we think there was, the Minister says there wasn't - the fact of the matter is, we have the right to propose and move an amendment. I so move the amendment and then we can vote, or see what -

Ms Verge: I will second the motion.

Mr. Simms: Seconded by the Member for Humber East, that, simply put, the word 'three' in that section - the Clerks have this, I guess. Following us, are you? - be substituted by the word 'two'; t-w-o in place of the word 'three'. It is pretty straightforward.

Mr. Chairman: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Mr. Simms: Just one second now, Mr. Chairman.

Ms Verge: Another amendment. An amendment to Clause 1.

Mr. Simms: What is it?

Ms Verge: It should be an

organization which promotes quality day care, and as a separate one, an organization which promotes quality homemaker services. Because they are completely different.

Mr. Simms: Okay. An amendment to Clause 1, on page 6, (4)(b), which says now, 'an organization which promotes quality day care or homemaker service.' We want to change that, so the Minister will understand what I am saying, so that (b) says an organization which promotes quality day care, period. And then we want to add another section called (bb), or whatever you wish to call it, or make it (c) and move the rest appropriately down, (b) to say, an organization which promotes homemaker services. Because the two are totally different.

Mr. Efford: It is all in one department under one program.

Mr. Simms: But it says an organization which promotes quality day care or homemaker services.

Mr. Efford: What is your reason?

Mr. Simms: Well, because we want to make it clear that we are talking about an organization which promotes quality day care and we want to recognize an organization which promotes homemaker services. They are two different things. I do not think it is a major amendment, and it should not hurt the Government to accept that kind of an amendment.

Mr. Efford: If there is nothing to it (inaudible)?

Mr. Simms: It is put forth with the best intentions, let me say to the Minister of Social Services.

Ms. Verge: The Chairperson of the Review Committee, sitting next to you, knows the difference of that. We went through this in detail.

Mr. Efford: I am the minister.

Ms. Verge: I know you are the Minister, but you are supposed to listen to other people.

An Hon. Member: We are the public.

Mr. Simms: We will move that amendment, in any event, Mr. Chairman, and trust that the Government will give serious consideration to those two amendments. I do not think they significantly alter the Bill, at least this one does not, and we hope they will support our amendment when the times comes to vote for it.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the amendment to Clauses 1 carry?

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

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have been writing as the Opposition House Leader has been describing his changes. I understand very clearly the move from three to two years in Subsection (5) of Section 2 of the Act is simply shortening the time a renewal is for. It is a topic I have not discussed with the Minister. With regard to the second change, I just want to get clear what the amendment is. It is the deletion of the phrase, 'or homemaker services', in Subsection (d) of Section (4). It would read better if you added Section (c) 'the homemaker services', and then changed (c) to (d), (d) to (e), and (e) to (f). Now, I am wondering if the same kind of

change is requested in Section (c), where you have day care and homemakers put together, or is that one licence?

Mr. Simms: No, that is a different issue.

Mr. Baker: You do not want a change there?

Mr. Simms: Mr. Chairman, if the Government House Leader would permit, why don't we call it 4:30?

Mr. Baker: This is what I was going to suggest. I could see there may be other suggestions in that same clause, so perhaps we could call it 4:30 and get on with the Late Show. The Committee could rise, report progress, and we will get on with the Late show.

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

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bellevue.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bills Nos. 22 and 3 without amendment, and ask leave to sit again.

On motion, report received and adopted, Bills ordered read a third time on tomorrow, Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

Debate on the Adjournment,  
[Late Show]

Mr. Speaker: We are now into the motion for adjournment. The first

item is submitted by the Member for St. Mary's - The Capes relating to his dissatisfaction with answers given him by the Minister of Education re school board consultants.

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

Mr. Hearn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was difficult to write on a note that I was dissatisfied with the answers from the Minister of Education, because in reality I did not get any answers from the Minister of Education. So perhaps for the record I will say I was dissatisfied with the responses from the Minister when I talked to him about cutbacks in the field of education.

I was also disappointed, in reading Hansard, at the end of the Minister's answer's, where he referred to the Department before he came there. It is in contrast to what the Minister used to tell me when I was in the Department as Minister, how well everything was going, how well the Department was operated, and how many advances were being made in the Province; best Minister in history, he told me. That was before I gave him the job.

Then when I gave him a big job to do the study on educational finance, he turned around and insulted me. But the Minister has to remember that - what is it? - it is a long road that has no turn. So I am not sure whether I will get a chance to do a study for the Minister. I certainly hope I do.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, on a serious note, the questions which I put to the Minister concerned cutbacks

and freezes that the Minister has instituted, and these are words now being used by the School Trustees Association and the Newfoundland Teachers' Association, by parents and by everyone else, because they know in reality that we are in a period of restraint, a period of cutback and a period of freezes, instituted by the Government opposite.

The Minister of Finance in answering questions today and every time he answers a question, which isn't very often, but when he does refers to 'the state we are in today because of the previous administration.' Let me advise the Minister we are talking about current account, we are talking about a budget that had a surplus. Consequently, the Minister should answer the questions in light of that financial state. So when the Minister of Education gets up to answer the question perhaps he will tell us why such severe cuts have to be instituted, and if he as a life-long educator realizes the damage that will occur if such cuts are initiated.

Will the Minister guarantee us in light of the job he has to do, which isn't an easy one - Minister of Education is one of the most difficult jobs in the Province - and the little money which he has to use, and I admit that, I know exactly what he is going through - but there are certain things advocated in his suggestions - I will not say at this stage decisions - that if implemented will have a disastrous effect on the education of young children in this Province.

And will the Minister guarantee us that he personally will take a

stand at the Cabinet table to make sure that he receives funding enough to make sure that the important things are looked after: that we do not lose teachers, that boards do not receive cutbacks, that fees don't have to be charged poor people who can not afford to make them? That he will look through his budget to see if there are ways we can save money without doing the terrible things which will have a detrimental effect, as I say, on the future of the children and the future of this Province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member again for inviting me to serve on that Task Force because I found out what was really going on. I did not realize things were so bad until I had the opportunity to spend a year examining what the former administration did: travelling the country, living in very modest accommodations, travelling economy class where possible, because I realized how important it was to save money, even in those days.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Dr. Warren: But I did learn quite a bit about the system. Mr. Speaker, there have been no cutbacks decided upon. There is no freeze decided upon. What the department has been doing, the Department of Education and other departments of Government, is examining all of the options. And I think the hon. Member did indicate that. There may be a shortfall of funding next year, and we may have to deal with it in one of three ways. We may have to borrow additional money. There may be some things that we have to



do, we may have to borrow additional monies like they did. We will not be, perhaps, as reckless as they were in the amounts, but we may have to borrow additional monies and add to the debt of the Province. We may have to look at the whole question of taxation. There may be some more efficient ways to collect taxes, there may be some other taxes that may be introduced, but the hon. Member knows that we have a relatively high level of taxation anyhow in this Province. So that may be an option, but it is not a very likely option at this point in time that we are going to be able to collect an additional \$100 million or \$200 million through additional taxes. That is not so in this Province. With the economic situation as it is, with the decline, the recession, the federally induced recession. You know, it is difficult. So we may have to look at other options.

Mr. Speaker, since we came to power I can tell the Opposition that we have done a great deal to improve education in this Province: health, social services, and other areas. I have before me a document which demonstrates - and I have asked this from public accounts - that from 80-89 to 89-90, the former Government increased spending on elementary and secondary education by 3.4 per cent the last year they were in office. Now I do not know what would have happened the next year because we have heard of letters that indicated there were going to be cuts the next year. They were planned.

In our first year, Mr. Speaker, we increased spending in elementary and secondary education by 6.9 per cent, more than double the increase of the former

administration. This is public account data. These are public account figures. Mr. Speaker, for 1991 the amount of money spent on elementary and secondary education went up by 6.4 per cent even in this tough year. You know we increased tax equalization for school boards. You talk about school boards and what we did for them. The first year the former administration had school tax equalization they put in \$2 million; the next year they put in \$2.5 million, and then my friend he got to \$4.5 million. He increased it by \$2 million the previous year. Do you know what this Government did for school boards? It increased it to \$10 million in the first year. And, Mr. Speaker, we kept it at \$10 million this year. The school board operating grants were increased. Capital grants - you know capital grants, Mr. Speaker, went up from \$20 million to \$27 million in our first year.

An Hon. Member: How much?

Dr. Warren: \$20 million to \$27 million and we kept it at \$27 million the next year. Scholarships had not been improved for twenty years. We tripled the amount of money - twenty years since they increased a cent in the scholarships. The student assistance program: I admit that the student aids were planned by the former administration, but we implemented it. We did it. We just did not talk about it, we did it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Warren: Distance education, lighthouse schools. You know, Mr. Speaker, there were more computers in the homes of this Province than in the schools until this

Government took over. We put, this past year, \$1.7 million worth of computers into the schools of this Province. This is the first time, Mr. Speaker-

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Minister's time is up.

Dr. Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: What a deliverer. What a job.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Kilbride, stating his dissatisfaction with the answer of the Premier concerning his questions on the Ombudsman.

The hon. the Member for Kilbride.

Mr. R. Aylward: Today I asked the Premier a question about the abolishment of the Ombudsman's Office, which was announced some eight months ago in the Budget of the Minister of Finance and that eight month delay was pretty well the basis of my question as to why it took eight months to prepare the legislation which was suggested in last year's Budget.

This legislation I expected, taking eight months to prepare, must have been an extremely complicated piece of legislation because it took so long to prepare it. But we heard today from the Premier that the legislation is probably going to be only one or two lines.

Now, I do not understand why it took eight months for this Government -

An Hon. Member: I do.

Mr. R. Aylward: - this efficient Government as they call themselves, eight months to prepare a two line piece of legislation. I can understand that it would not be called before the House up til now, because it is probably a fairly controversial piece of legislation, and it will take some considerable debate to get it through this House of Assembly, if it ever goes through because I would expect some Members on the other side would have a little bit of compassion for the poor people of this Province and the people who have problems with the bureaucracy, whether they are poor or not, to give them a final say.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why it has not been prepared in an eight month period if it is such a short piece of legislation. It could be brought before this House and laid on the table so Members could have a look at it and if it is a simple piece of legislation we could at least discuss it publicly, but right now, Mr. Speaker, we do not have a piece of legislation in this House.

As I mentioned today, a professor at Ottawa's Carleton University, who, Mr. Speaker, is considered a world leading authority on Ombudsman. His name is Dr. Donald Rowat and he was reported in a Canadian Press story which appeared in The Evening Telegram, and this Government gave a reason for abolishing the Ombudsman's Office as being, the MHAs could do the job.

Now, MHAs do a fairly good job in this Province, on both sides of the House, they work as hard as they can, but they cannot do the

job of an Ombudsman.

An Hon. Member: Part-time ones cannot do it.

Mr. R. Aylward: A part-time one, especially the part-time ones who are Ministers cannot possibly do it because most of their time is taken up as a Minister, so he should be an advocate of my argument because he is a prime example of the part-time MHA in this building, because he is a Minister and his Minister-ship, if he is any good, will probably take up 80 per cent of his time.

Mr. Speaker, I know he works twenty hour days, I am sure of that, but at least seventeen hours of that must be at trying to improve and protect this environment that needs to be protected in our Province, so he is one Minister who would probably support this when it comes through that he will not abolish the Ombudsman's Office because he knows as a part-time MHA, he cannot do the job. He just admitted he could not do the job. He said only full-time MHAs like most Members on this side of the House can do it. Now, I will admit, I cannot do the job of the Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker, I will admit, and an expert in the field, a professor from Carleton University, says it is impossible; he studied it for years.

The President of the International Ombudsman's Institute based in Alberta, at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, has said himself that this is a backward step and it will be an embarrassment to Canada. He also made a few more comments on this. He himself at one time was an Ombudsman, and he is very familiar with this, but he did write the

Government. He wrote the Government presenting a case and asking if he could meet with them. That is what he wanted to do, have a discussion to see if there was some way to change his mind, Mr. Speaker. What I wanted the Premier to do, and he suggested he would some time, but he could not remember the letter, and on an issue as important as this I do not know why he would not remember, but he did say he wrote him back and he will probably table the letter, Mr. Speaker. He also said that it would probably not go before a Committee.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member's time is up.

The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with as many of the points as possible raised by the Member for Kilbride. First of all it is practice that all Bills, when they are ready, are passed along to the Committees and that will be done, there is no doubt about that. I would like to go back over the situation in this Province, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the office of the Ombudsman, and try to educate members of the Opposition a little bit. When the position of Ombudsman was created I have no doubt that there was a need for it. I have no doubt there was a need for that particular position. Mechanisms were not in place in this Province to handle complaints that individuals might have against Government agencies and Government, so I suspect that there was a need for that kind of an office. However, Mr. Speaker, since that time there has been a veritable explosion in means

whereby the citizen can get redress from any imagined grievance that he or she might have.

An Hon. Member: Like Open Lines.

Mr. Baker: No, if members will listen I will go over some of them, some of the existing mechanisms. First of all, I suppose, we are only 500,000 people in this Province and because of that we have a very small Government. We are not many in numbers. We in this Province, I suppose, have more semi-judicial appeals boards to handle complaints against any kind of decision this Government makes, more appeals boards than could be envisioned anywhere else in the world for half a million people. These are arms-length boards which adjudicate in terms of complaints people have against Government, and these boards work. Members opposite were probably primarily responsible for the explosion in these arms-length boards that now handle the complaints from citizens of the Province.

An Hon. Member: Don't be so foolish, boy! (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: I am giving you some other things now. In addition to that, Members scoff at the fact that MHAs have a role to play in this. We have improved the services to MHAs: we have provided funds so that it is possible for MHAs to have a district presence and so on; we have improved the communication network in terms of the MHAs. And I agree MHAs can't do it all. But we have improved the working conditions of MHAs so they can better do their job representing the people in their districts.

We have the Human Rights Commission. We have that mechanism for issues that deal with human rights, and a very, very large percentage of the calls that come into the current Ombudsman's office are really things that probably are human rights issues rather than Ombudsman's issues. I am just pointing out the mechanisms now that are available in our very small population to handle the grievances of our populace.

There is the Consumer Affairs Association, and most of these complaints are consumer affairs complaints. We have a whole Consumer Affairs Department with offices all over the Province to handle these things. We have the usual mechanisms through the courts. We have a superabundance of mechanisms for citizens of this Province to grieve against any imagined inconvenience or any damage done to them by Government.

In light of all this, what I am saying is that the situation has changed tremendously in this Province in the last dozen years. And because of that change, you do not bring something in and keep it simply because it is there, you adjust to changing circumstances. And circumstances have changed. We have the alternate mechanisms in place and they are being used to good effect. So that is the reason.

An Hon. Member: Yes, the Open Line shows.

Mr. Baker: It has nothing to do with Open Line shows, as members opposite seem to suggest.

Mr. Simms: It was the Premier who said that.

Mr. Baker: It is not solely because of Open Line shows, or anything -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please?

The hon. Minister's time is up.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Next is the hon. Member for Fogo stating his dissatisfaction with an answer given to him by the Minister of Education in response to a question on post-secondary university courses.

Mr. Winsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the recording has wound down since the last speech. It was on silent. So that old gramophone my colleague for St. Mary's had cranked up is wound down, and now we will get some new stuff from the minister, because the record he gave awhile ago is very much broken. I asked the minister some new stuff on post-secondary, because we have gotten some indications in the past number of days that Memorial University is going to be impacted on very significantly by freezes and cutbacks in this Budget. I questioned the minister today on the repercussions of this cutback on the post-secondary institutions throughout the Province, in Burin -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

There are too many loud conversations on my left here and I can barely hear the hon. member.

The hon. the Member for Fogo.

Mr. Winsor: I questioned the minister as to potential cutbacks in the post-secondary programs that Memorial University offers in Burin and Lab City. If the

minister remembers, Lab City only got the first year courses after we kicked up a commotion. My colleague for Menihek questioned the minister, and the people from Menihek had the minister come down, and it was only then that the minister agreed to put courses in, starting in January. Now we are very much afraid that in this Budget cutback, this will be the first area that will be affected. We were not at all pleased with the minister's response today, and what we are looking for from the minister is a guarantee that these courses will remain as they are. I only asked the minister about the campus for Central Newfoundland.

An Hon. Member: The university.

Mr. Winsor: The central campus for Newfoundland, the university that was going to be created. And I am somewhat saddened that the President of Treasury Board was overruled for the second time by the Minister of Education. I know he wanted it to go to Gander, and the Minister of Education said no. It was the same when he tried to eliminate the school tax, the Minister of Education overruled him on that one. That is the second time and now what we are wondering is if the President of Treasury Board has had any influence in getting first year university courses offered at Gander, you see, because Gander is a focal point, a central point for your District of Bonavista North, Mr. Speaker, it being only twenty miles away from Gander, the District of Terra Nova is only thirty miles away, and my own District of Fogo could be adequately serviced by Gander if we could have some post-secondary courses.

But now that the minister has taken away the campus I was sure the President of Treasury Board was going to get for Gander - in all respect to my colleague from Grand Falls, I am sure the President of Treasury Board was going to pull his strings and get it. He did not have any clout, and now we are wondering what has happened that the President of Treasury Board has not been able to deliver post-secondary course.

An Hon. Member: Who do you support?

Mr. Winsor: I support Gander. There is no question. I told the Member for Gander that I support him in his bid, and there is no question about that. It is only twenty miles from my district.

Mr. Simms: If you and I were in the Government and in Cabinet, we would have some (inaudible).

Mr. Winsor: We would have a good fight over who was going to get the university. And I am sure the President of Treasury Board will now convince the Minister of Education. The minister has already had some correspondence with the town council in Gander in their attempt to get post-secondary courses for Gander. So we are looking forward to the minister now being able to stand in his place and announce that post-secondary courses at Memorial will be offered at Gander this year.

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

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to respond to that question. We are very pleased with the success of the first year courses in Burin and in Labrador

West, and I am sure that they will continue. We are very pleased with the success of the courses.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Dr. Warren: I am talking about the two he asked about. The same quality applies in Lewisporte and in Grand Falls, but I am talking about those two. They have been established programs. The two most recent ones are excellent, and I am sure these programs will continue.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I am sure this Government will continue to advocate education as a priority, as investment for this Province, and post-secondary education is a key investment and we will continue to support that. In fact, this year, Mr. Speaker - a little bit of new information: we increased student aid by \$1.7 million. Mr. Speaker, we increased post-secondary operating grants by 7.4 per cent last year.

My hon. friend read a letter yesterday which indicated that if the other party had been elected, we would have had a cut of 2.5 percent. That is 10 per cent more! That is a difference of 10 per cent more, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to be part of a Government that really puts education as a priority. And after this little lull of the next two or three years, we will go straightforward into the 21st century with bigger and better programmes.

Some Hon. Members: What about Gander? What about Gander?

Dr. Warren: I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, we will consider every reasonable request. We are a reasonable Government, we are

reasonable people, and when people come with reasonable requests we listen, and we will listen and give every consideration to the request of my hon. friend, from Gander. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

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

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 9:00 a.m.