

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Second Session — Eighteenth Legislature
37th Day

Tuesday, May 4, 1976.

The Assembly met at 10:00 o'clock a.m.
On the Orders of the Day.

QUESTIONS

Settlement of Nurses' Strike

Mr. D. G. Steuart (Leader of the Opposition): — I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Health, but as usual the Minister of Health isn't here. I think that it is a disgrace that he isn't here. I should like to direct it, then, I presume, to the acting House Leader, the Attorney General.

We are pleased that the nurses' strike is over and hospitals will soon be operating at full capacity, what was the settlement? The fight was between 21 and 23 per cent.

Hon. R. Romanow (Attorney General): — Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the Hon. Leader of the Opposition will recognize that at this stage in the game I would not be at liberty to divulge the details of this because as I understand the situation the proposal has yet to go back to the membership of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses for approval as well as, presumably, formal approval by the Saskatchewan Hospital Association. So I think that we have to await that decision before any final announcement is made. I think that won't take too long and then obviously it will be public.

Mr. Steuart: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I understand the settlement is between 21 and 23 per cent, it is about 22 per cent. Would the Minister agree that the settlement being in that range of one or one and a half per cent, that it was a disgrace and a dereliction of duty on behalf of the Government to allow this serious situation to develop. It was threatening and I think a serious repercussion to the health of the people, for a mere one per cent that could have been settled three or four days ago.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I just simply have to answer, no, I do not agree. We believe in the principle of free collective bargaining except in the most extreme of circumstances where Government intervention may be necessary. In this situation it appears that the free collective bargaining system has worked again, not without some hardship, it is true, but it has worked and frankly I don't agree with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. G. Lane (Qu'Appelle): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the acting Minister of Health in the absence of the coward from Health.

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The strike lasted nine days which is approximately two and one-half per cent of the year and the nurses basically settled for what they asked for in the first place.

Would the Minister not be prepared to admit that the failure of the Government to act and the refusal of the Government to take action notwithstanding the crisis, that perhaps this was contrived on the part of . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! Order! Next question.

Radon Level at Uranium City

Mr. E. F. A. Merchant (Regina Wascana): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of the Environment regarding the problems which are now existing in northern Saskatchewan over radon levels.

Would the Government now agree that the radon levels in homes and the school in Uranium City are dangerously high and that the careless and improvident manner in which the Provincial Government has handled this investigation had endangered the safety and the health of the people. Would the Government agree that as a result of your improvident action you have endangered the health of the students and the young people and the residents of Uranium City?

Hon. N. Byers (Minister of the Environment): — Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Hon. Member, a federal provincial survey is underway and will take a few more days to complete. The results of the survey to-date were published in a communication released to the media yesterday. Obviously this information has not yet reached the Hon. Member for Wascana.

I ask the indulgence of the House to read to him the press release that was given out yesterday.

Over half of Uranium City's residents have now been tested for radon daughter radiation. According to reports from (and I draw to his attention) federal and provincial testing teams provided to Environment Saskatchewan and made public yesterday.

Two hundred twenty-five residences show acceptable radiation levels; in 82 residences higher than acceptable levels have been recorded. In 25 homes and publicly used buildings where higher than desirable levels were found in earlier testing, subsequent checks showed higher than acceptable levels still existing in 12 locations. The proportion of acceptable and high levels of radon daughters radiation seems to be constant. Approximately three quarters of the first 94 buildings tested also showed acceptable levels and approximately one quarter showed higher than acceptable. But while the proportion keeps constant, no geographical pattern has emerged. Higher levels do not appear to be concentrated on any one section of Uranium City as distinct from another.

The testing team will continue to check . . .

Well he raised an emergent question in his mind, information

that was available to all people of Saskatchewan yesterday.

The testing team will continue to check on radon daughter radiation levels in all remaining buildings. Additional readings will be taken where higher than acceptable levels showed up in the first readings and if radon concentrations continue to be higher than acceptable after ventilation special tests will be made to pinpoint the source of radon entering such buildings.

I want to add that the surveys of these buildings are not completed. That it may be some weeks yet before the final results are known. At that time we will jointly map out with the federal authorities a program to identify the point sources of radon gas. But this is a very difficult program because the high concentrations are not concentrated in one place in the town.

I want to draw to the Hon. Member's attention, who makes a great ado about levels, that the high levels reported here are just above the desirable level in most cases.

I want to bring to his attention that at this moment the provincial officials are meeting in the board room of the Department of Environment to assess these results with a view to mapping out a possible course of corrective action when we have more data available.

Mr. Merchant: — Mr. Speaker, I must say I thought the Member's response was rather lengthy but in any event, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister is serious in suggesting to the House that when 82 homes were dangerous and only three times as many were safe, that in your opinion that isn't an emergency situation. I wonder if the Minister would indicate whether there are any intentions to perform an evacuation of this area and whether there is any intention to test the children, because as the Minister may know, children are more subject to bone cancer and the cancer which follows from exposure to the radon daughters levels. Is there an intention to test the children to find out the amount of radiation and if in their body, and thereby discover how badly they have been damaged by the high levels of radon daughters. And last, Mr. Speaker, if I may just leave one further question, I wonder if the Member would indicate what kinds of experts are telling him that five and six times the 30 picocurie level which is considered dangerous is still a safe level of radiation in Uranium City.

Mr. Byers: — Mr. Speaker, I think in this case we have drawn on the best talent that we have in Saskatchewan to deal with this problem. And the Federal Government has, hopefully, provided us with the best talent they have to deal with this problem. These professionals, whose judgement I am prepared to accept, have not declared it such an emergency as to order an evacuation. In their view the corrective measures taken to deal with this situation while the testing goes on is deemed to be satisfactory and the people of Uranium City have responded to the suggestion that the experts in the field have been able to provide.

Are these experts competent? I say they are. We assume that we have the best that the Federal Government can provide and we have made available the best that we have in this Province.

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Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Merchant: — Mr. Speaker, one last supplementary. First, would the Minister indicate why in a state of emergency your department allowed the testing teams to pull out for over three weeks? They only went back into Uranium City yesterday and had pulled out well before Easter. Why, in this state of emergency, would you do that? Secondly, is there any intention to test the amount of radiation exposure particularly by the children to find out how badly injured the children are so that they can be shielded in future from further exposure to radiation, even exposure to x-rays. It is a simple test, it is a 20 minute test for anyone. Is there intention to test the people who have been exposed to the radon daughter level?

Mr. Byers: — Mr. Speaker, the Atomic Energy Control Board has the authority to evacuate people if it wants to and if it deems the circumstances are necessary to order an evacuation and they have not done it.

Saskatchewan Disaster Fund

Mr. E. A. Berntson (Souris-Cannington): — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister responsible to the Saskatchewan Disaster Fund. How is this fund funded?

Mr. E. C. Whelan (Minister of Mineral Resources): — The question as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, is how is the fund funded. It is paid to the municipalities after a resolution is passed by the municipality indicating, in their opinion, that they are a disaster area. An Application is made, adjusters are sent out and there are two types of funds, as you know from the regulations, either paid directly to the municipality or to individuals, whether it is a town or an urban area.

Mr. Berntson: — I think you misunderstood my question. The question was how is the fund funded, where does the money come from to go into the Saskatchewan Disaster Fund?

Mr. Whelan: — It come from the Department of Finance.

Mr. Berntson: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is there any money in the Saskatchewan Disaster Fund now?

Mr. Whelan: — Mr. Speaker, there is a token amount that is voted each year and payments are made as the need for funds develops, as requests arise and the need for payments is obvious.

Mr. Berntson: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware that there are approved claims from the disaster in Regina of a year ago, claims approved as early as last fall, that are still outstanding. They have not been paid.

Mr. Whelan: — I am aware that there is less than two per cent of the total that is still outstanding but the claims are outstanding because an arbitrator has been brought in. There is a dispute as to the exact amount that is to be paid. When the arbitration is concluded we will make the payment that the arbitrator suggests. This applies to the payment that was made to the city of Regina, it took something like six or eight months to conclude the arbitration.

Mr. Berntson: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware that there are approved claims from the disaster of a year ago that are still unpaid and that the reason given for the non-payment is that the Fund has no funds?

Mr. Whelan: — I doubt that very much but I will look into it. There are a few of them that are still outstanding. Maybe a half dozen in the individual areas and maybe two dozen in the business group, it would be a very small number in any case. We have settled almost all of them.

Radon Levels at Uranium City

Mr. E. C. Malone (Regina Lakeview): — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of the Environment. Is the Minister prepared to explain to this House at this time why the joint provincial-federal team that was operating in Uranium City checking the radiation levels was allowed to halt their work for a period of approximately three and one-half weeks? Are you prepared to advise this House whether or not the children referred to by the Member for Regina Wascana are going to be tested in the manner suggested by the Member for Regina Wascana?

Mr. Byers: — I do not know, Mr. Speaker, the precise reasons why work has halted. I do know that the original testing equipment which was provided by the provincial Department of Labour because the Federal Government was not able to provide such a machine, took several hours to test one dwelling and therefore the testing was taking a long time. We were able to obtain a machine which took some time to obtain from the federal authorities and it took some time to arrive and I suspect that may be the major reason for halting the testing.

Your second question with respect to the children, I am told that the medical people associated with this team have indicated that the radon levels are not so high as to make it necessary to evacuate people.

Mr. Malone: — Mr. Speaker, again, I didn't ask about evacuation, I asked the Minister whether he was prepared to tell this House today whether or not the children in the more dangerous area or perhaps all the children in Uranium City, whether or not they are going to be examined with a view to seeing whether there has been any damage done to these children? You haven't answered the question, I am asking you to answer it now.

Secondly, if you are prepared to conduct these examinations

can they be done in Uranium City? Are the proper facilities there and if not are you prepared to arrange for these children to be taken to wherever the proper facilities are to have these examinations conducted?

Mr. Byers: — With respect to the first question, whether the children have been tested, the answer to that is, I do not know. I think that that is a judgement which the team of experts who are in there are competent to make a judgement as whether they should be tested or not. I don't think that is a politician's job. Whether or not they can be tested in Uranium City, I do not know the details to that. I can obtain that information and provide it to you later.

Mr. Malone: — A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. If the said joint team in Uranium City recommends that the children be examined as outlined by the Member for Regina Wascana, are you prepared to do this? Are you prepared to absorb the expense between yourself and the Federal Government, if necessary, to conduct these examinations and, if necessary, are you prepared to take the children to wherever these tests can be properly conducted?

Mr. Byers: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated this morning I thought quite clearly, that there is a meeting now under way of provincial officials. One of the things they will be looking at is a plan of action to follow once the survey results are completed. I think that we have to await the recommendation from that Federal-Provincial team. At this time we do not have a recommendation to move anyone from Uranium City to undergo testing. I think we will simply wait until we get that recommendation from the Federal-Provincial team that has been assigned to that job and at that time we will be in a position to make a decision as to what action is needed.

Mr. Merchant: — A supplementary. If the Minister is aware that in Port Hope where the levels are three times, well five times as low, this testing of the students is going on. I wonder, secondly, if the Minister is aware that that testing is going on as a result of the request by the Provincial Government, that the Provincial Government took some steps to see that the testing was done. I wonder lastly if the Minister is aware that for children particularly, leukemia, tumors, bone, breast and lung cancer, are the results of exposure to radium daughter products and gamma ray penetration. I wonder if the Minister is aware that the Ontario Government in Port Hope where the levels are 20 per cent as high, took the initiative and resulted in the Federal Government moving in the direction that they have done?

Mr. Byers: — With respect to the first question, I think that we responded to this problem in Saskatchewan just as rapidly if not more rapidly than the provincial authorities responded to it in Ontario.

Secondly, I think the Hon. Member is quoting technical knowledge that he would not expect any Member of this House to know. If he wrote it down before he came in here, fine, but on that point I think we have to leave this matter for our officials to make their recommendation to us. When we receive those recommendations, we will then act on them.

Pooling Stenographical Work

Mr. Larter: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister in charge of Government Services.

I would like to ask the Minister if any thought has been given to areas where you have stenographers or secretaries, where the workload in some departments is light and in other areas very heavy. In the case around April 20, orders were sent out to cut back on staff by three to four per cent, has there been any thought towards pooling stenographic work in the government offices? Many government people think that by pooling secretarial work in government offices, particularly where all the government offices are together that there could be a more efficient handling of government work?

Hon. G. T. Snyder (Minister of Government Services): — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the Hon. Member's question, I think the efficiencies that are to be brought about will have to be done in keeping with the priorities of each of the deputies who are in direct control of the stenographic and other services that are provided within the department. I think you create some real problems if you start shifting stenographic people from one department to another for reasons of payroll, and a whole host of attendant problems would come about. I think each of the deputies is in a position to more properly utilize a stenographic staff and others, and are probably in the best position to make that kind of an assessment.

Mr. Larter: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I think that there is a problem in getting these people together I don't think that there is a problem in getting these people together I don't think there is any doubt about that. Some of the people in the various government departments who have people that are doing very light loads and where another case where a girl is very heavily loaded with work and they cannot get another one now due to your cutback in staff, which I agree with where possible. Can't this be worked out, though? If people in these departments agree that this would be desirable and there are certain cases on Social Welfare . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Budget Commitments for Hospitals

Mr. G. Lane (Qu'Appelle): — I should like to direct a question to the acting Minister of Health.

In light of the nine days lost because of the nurses' strike, will the Minister of Finance alter the budget commitments for hospitals to put back into the system the patient days that were lost because of the strike?

Hon. W. E. Smishek (Minister of Finance): — Mr. Speaker, I really don't quite understand the question. What has patient days that have been lost in hospitals, have to do with restoring of funds? If the Hon. Member is able to clarify his question, maybe I might be able to respond to it.

Mr. Lane: — A supplementary. For the edification of the Minister, during the strike the hospitals were open, but there weren't too many patients in the hospitals because they have been sent home. There were obviously patient days lost because patients weren't in the hospital for a period of nine days which is two and one-half per cent of the year. Will the Government alter their budget commitments to extend the number of patient days allowed to hospitals by the nine days that were lost over the year?

Mr. Smishek: — Mr. Speaker, the budgets, in the case of hospitals with 50 beds or more are determined on a global basis and that budget has been worked out between the SHSP and the hospital. In the case of hospitals with less than 50 beds, some of them are on global budgets based at their choice and those hospitals that are on the line by line basis, the budgets have now been established and the strike has got nothing to do with the determination of budgets.

Mr. Lane: — Will the hospitals that operated without nurses but they kept staff on, there were no lay-offs, will they be compensated in any way to allow them to make up the patient load or funds for the patient load which was lost by reason of the strike. Will the Minister admit that in fact this nurses' strike ended up saving the Government money?

Mr. Smishek: — I don't know whether it saved the Government money, it might have. I think every situation has to be assessed. Remember that the Province does not operate the hospitals, it is the individual boards. They have their budgets, I don't know whether there were savings, there may not have been savings. Remember that in most of the hospitals, the patients were still there, some of them were discharged but all the hospitals despite the dispute, were operating patient beds.

Radon Level at Uranium City

Mr. Merchant: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of the Environment would indicate what the highest level was in the 82 homes which were found to have a level which was too high to be safe? What was the range of levels and what was the highest level?

Mr. Byers: — I do not have that specific information.

Mr. Merchant: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister would indicate whether the levels were anything like the range that was found in the schools. The Minister no doubt recalls those levels which exceeded 50 and the top level was 170 picocuries per litre. Were the levels in the homes 50 or 60 times the three picocuries per litre level which is considered an acceptable level by the American authorities and the Canadian authorities?

Mr. Byers: — Mr. Speaker, I gave the House the percentages of residences and businesses that were above what is considered to be a standard level. I have indicated that for the most part, the levels that exceeded the desirable level are only

above the desirable level. I do not have the readings for each individual house and residence that was tested.

Hog Operation at Antelope

Mr. D. M. Ham (Swift Current): — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Agriculture.

Is it true that the hog farm operation at Antelope which was backed by a Farmstart loan is being sued by the Bank of Nova Scotia for \$20,000?

Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of that particular problem and I will take it as notice.

Question Re Ministers' Response to a Question

Mr. C. P. MacDonald (Indian Head-Wolseley): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I just want to clean up the question about the response of the Minister of Environment in the Question Period today.

Anybody who could suggest, Mr. Speaker, that to read a ministerial statement, relating to a survey, of 10 minutes in length or whatever the length was, was in order and I have only one interpretation to make of the Question Period today and in the past. The questions must be in order and the answers . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! Order! The Member is arguing a decision that has been made. If the Member wants to know something about a particular decision that has been made I would attempt to answer it.

Mr. MacDonald: — I ask you, Mr. Speaker, do you consider the response of the Minister of the Environment in order and a question of the Member for Wascana out of order?

Mr. Speaker: — The Member for Wascana asked a question and the record will show this, and I believed it to be bordering on debatable and argumentative, however, I let the question go forward. The Minister of the Environment came in with an answer which I believed to be rather lengthy, however, it was dealing with the question which the Member had put forward. Then the Member responded with three questions in one supplementary, which I thought was rather much but I allowed it to go ahead. And if you want to know what the three were it is in the record. Then the Minister of the Environment answered the questions, or attempted to answer them as he saw fit and then the Member for Wascana then asked another question and said “final supplementary” and I took him at his word and I took it as the final supplementary and I cut him off, when he attempted to reopen the subject to me again.

POINT OF ORDER

Disallowing Question

Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, when I asked the first question today you cut me off before I was finished the question.

The first one I should like your answer on and, secondly, why were you so quick to cut me off before I was finished but you were very reluctant to stop the Minister of Environment. Thirdly, when the Member for Regina South, you refused to let him ask a supplementary . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! Order! The Member is making an omnibus Point of Order. Now if you can come with one Point of Order at a time I shall deal with it.

Now the Member says he asked the first question, he did not, he asked the third question. It was debate and the record will show that it was debate clearly.

Mr. Lane: — Well, are you saying then, Mr. Speaker, that the reply of the Hon. Minister of the Environment was not debate?

Mr. Speaker: — I have already dealt with that when I dealt with the Member for Indian Head-Wolseley's question on the Point of Order with regard to the question. I dealt with it quite thoroughly.

Mr. Lane: — On another Point of Order. Perhaps I am speaking too fast for the Speaker, but the Hon. Member for Regina South got up to ask a supplementary and you did not say before you ruled him out of order or refused to let him ask the supplementary that the previous supplementary had been the final supplementary and you did not give the warning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: — Right and I am not obligated in any way whatsoever to say that that is the final supplementary. If the Member would read the Interim Report he would know that. It is quite clear. Are there any more Points of Order.

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

Hon. G. MacMurchy (Minister of Municipal Affairs): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I wonder if I might introduce to you and the Members of the Assembly some students in the Speaker's Gallery from the Govan High School, Grades Eleven and Twelve, some 20 students. They are accompanied by Mr. Bob Lockwood and Mr. Gordon Patterson, teachers at the Govan School.

We welcome them and we hope that they have a very enjoyable stay in the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Pepper (Weyburn) that Bill No. 37 — **An Act to amend The Liquor Licensing Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. R. A. Larter (Estevan): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this Bill and how it has affected people in the past.

I was one of the age group during the Second World War who went into the armed forces when I was 17 and a half and three years later I came out of the armed forces and I was still too young to enter a place where you could drink beer, wine or liquor. I can tell you that it was very annoying to me all the time that I was in the armed forces, not that I possibly needed the booze, but the fact that I could only go into the wet canteens and it was very annoying to me.

What concerns me in this Act is that you are raising the age back up to 19, but you are not changing the age of majority. You are telling the 18 year old that he can now do everything except to go into a beer parlor, go into a place where they serve cocktails. His wife may be 19 years old and he is 18, this stops him from going into these places.

I think that both Governments have been playing around with our 18 and 19 years olds for too many years. It was age 21 not too many years ago, and it is 21 just across the line, eight miles from me in North Dakota. The Liberals brought it down to 19 a few years ago and they thought it was a real vote getter. Then the NDP felt that it was even better a few years ago and they brought it down to 18 years old. I would like to know when we are going to stop playing around with these young people. I just thought that I would make those points before the vote comes up. You have been toying around with the people in this age group and it is not a good thing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. A. Thibault (Kinistino): — Mr. Speaker, I listened to the debate on these two Bills. I have taken notes. I also want to say that first of all I do not question the sincerity of the mover of these Bills. I think that he is very sincere and there is no doubt in his mind that that is what should be done.

First of all I want to ask, what are we doing? Are we going to create a new bunch of outlaws, just by the stroke of a pen? I listened to one speaker who said, I know that it is not going to change anything, but I am going to vote for the Bill anyway. I don't accept that type of reasoning. That type of reasoning means, I know, that the young men are going to drink anyway so we will make it illegal for them to drink. That doesn't go down with me at all.

You are going to turn the hound dogs on them, that is all that you are saying. The question is this: are we using the right approach? In my opinion it is a bad step.

I was raised in a home where I drank whiskey when I was just old enough to hold a glass and I am going to tell you something.

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That family had ten children and of the eight that I know of who are living right in our own community, there is not one of them that has an alcohol problem, because the father taught us responsible use of alcohol. He promised to get drunk at least once in his life just to show us what it was. He died when he was over 80 years of age and he did not fulfil that one promise.

Therefore, those who are going to vote for this Bill I would like to ask you this question, “How old were you when you took your first drink?” And where were you when you took that first drink? How old were you when you smoked your first cigarette? And where were you when you smoked that first cigarette? “I could go all the way down the line and I am going to tell you that if we all open our books for everybody to read some that are voting on this question today, would have a little problem with themselves, including myself.

When we had the liquor strike it was amazing that some of the MLAs went looking for booze for weddings and I want to tell this House that I was one of them. I am going to tell you that as I was one of them. I am going to tell you that as long as they use it responsibly there is nothing wrong with it.

Now what about the examples that our age provide for our society? Outside of going to church we have to have a bar. We have to have refreshments before we start and pretty soon if we don't stop and think we will have refreshments before going to church service and the bingo afterwards. That is the direction that we are going. What about our young people? They made a presentation here the other day, wanting a social activity centre where there is no booze in it. Are we going to listen to them?

Is the Minister of Health and the Minister of Culture and Youth going to listen to the young people and provide activity centres where there is no booze? Isn't it a part of the reason why they stand in line waiting to be 18 years old and into the bars? Well, let me tell you that I am all for enforcement and I went to my constituents and talked to the people. I talked to clergymen and I talked to young people and I talked to school teachers. One superintendent told me that he had no problem in school with the students drinking. One told me that over a ten year period he put one child out who was drunk. But he said that where the problem really is, is when the teacher has a drinking problem and he has students in the classroom who have just as much right to be drinking as he has.

We don't talk about those, we just want to pass a Bill and tap ourselves on our chests — oh, we did something to raise the drinking age, when we know very well that all that we have done is created a new bunch of outlaws. That is not a good approach. I think the responsible use of alcohol should be taught and that is the road to go. Parents are responsible. All that we are doing here is a bit of window-dressing if we pass this Bill.

I am not casting any reflection on the Member who moved this Bill because he is honest and sincere. I sit with him and I know that he believes in what he is trying to do. If we had proper ID cards we could draw a distinct line between the age of 18 and 17. Are you going to draw a distinct line between 18 and 19? If you don't enforce the law better than you did before, if you are going to play it loose that way, what is the point?

I should like to cover several subjects on the question. I would say that the people in our society respond in the same way as our crops in the fields, as our animals as we raise them on the farm. Whatever elements they are exposed to they will reflect those elements. If a shepherd is kind to his sheep and he has a good collie dog to look after them, he will take care and he will have a job done. But picture a shepherd that is out there with hound dogs and trying to keep his flock together. That is exactly what you are going to do with the 18 year olds, you are going to turn the hound dogs on them, and I will not support that.

Yes, some of you are walking out because it is starting to bother you. But I am going to tell you that as far as I am concerned the places that have used the good shepherd approach have had results. I am not one who is going to say, look what we are doing in traffic safety, we catch two drunks out of 100. We bring them into court, strip them and take the food off the table and everything else and we say that we are doing a good job. One speeder out of 7,000 is caught. Why don't we expose our people to a better environment. It is the environment of our society that is causing it. If we are going to change the age and we don't change the environment, it means nothing.

I think there is too much about parental responsibility. In the Traffic Safety Report the whole thing is geared to attempt a good shepherd approach. In the countries that have done it, they've had magnificent results. Now we are going to start off by launching an attack on the eighteen year olds. We are going to have a wonderful attitude from the teenagers in traffic safety 1977 if that's what we want to go ahead with. There is nobody that is more aware of the accidents and the slaughter on our roads than I am. But before I will try to pass a Bill just to say that I am doing something I cannot buy it. I will have to oppose that Bill.

I could go on all day about the environment. You take our television, they advertise toothpaste, because it sells toothpaste. They advertise aspirins because it sells aspirins. They advertise murder from morning till night, nothing is said about that. And we are getting murder in our society. Are you doing anything about it? Are we trying to create a better environment on our television screens? I'm going to tell you, one time I hired an ex-convict. He promised me to behave while he was at my place because nobody wanted to hire him. I said, "I'll hire you but you had better walk straight." Now I observed this character when he watched a western show. And I'm going to tell you when the police got shot in any one of the shows he would jump off his chair just like a hockey fan would jump off his chair when Bobby Orr scores a goal. And to say that television has nothing, no influence on our younger people, we are just out of our minds. You take Tokyo, for instance, where the police are given an area of the city to look after. Tokyo's murders run around 200 a year, with a population one-third larger than New York. New York has 2,000 a year. The reason for it is a good shepherd with their people. We think we can legislate morality. Look at the Statuted Books, there is a whole pile of them there. Even the lawyers can't read them and explain it. They have got to have court cases. We had a Highway Traffic that hasn't even got an index. And then we want our youngsters to obey the law.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when I was first approached by the news media what I was going to do about the Bill, I said my decision

had not been made. I went into my constituency for two days, I interviewed my executive, I interviewed clergymen, I interviewed young people and I interviewed teachers. None of them said they had drunks in school. Because the teachers are attending to their business. One superintendent told me when I have a drunk teacher is when I have a drunk problem in school. I'm going to tell you, it's with a very clear conscience that I'm going to vote against this Bill. And I'm not afraid for the public to know.

Our NDP convention voted it down, after being thoroughly discussed for two consecutive years. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want it made abundantly clear that what we need is proper ID cards, proper enforcement and better environment in our society and I'm sure that the good shepherd approach will succeed a heck of a lot better than what we are trying to do now is make outlaws for traffic safety 77. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I guess there is no doubt in the people's mind now which way I am going to vote on this subject. Thank you.

Mr. R. N. Nelson (Yorkton): — I should like to comment briefly on this after listening to the debate on the drinking question. I feel that I must take part.

First of all let it be understood as far as I'm concerned if all the booze were poured in the sea tomorrow my only concern would be for pollution of the sea, even if I do take the odd one myself. Let me also say that I am not ignorant of the havoc that is wrought by misuse of drugs of all sorts.

I need only think of the use of hard and soft drugs among our young people, to know that there are many problems. But it is not just the young people. I have talked to middle-aged middle-class people in Saskatchewan who have described the present-day peddlers of marijuana as the heroes of our day. To some these soft drug peddlers are like the rum runners of the prohibition days — they are defying the laws they say so we can enjoy ourselves in the future. I repeat that was not conveyed to me by a high school student, it was said to me by a middle-aged, middle class adult. Attitudes in the last ten to fifteen years have changed drastically. Fifteen years ago women didn't go into a bar in Saskatchewan. It was completely verboten. Now it is commonplace. As a rough guess it was about fifteen years ago the first dances and parties had bars in Saskatchewan. Now it is no party without the bar.

Let there be no mistake. I have witnessed the tragedy of the excessive use of alcohol. I have also seen teenagers through a time when booze and drugs were most common — and I worried plenty.

I now have two more girls, one thirteen, one fourteen. They are at an age when booze and other drugs are all about them. I hope and pray that they can come through unscathed. Moreover, Alcoholics Anonymous people tell me of 16 year olds coming to join their organization. Certainly a problem exists — a most serious problem but a problem for all ages. The question is to find solutions.

Is raising the drinking age any solution? That we must decide here and now. Is this move a band-aid over a cancerous sore or is it a valid reasonable step in the control of our drinking problems.

I have mentioned the changes in attitudes. No one can deny that those changes have taken place. A short while ago, abortion was an unheard of step or a last resort. Now we have request for abortion on demand. Grade one and two children now arrive at school to tell their teachers about televised wrestling matches that follow the late night news on Wednesday nights. No one can deny the permissiveness of our society today.

If I were to be facetious, Mr. Speaker, I would say that I would move in this legislature that we now make marijuana illegal — it is illegal you say? Let me ask you how successful the law has been in preventing the use of marijuana. I have stopped students in the halls of our school — one at a time to ask, “How difficult is it to get drugs?” They will give me an answer they wouldn’t give in a court of law. Their answer, if they trust me, and they don’t always, is “like that.” “It’s no trouble if we have the money.” So if the law has not been and is not successful with marijuana that was not an accepted drug like alcohol is, why should the raising of the drinking age help?

Money is the key. My two girls babysit. This last weekend one earned \$5.00 the other earned \$8.00. The only way that I could stop them from getting liquor or other drugs, if they really want them, is to take that money away and that is no sure answer either.

Of what value was prohibition? It was a beautiful law for the bootlegger to make millions. It was a beautiful law for the rum runner. A law must be widely accepted for it to be effective, otherwise the law is an ass. With all respect for those who favour the raising of the drinking age, we do not believe that if it can be effective, I cannot support such a move.

No, Mr. Speaker, I greatly fear changing the drinking age is a band-aid on a cancerous sore. Raids on liquor establishments that sell to people under age, yes, that might have some merit. I’ve asked grade twelve students if they would object to having their pictures on their driver’s license? The answer was “yes” that would be good. That way if I lost my license no one else could use it. They said, “it would be a good way to identify yourself in so many ways — such as when we enter a bar.”

No, let us do some enforcing of the laws that we have. That is not the whole solution either. Far from it. But at least that would be that small step that I hear from people who favour the drinking age. Let me give you one more example before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker.

In Yorkton we are some forty miles from Roblin, Manitoba, where the drinking age is still 18. Don’t tell me what would happen when some of the Yorkton’s 18 year olds drive home from a forbidden drinking spree in a Roblin pub. I don’t want to hear about it.

The answer to our drinking problems lie deep within our society. There is no easy solution. And I’m afraid the raising of the drinking age is only an easy solution. We must all begin to do our part to find the answers.

Mr. Speaker, I shall be opposing the motion to raise the drinking age and supporting some positive moves.

Mr. S. J. Cameron (Regina South): — I should like to address some brief comments to the question. One is tempted as many Members obviously have been to discuss and debate a lot of questions which are really not before us. Questions which one way or another, and for better or for worse, have long been settled. The question before us is really a pretty narrow one and a pretty precise one. And that's whether or not a certain age group will be entitled to go into liquor outlets and purchase liquor lawfully or whether they do it unlawfully. The broader questions of the evils of drink and drugs and drinking and driving and similar questions, by and large, have been settled in other places and other times.

As I see this measure it really involves a balancing of competing interests between two distinct groups of eighteen to nineteen year olds. The first group is that group that has completed its education and is in the work force. The other group is the group of people between eighteen and nineteen who remain in high school. The Bill, as I understand it, in the main is directed at group two. It is directed at preventing high school students from having access to liquor outlets and being able to acquire liquor lawfully. That I think is a desirable objective, one which I would think most Members would agree with. The difficulty with it, is in satisfying that objective in the way this Bill is constructed, is that it is denying access to liquor outlets to the first group, the employed group. And I don't think that anyone can argue that's fair in view of the fact that those eighteen year olds have every legal right given to them. So the difficult thing is to balance the interests of the one group, the employed group of eighteen to nineteen year olds, against the other objective of preventing the second group — the eighteen year old high school students, from having access to the outlets.

A pretty difficult balancing is required. I would have preferred to have seen some effort at distinguishing not with reference to age, as we are here doing which is really avoiding the problem, and attempting to distinguish by condition or state of life. That is, I would prefer to make an effort to render it unlawful for high school students to have access to liquor outlets, rather than using a blanket approach that we are here using by making the definition with reference to age.

However, that has not been done and as is so often the case there is little to be gained in directing our minds to the ideal, we have to direct our minds to what's before us. In that difficult balancing I considered myself that it was more desirable to prevent eighteen year olds in high school from having the access to liquor outlets than it was to continue to permit working eighteen year olds to have access, I have come down on the side of preventing high school students from access to outlets and from the lawful purchase of liquor but in doing so I appreciate what I am doing to the other group of eighteen to nineteen year olds, which is not desirable, but that's the difficult balance that's required. It's an imperfect solution but it is one small advance and for that reason I intend to support it.

Mr. J. A. Pepper (Weyburn): — Mr. Speaker, in rising to close the debate on this very important issue I would wish to begin by making a few general observations in relationship to the comments which have been made during the course of this debate.

I wish to commend those Members on both sides of the House

who have participated in the debate. And if I do have concern it would have to be perhaps my disappointment that more Members did not choose to reflect publicly on the issues involved in this vitally important subject today.

Mr. Speaker, in a few moments Members are going to be asked to make a decision. I am pleased that this Assembly is able to deal with this in a matter in a non-partisan fashion. And a free vote will not bind any Member to any party's position, other than his own conscience. It appears, Mr. Speaker, inevitable that some will choose to perhaps abstain from voting. And I feel that this is very unfortunate. Because as a public representative I also feel that it is our duty and elected responsibility to take a stand and a firm stand on a measure brought forward in the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Pepper: — To those who have preceded me, I congratulate you for attaching yourself to the principles involved. To the proponents as well as the opponents who spoke earlier your contribution was valuable and hopefully will guide others, who are perhaps uncommitted in relation to these amendments.

When I introduced the amendment, Mr. Speaker, I attempted to point out perhaps even dramatize the facts which are prevalent within today's society in terms of the overall question of alcohol usage. There can be no doubt about it. We are faced with a very, very serious situation. Even those who spoke earlier against the Bill could not dispute the facts, I am sure, in terms of the social and the economic hardships which are being perpetuated on today's youth as a result of the liberal approach we as legislators have approved in the past.

The main argument which has surfaced against this Bill appears to be the question of freedom of choice and the rights of the individual. I do not question that, Mr. Speaker, the sincerity of those who use this argument. It is rather a question of supporting their arguments and I can not agree with that point of view. I agree with those who say we cannot legislate responsibility. As I stated earlier there are fifteen year olds who can use alcohol more responsibly than some 18 year olds, just like there are some 18 year olds who can handle this responsibility better than some 40 year olds.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that we can say that because we cannot legislate responsibility that gets us off the hook and we should just leave bad enough alone. I'm not satisfied with that. I will also admit that there is no simple solution to this problem and there is no single action we can take to correct the situation. There is no single action. But rather, Mr. Speaker, we must look towards a collective approach. We must do whatever possible. That's what I think this Bill will do, something possible.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard it stated in the past by young people themselves that while a lot of them spend a considerable amount of time in drinking establishments, the reasons are not generally because of any pre-occupation with drinking, but rather they go to the bar because that is where their friends are, and the bar in a lot of cases, represents the only social setting in which teenagers while away their leisure time.

May 4, 1976

If this is the case, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that what I am told is not a valid concern, but I feel that we as a government have a responsibility to examine the situation. Perhaps there is something we can do. How much responsibility do we have as a government in terms of providing opportunity to the people we represent, when that opportunity represents a service which is not considered an essential or traditional service?

I feel that governments should always be willing to study new ideas and should also be supportive of programs which positively contribute, Mr. Speaker, to the development and growth of all age groups within the province.

In recent years our attitudes have reflected a degree of change. Day care centres, grant programs for recreational facilities, assistance for activity centres for the aged and the disabled, along with many other programs in the youth and culture area.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, if approved will leave a void for many of our province's 18 year olds. Enticements are not needed, however. I feel that we could very positively influence and motivate our youth into activities which will enhance their development as adults in today's world. Through this legislation we are saying, we fully recognize the negative aspects of alcohol abuse. We are prepared to show leadership and to take steps to offer corrective measures and we are prepared to even go further, Mr. Speaker. I know that there is not a single Member in this Assembly who would oppose programs which would provide opportunities for our youth and which would provide outlet for the emotional needs of this age group. Too often we tend to attach a rather insignificant priority to such policies. We all want the best for our children and we all hope that they will grow and develop in a responsible way, yet I wonder if we are doing all we can to ensure that the odds are improved.

I would hope that we could reasonably expect the general public to provide us with their views on this topic.

This legislation does not mean that we have written off 18 year olds as not being responsible. This legislation merely states that we are concerned about their welfare. We want the best for them and we will do our part to provide the legislative assurance that social problems such as alcohol abuse are minimized.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all Members keep these thoughts in mind when voting on this issue. The proposed change will have an impact and I feel that we must assume more responsibility as elected representatives to assure the success of such a move, while at the same time displaying our real concerns through immediate action and assistance.

During this debate, it has been suggested that if it could be guaranteed that these amendments would improve the situation, that more support would probably accompany the amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you, if we, as elected representatives had to be provided with guarantees before supporting legislation which comes before us, we would never approve not even a single action.

The facts are before us. It is a serious situation. Using any and all statistics which are available on the subject, we are faced with the facts that alcohol and its related problem is tightening its grip on our society and if we are to loosen its stranglehold we must respond positively to any initiative which can lessen the adversity associated with this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I am not attempting to heap criticism on those who do not support my viewpoint. I respect their feelings on this matter and I commend them for having the determination to display their individual position respecting this Bill. However, I cannot support the position of those who choose to remain silent on the matter.

Quite obviously each Member did not have the opportunity to participate in the debate, but I might remind you, however, that same thing cannot be said about the vote which will be taken shortly.

Each of us are elected to make decisions. Our decisions should be based on conscience and we each owe it to ourselves and our constituents to show where we stand on policies and principles.

In my introductory remarks earlier, I made mention of a number of statistics which have been compiled on this important matter. I quoted to the House the concerns of those who have in the past made their positions very clear.

Those concerns have been echoed by other speakers during this debate. The concerns of parents, school officials, teenagers, medical spokesmen, and all en masse have made it clear that there is concern and it is high time that something positive be done.

It has been said in this debate that no letters have been received from law enforcement agencies, but it is reported in one of our recent weekly newspapers, Mr. Speaker, one of last week that one of the judges of our Provincial Magistrates' Court agrees with the Bill before the Legislature, raising the drinking age to 19 years from 18. Realizing that it will not solve all the problems, but it certainly would take the high school students out of the beverage rooms.

Perhaps one of the most recent communications and I am sure all Members are aware of it, because I think that they received the same as I did, adds strength to my argument and expresses a general feeling of a considerable number of the citizens of our province. I'm referring, Mr. Speaker, to a motion which was passed unanimously by Health Region No. 1, comprising the district councils of Leader, Shaunavon, Maple Creek and Swift Current, at which time they asked that we give this Bill our affirmative consideration, approving the raising of the legal drinking age from 18 to 19 years of age.

So as I say, Mr. Speaker, in addition, the public has responded very positively to these amendments since their introduction. Let me remind you, Mr. Speaker, and this Assembly the public is watching this debate very closely. They are waiting very patiently to see how we handle our elected responsibilities. They are not expecting us to rubber-stamp this Bill, nor are they expecting us to unanimously reject it, but they are expecting us to fulfil our responsibility to stand up and be counted.

May 4, 1976

I said earlier that we must accept the reality that we all possess the frailties of mankind and because we do, we will make mistakes from time to time. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that our true worth is not determined by measuring how few mistakes we do make, but rather how we respond to the mistakes we have made.

Recently, I have not heard any solid arguments supporting our earlier decision to drop the age from 21 years to 18 years. I have, however, noticed there are arguments based on the premise that there are arguments against raising the age from 18 to 19, but again those arguments appear based on the premise that there is nothing we can do to legislate responsibility and there is no single step we can take to eliminate totally, the problems which have been identified.

Mr. Speaker, again I say that this amendment will have a positive impact. I am not suggesting that it will solve the bulk of the problems, but it is a start. Other provinces and states have already started the legislative process to raise the limit to 21 years of age. I have heard it suggested that perhaps we should wait to see how their initiative works out before adopting similar moves here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I say that this is only a convenient way of sidestepping our responsibilities. This province has consistently shown leadership within many areas. We have the opportunity today to display leadership again. Are we going to follow that route are we going to content ourselves with letting the other guy do it first.

So, Mr. Speaker, for those reasons, this is a serious moment for me. I feel very strongly about the issue and I am concerned as to society's attitude. If I can contribute in any small way to the betterment of our citizens, this is all that I ask.

Regardless of the outcome of this vote, I hope the people of Saskatchewan view these proposals as a sincere and honest attempt to respond positively to social and economic realities which prevail within our society, in terms of alcohol and its use.

Of equal importance is the attitude of this Assembly in tackling this issue. I would hope that each Member can see fit to be part of the solution, because, as I said before and I say again, if we are not part of the solution, we are certainly part of the problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time on the following recorded division

YEAS — 29

Pepper
Faris
Robbins
MacMurchy
Mostoway
Kwasnica
MacAuley
Shillington
Rolfes
Vickar

Steuart
Stodalka
Lane
Wiebe
Malone
MacDonald
Penner
Cameron
Nelson (Assiniboia-
Gravelbourg)

Clifford
Anderson
McMillan
Collver
Larter
Bailey
Berntson
Ham
Katzman
Birkbeck

NAYS — 24

Thibault
Bowerman
Smishek
Romanow
Messer
Snyder
Byers
Kramer

Kowalchuk
Larson
Whelan
Kaeding
McNeill
Feschuk
Cowley
Tchorzewski

Matsalla
Nelson (Yorkton)
Allen
Koskie
Johnson
Thompson
Banda
Merchant

The Assembly adjourned at 10:12 o'clock p.m.