



HAN

Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	Lib.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 6, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m., all members and guests standing, the Sergeant-at-Arms, carrying the Mace shoulder high and followed by the Speaker and the Clerks of the Legislative Assembly, entered the Chamber and proceeded along the west side. The Speaker took post on the east side of the Chamber, the Clerks took post on the west side of the Chamber and the Sergeant-at-Arms returned along the east side of the Chamber to the main entrance where he stood and awaited the arrival of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Premier, members of the Executive Council, military and civil aides, and officers comprised of the officer escort met in the Lieutenant Governor's reception room.

The Premier, members of the Executive Council, military and civil aides, and officer escort accompanied His Honour from the reception room to the Chamber in the following order:

*The civil aide on the right;
the military aide on the left;
the officer escort;
the members of the Executive Council;
the Premier; and then
the Lieutenant Governor.*

At the main entrance, the military and civil aides, the officer escort, members of the Executive Council and the Premier halted and turned inward to allow the Lieutenant Governor to advance to the head of the officer escort where His Honour was met by the Mace.

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Garry Clark):
His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Lieutenant Governor then, preceded by the Mace carried shoulder high, and followed on his left by the military aide and on his right by the civil aide, proceeded along the west side of the

Chamber to the throne. The Premier proceeded along the east side and stood on the floor on the east side of the Chamber. The members of the Executive Council took their places.

The military aide took up his position on the east side of the throne, and the civil aide took up his position on the west side of the Chamber.

The officer escort was positioned on the west side of the throne.

The Lieutenant Governor seated himself on the throne; the Mace made obeisance and retired to the east side of the Chamber.

The civil aide advanced from the position he had taken on the west side of the Chamber and, after the usual obeisance on each step, handed the Lieutenant Governor the Speech from the Throne.

The civil aide then retired, step by step, backwards and took up his position on the west side of the Chamber.

The Lieutenant Governor seated the House.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Peter M. Liba (Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba): Madam Speaker and members of the Manitoba April 6, 1999a Legislature, I welcome you to the Fifth Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba.

Je vous convie à la cinquième session de la trente-sixième législature de la province du Manitoba.

I am honoured to present Manitoba's Speech from the Throne for my first time.

In performing one of my first major duties as Her Majesty's representative, I wish to pay tribute

to my predecessor, Yvon Dumont. Together with his wife Lyla they fulfilled their responsibilities with great distinction and made many permanent and very positive contributions to this office and to Manitoba.

During the ceremonies to mark my installation, I talked about the importance of a renewed sense of pride, optimism and confidence by Manitobans in our great province. My government shares that vision for our future. It is committed to making Manitoba the best place in Canada to live and to work and to raise our families.

* (1335)

We have come a long way toward achieving that goal but there is no room for complacency. My government shares the views of a recent study commissioned on the city of Winnipeg, which recognized that the city and the province have enjoyed several years of solid growth but warned the status quo is not an option.

Our economy is at a strategic junction. With vision, leadership and the right policy choices, our economy can move forward with even greater strength. But if we lose our focus and fail to meet the current challenges facing this province head-on, our economy could slide into decline with all the consequences a decline implies.

We have every reason to be optimistic about our ability to meet these new challenges. Over the past ten years, my government has built a solid track record of working with Manitobans to identify the major challenges facing our province, set clear goals and make steady progress towards those goals. Before identifying the new agenda that will be driving my government's future efforts, let us take stock of our progress to date.

Just over a decade ago, when my government was first elected to office, it set as one of its primary goals the need to address Manitoba's critical and unsustainable budgetary situation. Deficit financing and other misguided public policies were undercutting our fiscal integrity and placing our children and our future under an onerous debt load. Working towards this goal has

required sacrifices from us all, but those sacrifices have delivered results. Now our budget is in balance, and we have strong legislation to keep it that way. The debt is being paid down, and our standing in international financial markets is among the best in Canada.

Major reforms have also been made within the government itself to improve service and enhance accountability. The Province of Manitoba is among the leaders in Canada in Y2K readiness, and we are sharing our expertise with other Canadian jurisdictions.

A parallel goal in my government's early years was the need to restore proper management for such key public agencies outside the government as the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, Manitoba Hydro and the Workers Compensation Board. These institutions were facing financing and management problems that jeopardized their ability to serve the people of our province. Now, a decade later, Manitobans are being served by Crown corporations and other public organizations which are managing their responsibilities in a sound, stable and sustainable way.

The Workers Compensation Board has moved from a deficit to a surplus position and its improved financial health has resulted in a more competitive economy.

Manitoba Hydro customers enjoy electricity rates that remain among the lowest overall in Canada and among the lowest in the world. A recent announcement by Manitoba Hydro of no rate increase in 1999 means that most residents in Manitoba will have had three consecutive years without a rate increase.

With MPI, Manitobans pay among the lowest automobile insurance rates in Canada and will continue to do so well into the future. This year, nearly 400,000 vehicle owners will pay less for automobile insurance.

Another priority set when my government first took office was to rebuild our province's economy. A decade ago, we had an economy which was ill prepared to deal with the pace of

change around the world, much less to compete effectively. Earlier policies opposed the reduction of trade barriers and discouraged private investment, business growth and job creation. Now, we have an economy which is being transformed and modernized every day. New economic records have been set in trade, in investment, and today there are more Manitobans working than ever before.

Manitobans can take pride in the fact that we are leaders in Canada in a great many key economic sectors. We are home to some of the largest companies and producers in their sectors, be it manufacturing, financial services, or agriculture.

Even more exciting is our success in nontraditional industries. A few years ago who would have forecast the rapid growth in the film industry, in health care products, in telecommunications, in information technology and software development, in transportation and distribution, and in value-added agriculture? A respected Canadian researcher told Manitoba's recent millennium conference, that on a per-capita basis, Manitoba has more knowledge-based jobs than almost anywhere else in the world.

* (1340)

From its earliest days, my government has stressed that the purpose of building a strong economy and putting our financial house in order is to secure and improve the quality of life in Manitoba. Now, with consistent balanced budgets and a strong economy, we are better positioned to enhance our investments to ensure the availability of high-quality health care, education and services to families.

Health is my government's top spending priority. The share of our province's budget which is devoted to health care is the second highest in Canada, and major new investments are being made in program renewal. Many Manitobans may wonder how it can be that their government can spend so much on health care while they still hear so much controversy. Manitobans are not alone with this paradox. All across Canada, provinces are experiencing similar difficulties.

The answer is simple. Manitoba, and the rest of Canada, are in the midst of a fundamental reform of our health care system. We entered this decade with a health care system that was the best we could build in the '60s and '70s, but it was not equipped to deal with the changing realities of the '90s. Our population is aging. Health professionals have developed new approaches to health care that focus on keeping people well in the first place, diagnosing illness sooner so it can be treated earlier when chances of success are highest, and treating people closer to home. My government's plan for health care reform responds to these new realities while protecting what is best in our existing health care system.

The challenge of restructuring our health system, which would have been difficult in any circumstance, became an even greater challenge when the federal government unilaterally cut back its annual health and social transfers to Manitoba by more than \$260 million.

Now, after years of difficult adjustments, and with the partial restoration of federal funding, Manitobans will begin to see the benefits of health reform. As part of our plan, my government is reducing waiting times by expanding high demand services with new equipment funding. We are relieving hospital overcrowding by adding more personal care home beds, tripling the home care budget since 1988, and implementing new approaches to emergency care. Dialysis and breast screening programs have been expanded.

In this session, my government will present legislation to update The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, The Registered Nurses Act, The Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act and The Physiotherapists Act, all of which were enacted approximately 20 years ago. The new legislation will reflect the expanded role that the health professionals, governed by the acts, play in today's health care system and will include enhanced public representation on governing bodies and committees.

Another key social priority set by my government is support for our province's children. Our society benefits from healthy, resilient

children who achieve goals within happy thriving families. Government cannot be a parent, but it can help parents in dealing with difficult situations and circumstances.

My government has introduced several innovative programs that focus on early childhood development and intervention and support to parents so that our children get a good start in life. Programs such as Women and Infant Nutrition, EarlyStart, BabyFirst, Stop Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and expanded and flexible child care services have been implemented. In the coming year, my government will continue to implement programs that promote positive parenting and healthy child development.

My government has placed particular priority on providing our children with a strong education firmly grounded in the basics. There is no greater social equalizer than a high quality public education system. My government will continue the focus on standards and testing to ensure that students, parents and teachers know how a student is progressing and can take remedial action at the earliest possible time. We have reshaped our education system to ensure that every child develops the foundation skills to read, write, problem solve and compute at a high level. We have encouraged greater parental involvement through parent advisory councils, introduced standards and testing, and allowed parents and students to choose the school best suited to their needs.

We have worked with our schools to help meet their needs for technology and skill upgrading and will continue that important task. My government will work even more closely with parents, schools and industry to ensure that today's graduates are ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow's workplace.

In this session my government will implement measures to further enhance services to children with special needs.

In the mid-'90s my government identified safety and security as a high priority. Policies have been implemented to ensure that gang-related and

other violent crimes are dealt with aggressively under the law.

We have provided for more police officers on our streets, developed aggressive bail policies, pursued tougher sentences, and transferred violent young offenders to adult court. Efforts to hold all offenders fully accountable for their actions will continue. In addition, my government has not forgotten the victims. That is why, in January 1999, my government proclaimed victims rights legislation.

My government has also taken direct aim at taking prostitution out of our neighbourhoods. Our antiprostitution legislation has been successful and is being looked at as a model across the country.

* (1345)

My government will continue its national leadership role in addressing the issue of family violence by providing ongoing support to our Family Violence Court, family mediation programs, dedicated domestic violence prosecutors and the Women's Advocacy Program.

Much has also been accomplished in the area of crime prevention and intervention where Citizens on Patrol, youth justice committees and other community-based programs have been successful in reducing crime in our neighbourhoods. In the coming year, my government will introduce new policies and programs to help keep communities, particularly schools, safe for our children and families. My ministers will also table legislation to extend what is among the toughest legislation regarding drinking and driving in the country, to apply to the operation of off-road vehicles including snowmobiles.

In addition to protecting the peace, security and safety of Manitobans, early in this term my government committed to encouraging self-reliance and independence of its citizens through welfare reform. Working with numerous partners as part of my government's Employment First approach to welfare reform, we have seen income

assistance caseloads drop dramatically by more than 10,500. Our Taking Charge! and other programs have equipped young single mothers with the skills necessary to become self-reliant and gainfully employed. In fact, since 1996, single-parent caseloads have been reduced by 2,255. The success of these approaches has been remarkable.

Over the past decade, my government has taken steps to rebuild Manitoba's economy, restore stability to the management of our public enterprises and our province's finances, and reinvest in key social programs. As noted earlier, a study completed for Economic Development Winnipeg acknowledges our province's recent successes, but it also warned that success cannot be taken for granted.

To move forward, we need to continue to innovate and change. We need new answers and decisive leadership. My government is prepared to move forward with a new agenda for a new millennium.

In the past decade, Manitoba has met its challenges head on. We have not been afraid to make difficult choices, and today we are seeing the benefits of those choices. The challenges before us are no less difficult.

Our future quality of life depends on our ability to successfully adapt to the knowledge-based economy. Relying on our traditional economic strengths will not be enough to secure prosperity as we enter the 21st Century. We must build the infrastructure needed to support new knowledge-based industry, and we must give our people the skills they need to compete in those industries.

In addition, we will work with business to refocus our development efforts and programming to better reflect the needs and demands of businesses in the new economy.

My government will continue to work with the private sector to forge even stronger links with our schools and post-secondary institutions to ensure that our students have the skills and

understanding to successfully participate in the workforce.

At the post-secondary level, my government will continue to develop new ways to increase accessibility and to ensure critical skill shortages are met. In addition, my government will explore with post-secondary institutions mechanisms to ensure education quality is rewarded in the funding process.

For those who are already in the workplace, it is important that opportunities for upgrading skills be available and affordable. As part of its ongoing repositioning of Manitoba's post-secondary system, my government will enhance opportunities for skill upgrading to ensure that our citizens all have the opportunity to prosper and that our demand for skilled workers can be met.

Once we give Manitobans the education and training they need, we have to provide a taxation environment that will keep them here. Interprovincial and international comparisons make it clear that provincial taxes must come down. In this age of growing freedom of movement, Manitoba must work harder to make this an attractive place for our children to live and work. As part of our plan to keep our children at home in Manitoba, my government will be lowering taxes.

My government has negotiated with the federal government to allow our province to calculate income tax directly as a share of taxable income rather than as a proportion of the federal tax rate. When this change occurs, Manitoba will be at liberty to undertake a fundamental restructuring of its tax system.

My government will begin the process by consulting both experts and Manitoba taxpayers on the type of taxation system that best meets the unique needs of our province. For instance, we will take a fresh look at how our tax system treats parents who choose to stay home with their children. Accordingly, my government will establish a Lower Tax Commission to undertake these consultations and provide options to the

government for tax reform. The goal is to establish a tax system that not only reduces the burden of taxes on Manitobans but is fairer, simpler and competitive with other jurisdictions. The commission will be asked to report to my government by the end of 1999.

We cannot rely on economic growth alone to give us the flexibility we need to reduce the tax burden on Manitobans. Unless we continue to reduce the costs of government, we will not get taxes to the level we need to keep our children here in Manitoba.

This June, Manitoba is hosting an International Summit on Public Service Reform, featuring some of the world's foremost experts, who will speak on such critical issues as leadership, banishing bureaucracy, alternative service delivery and workforce transformation. My government will use this opportunity to learn about other management approaches that might benefit us. In Manitoba we have already embarked on a major transformation of how we do business through the Better Methods Initiative, transforming our entire human resource management, payroll and procurement systems.

* (1350)

Over the next five years, Manitoba will have a unique opportunity to reorganize how it serves our citizens and to reduce the size of government without laying off any government workers. The provincial civil service is aging, and over the next five years some 25 percent of our employees will be eligible to retire. Seizing this opportunity, my government has set a goal of reducing through attrition the size of the civil service by 10 percent over that period.

Après avoir consulté les membres de la communauté franco-manitobaine, mon gouvernement a adopté une nouvelle politique en matière de services en langue française et est en train de mettre en oeuvre d'autres recommandations du Rapport Chartier.

[Translation]

After consultation with members of the Franco-Manitoban community, my government

has adopted a new French language services policy and is implementing other recommendations of the Chartier report.

[English]

In the last decade, many Manitobans in the private and the public sectors sacrificed income growth to help protect jobs and services. Fairness demands that their contributions be recognized and their compensation improved. However, compensation has to reflect economic realities, and in the public sector, it must also recognize budgetary realities and government's responsibilities to all Manitobans. The vast majority of Manitobans are likely to support reasonable improvements in the earnings of key public service providers, but they are unlikely to support proposals that would threaten the security and sustainability of essential health care and other services.

As Manitoba's capital and largest city, the success of our entire province is linked to the success of Winnipeg. However, Winnipeg faces some special challenges. Unless those challenges are addressed, the success of our entire province will be at risk.

One key challenge is the negative perception of Winnipeg by some and the need to maintain Winnipeg as a desirable place to live for its citizens. We know that many of our neighbourhoods, particularly in the centre, have seen an unacceptable level of decay and decline. My government believes that action is required to ensure that the families who live in these neighbourhoods feel safe, whether it be in their homes, businesses or streets, and that they have the economic and social resources necessary to rebuild their communities.

That is why my government will implement an initiative to concentrate the resources of the community on reclaiming our inner-city neighbourhoods. This Take Back the Streets initiative will allow for the creation of neighbourhood renewal committees which will lead the way in finding solutions to local problems.

My government envisions a full frontal attack on the problems that plague these communities. The neighbourhood renewal committees will be empowered to deal with a range of issues such as increased availability of people to provide literacy training, additional supports or a need for better lighting. If a greater police presence is required, my government will work with the city to find the resources to make this happen.

Our job, in consultation with the City of Winnipeg, will be to empower community leaders and residents and to redeploy the resources needed to get the job done. My ministers will consult with the City of Winnipeg and community leaders to determine all of the elements of the initiative, building on previous successes such as on west Broadway.

Another key social challenge facing Winnipeg is to provide for our urban aboriginal community to participate more fully in the opportunities the city has to offer. Today, there are more aboriginal residents in the city of Winnipeg than the entire population of the Northwest Territories before the creation of Nunavut. Manitoba's aboriginal citizens want and need better opportunities, especially for young people, for training and jobs and for building better lives.

For some time, my government has engaged in extensive consultations on the development of co-operative, community-based strategies aimed at identifying practical, workable responses to the concerns of aboriginal residents, particularly in urban centres. Partners for Careers and other mentoring initiatives have already placed over 500 candidates in new positions. Those programs will serve as models for other new initiatives in the coming year. My government will also be announcing both an aboriginal education strategy and an aboriginal health strategy. Both of these strategies aim to improve the health and opportunities for success of aboriginal people in Manitoba.

The main goals of the aboriginal education strategy are to increase aboriginal graduation rates from high school and post-secondary institutions as well as increase their

participation in training programs and in the workforce.

The health strategy will focus on immediate health problems plaguing aboriginal people like diabetes and will set out policies that aim at prevention, and the provision of better and more coordinated health services to our increasing aboriginal population in Manitoba.

Recently, the federal government has indicated its readiness to participate in these efforts. It is hoped that a major new agreement can be worked out to address these vital priorities without prejudice to our basic positions on fiduciary responsibility and other longstanding issues of jurisdiction.

* (1355)

My government is also fully committed to supporting Winnipeg's new mayor and council in their efforts to deal with the issue of high property taxes in the city of Winnipeg. Over the past 11 years, my government has provided financial support to the City of Winnipeg at levels that exceed the support provided by any other western province to their major city governments. It has also reduced the property levy charged by the province for the purpose of funding education while increasing the overall grants provided by the province to school boards. We are prepared to consider changes to provincial statutes to help give the City of Winnipeg the tools it needs to get on with the task of lowering overall taxation levels.

My government also appreciates the importance of sound relationships with the City of Winnipeg and the surrounding communities of the Capital Region. The Capital Region Review Panel has been engaged in extensive discussions with municipalities and the public, and my government looks forward to receiving the report and recommendations.

My government also remains committed to working with Brandon and Manitoba's rural and northern communities to continue to find ways to make our rural economy flourish. As part of this process, my government is currently planning a second phase to our rural development strategy as

a follow-up to its original strategy released in 1993. My government will consult with rural communities through vehicles such as the upcoming Rural Forum as it takes a renewed look at the factors influencing the quality of life in rural Manitoba, such as economic and educational opportunities.

In addition to the efforts outlined, my government will be taking a broader look at the health of our communities. In recent discussions with the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Premier and some of my ministers discussed a round table to examine the issues facing lower income families with children. Today my government is announcing its intention to proceed with a round table on healthy communities to be led by the Premier. This round table will be held in conjunction with stakeholders who share the desire to improve the outlook for our most precious resource, our children.

My government also plans several initiatives to assist parents in coping with the risks to children that come with our newly wired world.

While the Internet has opened up opportunities for learning and exploration that were unimaginable only a decade ago, children today also have access to material which is violent or sexual in nature and intended solely for adults. There are also disturbing incidents of sexual predators gaining access to children through this medium even while children are in the apparent safety of their home.

Many parents are simply not equipped with the knowledge to be able to monitor or restrict the type of information exchanged over their home computers. This generational gap in the level of expertise in the use of the Internet has created a situation where children are exposed to a world that is completely foreign to that of their parents. To address this problem, my government will be introducing a program called NetSmarts to provide simple and straightforward approaches for parents to block or monitor what children can access over the Internet.

Many parents have provided a gift of a video game to their children only to discover it contained

a level of violence far exceeding the standards of that family. My government will be introducing a bill to establish a rating system for video games similar to that which is used today for movies. Armed with this information, parents will be able to make better decisions about the entertainment to which their children are exposed.

The federal government has a key role to play in helping Manitoba meet many of our new challenges. A major step toward improving federal-provincial co-operation took place earlier this year when all First Ministers except the Premier of Quebec signed a new Social Union Framework Agreement to help guide the development and implementation of national social programs into the new millennium.

This year, the federal government announced a partial restoration of financial support for social programs like health care that had been cut in previous budgets. While that support is helpful both in real and symbolic terms, the federal funding will still leave Ottawa as only a junior partner in the health field. In co-operation with the other provinces and territories, my ministers will continue to press their federal counterparts to show meaningful leadership by committing in a systematic way to making the federal government a full and fair partner in the financing of these programs.

My government will also work with other provinces and territories in helping the federal government establish priorities for the national agenda. A new national highways program must continue to be high on the list. Unlike other G-7 nations, Canada's national government provides virtually no support outside Quebec and the Atlantic provinces for the construction and maintenance of our country's most important highway links, despite their importance for trade and unity.

* (1400)

Another priority must be the renewal of the National Infrastructure Program which proved so successful in making a start in meeting a growing infrastructure deficit across Canada, especially at the municipal level.

We will also press for improved support for aboriginal services, higher education, and expansion of the National Child Benefit as well as other initiatives for children. Specifically, we expect the federal government to do a far better job of providing for basic services like health and housing on aboriginal reserves. My government commits to working closely with Manitoba's aboriginal community to raise the profile of this issue on the national agenda.

It has been suggested that the Government of Canada may not wish to renew the Winnipeg Development Agreement when it ends in March 2000. My government hopes to work with the City of Winnipeg to persuade Ottawa that a renewed agreement is essential for the economic future of our capital city and the inner city in particular. More meaningful federal support is also being sought in the wake of Ottawa's decision to close the world-class nuclear research facility operated by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited at Pinawa.

In this session, my government will propose a series of bills regarding the elections laws of our province for the consideration of members. Among the most important will be revisions to The Elections Act and to The Elections Finances Act to reflect the recommendations of the recent Monnin report. This legislation will be placed before the House at the earliest opportunity. The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act will be presented for early approval in keeping with the tradition in our province of periodic electoral division reform. The co-operation of all members will ensure the early passage of this important and timely legislation.

A motion will also be introduced to amend the rules of the House to provide for the election of a Speaker by secret ballot commencing at the beginning of the next Legislature.

As I noted earlier, one of the biggest changes that has occurred in Manitoba over the past decade is a rebirth in our confidence and pride in our province. This new spirit has led us to many achievements but none more visible than the series of national and international events that we have or will be hosting.

A great deal of hard work, coupled with Manitobans' unequalled community spirit, served our province very well once again when we hosted the best-ever World Junior Hockey Championships at the beginning of the year and another successful Grey Cup last fall. That same kind of effort and spirit earned our province the chance to host this summer's Pan American Games. The Games will be a showcase for our province and our people. They will help us mark this millennium and the start of the next in the most appropriate way possible through an event that is aimed at fostering friendship and mutual respect with our partners throughout the hemisphere.

As we approach the end of the century, it is timely to formally recognize the outstanding excellence and achievements of individuals who have improved and sustained the well-being of our province such as those who have made these events a reality. Accordingly, my government will introduce The Order of Manitoba Act for approval. I am pleased to accept the offer to be Chancellor of the Order.

My government recognizes that we are at a critical junction. It recognizes the need for a sound plan and decisive action. The problems and challenges we face today will not disappear overnight. Building on our sound financial and economic foundations, we can set priorities and be prepared for problems we cannot foresee today, but my government's current priorities are clear.

My government knows it must, and it will, foster the infrastructure needed for the new economy.

My government knows it must, and it will, continue to strengthen our education system and to provide parents with reliable information about their children's schools.

My government knows it must, and it will, continue to improve our system of post-secondary education to make it affordable and relevant.

My government knows it must, and it will, ensure training is more available to those in the

workforce who must upgrade their skills to meet the needs of our new economy.

My government knows it must, and it will, continue to make our health care system accessible and responsive.

My government knows it must, and it will, not only lower taxes, but make them fairer, simpler and more competitive, to ensure our children view Manitoba as the place they want to make their home.

My government knows it must, and it will, foster an expanding diversified economy, using the opportunities available through fair trade.

My government knows that it must, and it will, take action to make our neighbourhoods safe places to live, work and play.

My government knows it must, and it will, take action to help aboriginals play a greater role in our communities.

My government knows it must, and it will, introduce ways to protect our children from harmful influences that have arisen as a consequence of new technology and new forms of entertainment.

Manitoba must make a choice, a choice between confronting the new challenges that are emerging as we approach the millennium with policies that will move us forward, or denying those problems and slipping into a spiral of decline. As much as we are seeing success today, my government knows that to focus only on today will result in decline tomorrow.

My government is firmly committed to governing for our children's future and is taking concrete steps to begin the process of meeting the new and emerging challenges facing Manitoba. It will not avoid difficult choices and it looks forward to working with Manitobans to bring about the changes needed to make Manitoba the best choice for our children as a place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

Later in the session, members will be asked to consider Estimates for the requirement for the public services of the province in this fiscal year, as well as the most recent Public Accounts.

Je vous laisse maintenant aux nombreuses tâches que vous allez être appelés à accomplir fidèlement. Que la divine Providence vous éclaire au cours des délibérations nécessaires à l'exécution de ces tâches.

I leave you now to the faithful performance of your many duties and trust that, in meeting them, you may benefit from the guidance of Divine Providence in all your deliberations.

* * *

The civil aide advanced and, after obeisance, received the speech from the Lieutenant Governor and retired to the west side of the Chamber.

The Mace then made obeisance before the Lieutenant Governor and preceded him along the east side of the Chamber to the main entrance, accompanied by the Premier, the aides and the officer escort. All members and guests stood.

God Save the Queen and O Canada! were sung.

The Speaker proceeded to the Chair after His Honour retired from the House.

The Premier proceeded to his seat in the Chamber

The Sergeant-at-Arms proceeded to the Speaker who was standing before the Chair. The Mace made obeisance and returned to the table.

Madam Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O Merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy Will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly, for the Glory and Honour of Thy Name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Premier's Statements

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. One of the fundamental pillars of our democratic institution is that members come to this House with accurate and factual information. Because I respect our institutions and hold them in high regard and since a question of privilege must be raised at the earliest opportunity, I do so now in relation to certain statements made by me during the Question Periods held on June 22 and 29, 1998. Throughout the Question Periods cited, members of the opposition forwarded information which alleged that members of the Progressive Conservative Party were involved in the funding of independent candidates in the 1995 provincial election. As I testified under oath before the Monnin inquiry, at the time the allegations were made I did not have any reason to believe them to be true.

As was laid out in the Monnin inquiry report, these allegations regrettably did have substance as five individuals who were members of the Progressive Conservative Party, including members of my staff, were involved. Furthermore, on June 24, 1998, on pages 4798 and 4799 of Hansard and throughout my answers to similar questions raised by members opposite, I stated the following: "Madam Speaker, the allegations were that it was the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba that was involved in the scheme and that raised the money. I spoke to the people in our party who are responsible for fundraising and I spoke to the people who are responsible for our campaign organization. They had absolutely no knowledge of the affair. . . I spoke to the people who chair the PC Manitoba Fund, the people who are—who is the chief financial officer of the party for the election, because this was a broad allegation."

* (1410)

I want to inform the House, as I informed the Monnin inquiry, that I had relied on my chief of staff, Mr. Sokolyk, to make certain inquiries on my behalf. I did not personally speak to each of

the individuals referred to regarding the funding of independent candidates.

I nevertheless take full responsibility for having provided information that was subsequently proven to be inaccurate. I and all members of the Executive Council routinely bring information to this House based on information and inquiries made by staff in our respective departments. Should that information be incorrect, it falls upon my colleagues and me to take responsibility for having provided this incorrect information.

Given the information we now know, I would like to offer a full and complete apology to the House for supplying this incorrect information and for implying that I had personally spoken to all the individuals referred to in pages 4798 and 4799 of Hansard. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): On the same point of privilege, Madam Speaker. We had raised a number of questions in the last week of June of this legislative sitting, and this is indeed our first opportunity, as the First Minister has indicated, to follow up on what was stated in this House by the First Minister, what was in evidence and in sworn affidavits in the Monnin inquiry, and what was eventually changed over and over again by the Premier's senior staff in that same inquiry.

Madam Speaker, we have said all along that a leader of a government in a democracy has the responsibility for the ethics and integrity of the campaign that he or she is responsible for, as the Premier was indeed in 1995 for the Progressive Conservative campaign.

Madam Speaker, we would have expected more from a true leader when the allegations were made public from individuals in the Interlake, and when Conservatives then stated that they had believed that they were only providing advice and support for aboriginal candidates under the Native Voice candidacy, which the Premier would know was in potential violation of the Manitoba Elections Act.

We knew, Madam Speaker, and we would have expected the Premier to know that Mr. Darryl

Sutherland could not have found the means, the financial means, to donate \$5,000 to his own campaign. So for the Premier to look the other way when this allegation was first raised, I think is an issue of extreme disappointment to members opposite and I think to all members of the public.

Day after day after day, when new information was being provided, the Premier attacked, he attacked Darryl Sutherland. He attacked members of this side of the House; he attacked Clif Evans or the member for Interlake; he attacked the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk); he attacked the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), who were the victims of a politically motivated scheme to split the votes in the 1995 election campaign.

Madam Speaker, the term—the findings of Judge Monnin—inducement, which is another word for providing incentives to run—are serious allegations, very serious allegations. It is this Premier who chose his friends and chose his senior staff and chose the campaign people. It is this Premier that is accountable, we believe, for a black mark on our democracy and an intolerable situation that took place in this last election campaign.

Madam Speaker, we sent people to South Africa, we sent people to Central America, we sent people to the former communist countries to help those emerging countries run free and democratic elections based on people and policy, not on the basis of deceit and cover-up. I would have thought that an honourable person who takes full responsibility for the people they hire and the actions they have taken would have taken full responsibility and resigned as the Premier of this province so we can step forward into the future.

Madam Speaker, the fact that this took place with the most vulnerable people in our society, people who have the highest unemployment rate, people who have the highest infant mortality rates, people who have some of the greatest disease rates in all of our country, the fact that his party and his people that he has hired took advantage of those people for political gain I think is an absolute disgrace, an absolute disgrace in terms of our democracy. This Premier chose to look the other

way; he chose to look the other way. In 1995, when comments were made in the Interlake media and then in the other media, he chose to look the other way when he would have seen the election returns, because certainly we looked at them. He would have known that nobody, not anyone opposite, donated \$5,000 to their own political party as an individual. He would have known that somebody who was on social assistance would not normally have those kinds of means available to them to donate \$5,000 in a 35-day campaign for purposes of this last 1995 election.

* (1420)

You know the people of Manitoba would have given the Premier the benefit of the doubt if he would have conducted a full investigation in 1995. If he was really concerned, if he really was concerned about democracy, if there was really the sincerity to find the truth in 1995, he would have, in my view, taken the initiative and found the truth and dealt with it in 1995, and then we could truly be turning the page as we should have been able to do four years ago, but he chose not to do this. He chose not to do it, and regrettably day after day after day when new revelations were made, rather than accept the information and deal with the information, the Premier chose to attack people, attack people on this side, attack Darryl Sutherland and other individuals who actually out of this whole incident came through with integrity and honesty when he finally felt that he had to come clean to the people of Manitoba and say he was induced to run as a Native Voice candidate by senior members of the Conservative Party that the Premier is responsible for.

Madam Speaker, the fact that the Monnin inquiry says, and I quote: the lack of truthfulness of some of the major witnesses is something that Judge Monnin has never witnessed in his years on the bench.

Now, who are these people? Who are those people and who hired these people and whose friends are they to show utter and total disrespect for the law and for the truth? These are individuals hired and trusted and put in positions of trust by the Premier (Mr. Filmon), his chief of staff, his head of Treasury Board, his other

individuals who have received meritorious awards in the Interlake for PC Manitoba Fund activity, and of course the acknowledged friends that the Premier had that were involved in writing cheques, and I quote: the markers were called in. It sounded like a scene out of a Godfather movie, not a scene out of Manitoba's tradition of democracy.

Madam Speaker, Judge Monnin says also: "I am left with the lingering feeling that perhaps I am not in possession of all the facts of this scheme or plot involving the three aboriginal candidates, as well as the subsequent cover-up."

So, Madam Speaker, even the judge, with all the evidence, with all the investigators, with all the information, with all the testimony, has come to the conclusion inducements were made, has come to the conclusion a scheme was hatched, has come to the conclusion that a cover-up took place and a cover-up that took place with Elections Manitoba, with the people of this province.

Madam Speaker, we do not feel that Judge Monnin has closed totally this issue, and I want the Premier to know this today in this motion of privilege because he knew obviously that we were going to come forward with motions of privilege because he knew that in Hansard based—and testimony that we would obviously feel that he had misled the House and misled the House on something that is so fundamental as the democratic principles of how elections are fought. And only after we went after the Premier over and over and over again did he finally relent and create a commission, a commission that has, in my way of thinking, been more a set of events that brings sadness to all of us than any other emotion because of our traditions and the breach of those traditions of this House.

Madam Speaker, the Premier will recall that we asked about whether Mr. Sokolyk was involved, and his testimony in the Legislature of course indicates something different than what was in the testimony that was provided before the Monnin inquiry in terms of his contact with the former campaign managers. I am sure some of our other members will get into that in more detail as we proceed.

We believe elections should be fought on the basis of people, on the basis of principle, on the basis of policy. We know that we will fight aggressive campaigns with members opposite, but aggressiveness never means using people to deceive Manitobans. It never means using the poorest in our society to benefit the political party in power in its attempt to run an election campaign. And let us be perfectly clear—the only group of individuals that would benefit from a vote-splitting scheme, the only group of individuals that would benefit would be this Premier and members opposite that would keep government and keep government, I would suggest, by deceitful and undemocratic means. They were the ones, and the Premier was the person who appointed the campaign manager; the Premier was the person who appointed Mr. Benson as secretary to the Treasury Board. We had commented on it in the early 1990s that the Premier should realize that you cannot take the chief fundraiser for the Conservative Party and put him in as secretary of Treasury Board, issuing and recommending on contracts to be awarded on the basis of merit in the public service. The Premier then did not see the distinction between a meritorious public service that works on behalf of the public and the goal of the Progressive Conservative Party and its attempts to fundraise and fundraise with the fundraiser of the Conservative Party.

Those alarm bells were not listened to by the Premier in terms of the distinction between the civil service and the public service and the actual delivery in that office of that individual. It is evidenced as well that on numerous occasions the secretary to the Treasury Board was involved in approving the election budget, in approving finances in the election budget, in approving expenditures in the election budget which is clearly against The Civil Service Act for one of the highest officials in the provincial government. Again, we did not hear an apology both in the public arena and in this Chamber on that whole area of potential breach of The Civil Service Act in terms of the awards of these contracts.

We believe, Madam Speaker, that, as I say, elections should be fought with people, ideas.

They should be fought honestly; answers in this House should be given honestly. The Premier failed to give us honest answers. He failed to investigate this issue in 1995 when he had a chance. He failed to come to the bottom of this when he had a chance in 1998 when we raised questions. A pre-election apology is still a failure to perform his duties as Premier of this province in the traditions of Premiers of all political stripes in the past. When I think of Roblin, when I think of Schreyer, and I think of the activity of this Premier, there is no comparison, and he should do the right thing and resign.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I, too, on behalf of the party, wanted to put a few thoughts on the record.

First of all, a matter of privilege is indeed a very important thing, always has been and no doubt always will be. Usually when you have a matter of privilege, there is a motion that would follow that matter of privilege. In talking to my colleague and to the Leader of the Liberal Party, what might have been an appropriate motion to this particular matter of privilege would have been to take this particular report, the Monnin report, and refer it to a Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, so that, as cited in the throne speech where the government is looking at making amendments to The Elections Act, the finances act, that we might have been able to add more strength in a nonpartisan way to that, what would be proposed legislation. So it would have been nice, Madam Speaker, to have seen a motion to that effect. In essence, we are not shelving the report. We want to address the report in a very tangible, in a very creative, in a very positive way.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, in our rules it says that we are all honourable individuals, and we respect and accept the Premier's apology. Having said that, it is not necessarily for us to pass judgment on the Premier. It is indeed going to be the responsibility of all Manitobans in a general election to pass judgment on the Premier.

* (1430)

In talking, whether it is in caucus or with constituents, many feel very firmly and have a

tough time trying to understand how so many people around the Premier were involved, and the Premier yet was not aware. No doubt, those types of discussions will go on inside the Chamber as the session progresses.

A priority for the Liberal Party, if the Premier and this government want to at least make a step in the right direction in dealing with the election, they have to look at the new boundaries. In the discussions that we have had within caucus—and I believe Jon Gerrard has been leading it—in terms of the province of Manitoba, it would be immoral and unethical for the government or the official opposition or for any member of this Chamber to do anything to prevent those new boundaries from taking effect. [interjection] The government members say hear, hear, and listening to the throne speech I did not hear any sort of a solid commitment that we will pass those boundaries prior to the next provincial election. It is a responsibility of the government, and that is an issue which will be amongst some of the details such as health care and so forth that were talked about in the throne speech. In addition to that, Madam Speaker, I know over the next 24 hours we will be given a great deal of discussion on this government's commitment to passing those new boundaries. We believe that with the co-operation—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for The Maples, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): On a point of order. I gave due respect when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) stood up on a very important matter of privilege. My colleague from Inkster is now trying to speak. We have a number of guests in the Chamber, and the normal heckling and partisan heckling that goes on should not take place at any time, especially during a matter of privilege and especially when we have guests here. I would ask all members to listen to my colleague from Inkster speak.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Maples did indeed have a point of order. I would ask the co-operation of all members on all

sides of the House to listen intently when a member has been recognized to speak.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind the honourable member that he should be speaking to why a prima facie case is or has been established for a point of privilege.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, today the Premier rose in order to express his most sincere apology, which at least in part has been accepted. We are suggesting very clearly that the apology is owed to Manitobans, and it is the people of Manitoba who will ultimately decide whether or not this government deserves to be re-elected.

The concern that the Liberal Party has is that we want to see this Premier go to the polls, Madam Speaker, the sooner, the better, but we cannot go to the polls under the old boundaries because that would be another form of manipulation which the Liberal Party will not support, nor will it condone.

So we accept the Premier's apology and challenge the Premier to call the election but not to call that election until this House has dealt with the boundary redistribution issue. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Beauchesne is very clear. Citation 27 indicates on a matter of privilege that "It should be dealt with by a motion giving the House power to impose reparation or apply a remedy."

I would note that the First Minister did not bring in a motion, therefore it is not a legitimate matter of privilege. But I want to indicate, Madam Speaker, in this case that we indeed, once this matter has been disposed of, will be bringing in a matter of privilege which will indeed, according to our rules, be accompanied by a motion that we feel is the only appropriate way to deal with the very sad state of affairs we have seen in this province and seen in this House with corruption of something as important as the electoral process, corruption at the highest level.

Madam Speaker, we will be dealing with this as soon as you dispose of this matter of privilege

in the appropriate way, through a motion that will deal directly not only with the corruption but the Premier's direct role in this House in misleading this House and the people of Manitoba.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): If I may add some comments following the remarks of the honourable opposition House leader with respect to how members correct or apologize to the House for inaccurate information being put on the record, because there is precedent established in this House which the Premier, we would submit to you, Madam Speaker, is correctly following.

The member for Thompson has correctly cited Beauchesne, but under the rules of this House, Madam Speaker, I would refer you to General Rule No. 1 where "Proceedings in the House, and in all Committees thereof, shall be conducted in accordance with the Rules and with the sessional and other orders of the Assembly." Which would include Speaker's rulings.

I would refer, Madam Speaker, to the whole question again of the process by which members—because we all know from time to time, many members of this House have brought forward information that has proven to be inaccurate and have apologized. What is the process by which to do exactly that?

Madam Speaker, I would refer you to a ruling by Speaker Rocan on October 26 of 1990 in which the then Minister of Northern and Native Affairs, the member for Arthur-Virden, rose in this House during Question Period to offer an apology. The opposition House leader at that time, the member for Thompson, rose and challenged that particular procedure as an infringement on the time of Question Period for offering an apology. At that particular time the Speaker of the day indicated that had the member risen on a matter of privilege it would have provided—that the member for Arthur-Virden had risen on a matter of privilege, it would have provided him with the opportunity to enter his apology on the record of this House.

The operation of that rule or that ruling by the Speaker was actually put to use in this Chamber on the 2nd of May, 1991, on two particular points,

one of order and one of privilege, that were raised by the opposition House leader as well as the deputy opposition House leader, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). At that particular time a member of this House rose on a matter of privilege, as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) did today, to offer an apology to the House for information that he had inadvertently put on the record of this Assembly. At that particular time he did exactly as the Premier did today, rose on a matter of privilege, provided the apology for the matter at hand to the House, as we all have required members to do from time to time on both sides of this Chamber. That particular time, the opposition House leader, the member for Thompson, rose on a point of order indicating that there was not a substantive motion. Speaker Rocan again ruled that the member was correct, that that point of privilege was out of order and did not proceed further. Immediately following that ruling, the member for Burrows, the deputy opposition House leader, rose on a matter of privilege on the same matter with a substantive motion. Speaker Rocan ruled against that particular motion, indicating very clearly the remarks of the minister, in apologizing, had brought the matter to an end.

*(1440)

Madam Speaker, with respect to this matter, and I am pleased to table today for the House, according to our rules, the report of former Chief Justice Alfred Monnin. According to that report, which was done by a former Chief Justice of this province, which gave everyone an opportunity to provide testimony, come forward with information, it indicated very clearly that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was not aware of the information as stated and accused by members opposite. Consequently, his request today or his bringing an apology to the House today was the appropriate action to be taken by an honourable member, any honourable member of this House when they became aware of bringing inaccurate information to this Assembly.

Madam Speaker, the Premier has offered an apology to the people of this province. He has done that very publicly. This is his first opportunity to bring an apology to members of this Assembly, which he has done pursuant to the

orders of this Assembly, pursuant to our rules which certainly take precedence over Beauchesne.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is a very serious concern. I will take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Monnin Report

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. I want to indicate that I will be following this by a motion and that this deals with some very important issues that strike the heart of the question in this province of whether we have any standards of ethical behaviour when it comes to this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and this government.

I want to indicate that it is the first opportunity for us to rise on this matter, and I would suggest to you that it is very definitely a prima facie case of privilege. I want to preface our matter of privilege by reminding this Legislature and the assembled guests—and I would like to thank the government House leader for tabling a copy of the Monnin report because I was struck when I read the report by the comment: “As a trial judge I conducted a number of trials. As an appellate court judge I read many thousands of pages of transcripts in a variety of cases . . . In all my years on the bench I never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry.”

The liars were not just random citizens of Manitoba. These were the senior Conservative government officials and senior Conservative Party officials, many of whom are close friends of the Premier. Never seen so many liars.

The report, by the way, also focused on the fact that Judge Monnin referenced the plot as constituting an unconscionable debasement of the citizen's right to vote, and I thought what summed up the report was the testimony of, I think it was Mr. Kozminski, who said that he would do anything to stop, defeat, the NDP—anything.

Madam Speaker, I want to suggest, in rising on this matter of privilege, that Mr. Kozminski I

think unwittingly put forward what has not only been the mantra of the Conservative Party but of this Premier. In fact, I want to suggest to you today that the most recent comments from this Premier show again a level of cynicism about the democratic process and a cynicism about our parliamentary process that is unprecedented.

Madam Speaker, I would note first and foremost that this Premier has still failed to apologize to aboriginal people who were the first citizens of Manitoba he should have apologized to for his Conservative Party's actions.

Madam Speaker, the actions of the Conservative Party were despicable, were beyond belief, and I want to note that not only has the Premier not apologized for that particular aspect of what happened, but he has yet, even in his previous comments, to deal with some concerns that we have. We cannot use, perhaps, the same language that Judge Monnin used, but this Premier (Mr. Filmon) deliberately misled the House June 23 and June 24, comments that we did not believe at the time, but later, according to his own testimony under oath, he has now indicated were not accurate.

Madam Speaker, I realize that testifying under oath does not mean a lot to senior Conservatives. So many liars. I would point out that we still are going to be watching for whether those individuals are going to be subject to perjury charges, because if there is any justice they should indeed be subject to some form of sanction for lying repeatedly.

Mr. Sokolyk, who, Madam Speaker, I believe was the campaign manager and the chief of staff for the Premier, I believe he lied under oath, how many times? I lost track in the end. I think it was four or it was five times. You know, we have numerous examples of that, but the Premier himself on the 23rd and 24th of June deliberately misled the House. Under oath, I will accept that the Premier was telling the truth under oath. He had talked to Mr. Sokolyk about this matter. Remember that infamous testimony where he blinked and said, well, you better see a lawyer and do not bother me with this.

Now, it is interesting because the Premier came into the House and said the following: the

member opposite knows that we have all sorts of rules and procedures that must be followed under Elections Manitoba's rules and legislation. He knows very well that it would be very easy to determine whether or not the Progressive Conservative Party gave that money to Mr. Sutherland, and I know that it is just not so; it did not happen.

This occurred after Mr. Sokolyk told the Premier coming into Question Period, as the Premier himself acknowledged under oath in the inquiry. So he had been told by Mr. Sokolyk, and yet he came into the House and said: it did not happen.

I want to note, Madam Speaker, that we spent quite some time—

Point of Order

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I do not want to disrupt the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) while he is in full flight, but I do ask him to please be accurate in the information he brings here. If he wants to he can read the transcript of the Monnin inquiry in which the comment that was made in that 30-second exchange was: The allegations are not true. That was what the comment said: but they are on to something.

Madam Speaker, that is the comment that was made: The allegations are not true, but they are on to something. As I indicated to Mr. Monnin, as I indicated under oath to Mr. Monnin, I at all times believed that Mr. Sokolyk might have had information but was not in any way involved in that. I believed that until I received the transcript of his testimony to the inquiry.

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister did not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, to continue to establish his point of privilege.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, what is interesting was, because as part of this infamous discussion in which the Premier blinked, he also suggested that Mr. Sokolyk get a lawyer—get a lawyer. I wonder

why. Were they just discussing the time of the day? What he left out—and I have the transcript here—is very clearly Mr. Sokolyk said they were on to something. I want to add, by the way, what is interesting—as I spent about two hours in the House on Supply asking the Premier about Mr. Sokolyk and Mr. Sokolyk's role. Of course, at that time the Premier was a little bit more smug in his approach. He said, well, he was a Conservative Party official then, he was not working for the government. We have seen with Mr. Benson that there is not much of a dividing line with this party in government when it comes to that. But he said: I had a full and thorough investigation. Do you know what his full and thorough investigation was in 1995? Who did he talk to?—Mr. Sokolyk. Mr. Sokolyk who was the mastermind of this—the mastermind of this.

* (1450)

Now, was this only the one time where the Premier misled the House, deliberately misled the House? On June 24 I spoke to the people in our party who are responsible for fundraising and I spoke to the people who are responsible for our campaign organization. They had absolutely no knowledge of the affair—June 24, 1998. I just want to put this in perspective again. After he blinked with Mr. Sokolyk on the 23rd, not only did he mislead the House on the 23rd, on the 24th he went in again—and by the way he misled the House because what he was really saying here—and once again this shows the degree to which the Premier was willing to go to twist the facts. The only person he spoke to was Mr. Sokolyk. This reference here to the people who are responsible for our campaign organization is Mr. Sokolyk. They, not he, had absolutely no knowledge of the affair. I mean unless the Premier spoke to other people that he did not reveal under testimony. I note Mr. Monnin has indicated that he feels there is a lot more to this than was indicated at the time. So the Premier can clarify when he said “they,” did he really mean “he”? Either way he had spoken to Mr. Sokolyk before he made the statements on the 23rd and before he made the statements on the 24th.

An Honourable Member: He told him to get a lawyer.

Mr. Ashton: He told Mr. Sokolyk to get a lawyer. Now many Manitobans, I want to indicate to the Premier, just simply do not believe you when you say—and I say it through you, Madam Speaker, to the Premier—you did not know. I would like to put on the record here one of the reasons they do not believe you is because in this House you did not tell us what had transpired. It was only under oath that you brought out some of these facts. They simply do not believe you.

If ever there was evidence of the fact that this rot that we see as a result of this inquiry is not just a group of isolated individuals, that that rot goes right to the top of this government, it is evidenced again by the fact that you came in this House today, Mr. Premier, and with your so-called apology you once again failed to deal with the fact that you deliberately misled this House and the people of Manitoba.

I want to get back again, Madam Speaker, before I move the motion, to the fact that we feel particularly aggrieved on behalf of the aboriginal people of this province. We can accept the desperation that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) showed in trying to wriggle out of this sordid affair, and I note the attacks against members on this side who were asking questions. It was politically motivated, according to the Premier—remember that?—politically motivated. He questioned that.

What particularly strikes me as to the fact that the Premier still does not get it is the hurt and the frustration that his actions have caused to a lot of fair-minded Manitobans about this issue, but particularly to our First Nations. You know, First Nations people can teach us all about one particular facet of relations between peoples and governments. It is respect, Madam Speaker. The lack of respect shown by the Bob Kozminskis, the Cubby Barretts, the Allan Aitkens, the Jules Bensons, the Taras Sokolyks, was despicable. They used, they tried to manipulate aboriginal people for their own narrow, self-focused gain. That was 1995. The Premier has had four years now since that to address the way in which that has been seen by many aboriginal people throughout this province, not just as a lack of respect but as an insult.

You know, Madam Speaker, I would suggest to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) that perhaps he should come with some of us who are not strangers at gatherings of aboriginal people. Perhaps if he could sit down and listen to the aboriginal people of this province, he might understand the hurt he has caused. They are still waiting for their apology. But, you know, we have given the Premier four years, and he still does not get it. He is still twisting, turning. He still does not understand that he has very little credibility left in his party—yes, his party, the Conservative Party.

I am hearing this, by the way, from many honest Conservatives who are very disenchanted, and I say that seriously, very disenchanted with the lack of honesty they have seen from senior officials in their party. The Premier has had four years. He had his chance today. He has not dealt with it.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), that this House censure the Premier for deliberately misleading the House regarding the vote-rigging scandal on June 23 and June 24, 1998, and for the contempt shown to aboriginal people by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) who has continued to fail to apologize for his actions to aboriginal people.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt about how serious this whole issue has been for all Manitobans, and there is no doubt that for all of us who are involved in public life, how disturbing it is whenever we hear of people in whatever jurisdiction, whatever province, whatever party take it upon themselves to do things that are less than, far less than ethical in the pursuit of electoral office. This is not the first time in Canada or in this province where there have been attempts by individuals operating in what they believed were the best wishes of their party or in the best pursuit of their electoral success. It is always very troubling to any of us who sit in these benches as cabinet ministers or who have sat or aspire to sit in these benches when one is provided with information that one believes to be reliable, particularly when it is with officials that are trusted by one as a minister or a member of Executive Council, and it is extremely disturbing

when one finds out that that information is less than accurate.

Our Premier came to this House today earlier on a motion of privilege under the procedure that I would submit, Madam Speaker, is the correct procedure at the earliest opportunity to do his duty as First Minister and offer all members of this House an apology for the information that was put on this record, and he did that sincerely and honourably. He apologized to members of this House for information that he became aware, after he had put it on this record, was inaccurate. He did what we require of each other in all similar circumstances, no more, no less, and he did that today. He has apologized to all of the people of the province of Manitoba on behalf of the party that he leads, and I am proud to be a member. He extended that invitation to all Manitobans whatever their background, whatever their colour, whatever their ethnicity. He did not single us out by race, as someone suggests should happen, but he offered that apology sincerely and, as was indicated in the Speech from the Throne earlier today, has committed this administration to bring forward the recommendations for legislative change offered by Chief Justice Alfred Monnin.

Madam Speaker, one of the fundamental parts of a motion of privilege is for the mover to make a prima facie case supporting the accusation. The facts of this matter, which we could debate in this House for many a day, have gone through the scrutiny of a full inquiry under one of the most noted jurists of this province, an individual who is well experienced in trying fact, who had at their disposal the ability to call witnesses and who did, who questioned and each, many of the parties—I am talking about individuals, political parties—were represented at those hearings by legal counsel, as was the New Democratic Party whose lawyers had opportunity to put questions and make statements. After the most rigorous of examination of the evidence available, which we in this House are not even as equipped to do as Chief Justice Monnin, former Chief Justice Monnin, he concluded and ruled on the matter in terms of the knowledge that the Premier of this province had.

* (1500)

If we cannot accept the judicial work of a former Chief Justice, then what has happened in our province? The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has offered no new evidence or information that would contradict the findings of the Chief Justice, and so I would suggest, as you deliberate on this motion of privilege, that there are two questions. One is, procedurally, is it in fact in order, given the previous rulings of Speaker Rocan on how a member can come to this House to offer an apology when that member has learned that information they have brought is inaccurate to this House? That is a fundamental question for all of us, because it may happen to any of us on whether it be a large matter or a small one. We need to know the correct procedure, and it has been ruled on in a series of rulings and tested and advised by Speaker Rocan. So we would suggest, on that ground alone, that the current motion is out of order, and that the matter has been dealt with by an apology by the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Secondly, Madam Speaker, on the substance of the motion on whether or not a prima facie case has been made, that is why I tabled the Monnin report in the Assembly today. I think we would ask you to consider the findings of Chief Justice Monnin where I think he very clearly found that the Premier's knowledge of this particular matter was as the Premier said. The Premier has indicated the detail around that. I think clearly, as you take this matter and consider whether or not this motion—that we would suggest from this side that the matter has been dealt with by the apology and that the motion by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) brings no new information or fails to make, in the context of the Monnin report which is submitted to this House, tabled in this House, the prima facie case that is required by our rules. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I do not believe this matter of privilege is in order. The reason is that the matter has been dealt with by the previous matter of privilege. So it is out of order.

But I could say that recently, because I will be returning to the police department, I have been spending a lot of time with police officers. As a

matter of fact, at 3:30 today I am supposed to be qualifying for the Glock pistol, so I guess I am going to be a little bit late. But being around that environment reminds me that, as a police officer, we respect process, and we respect the fact that people are innocent till proven guilty, no matter how strong the evidence is in some cases where I felt very strongly that someone was guilty of something. You still have to respect a judge's ruling. Every day in court there are people let go that I think were guilty of a case I brought forward.

So, yes, I am very suspicious. I think the Monnin inquiry brought forward many things that concerned many Manitobans. But, as my colleague stood up, we have accepted the apology. Once you have accepted an apology, I do not know what the censure would accomplish. To spank him? To spank the Premier? Is that the purpose of the censure, to make a political point? You know, I see the metropolitan is here today, and I am sure he could lecture to us on forgiveness. It is going to be up to the people of Manitoba whether they choose to believe the Premier or not.

So we have dealt with the issue. We should proceed to an election as soon as possible, once we have passed the new boundaries so that it will be a fair election based on equal representation, and that should be the end of the matter. Let the people of Manitoba decide.

What we vote here, a motion of censure, is nothing more than a spanking. As I said, we had a motion. We suggested a motion that would refer this matter to Privileges and Elections, where we could have dealt with it and looked at it, examined the Monnin report, not redo the inquiry. The court of public opinion will be served in the next election. So, Madam Speaker, I do believe that the matter of privilege is out of order.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I, along with my colleagues in this House on this side and all of the aboriginal people in Manitoba, treat this issue as a very, very important issue. It deals with our basic rights in a democracy. The Liberals may choose to trivialize this issue—

Point of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The rules are fairly clear that the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) should not be trying to impute motives. The Liberal Party and members of this side of the House also recognize and respect the seriousness of this issue. That is the reason why we believe an election is needed in order to let the public decide, not the member for The Pas.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Inkster, I would remind the honourable member for The Pas that he should be speaking to the motion and why there is a prima facie case.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I believe the honourable member for Inkster was up on a point of order. Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, what we have been saying all along right from the time that the scandal was brought out into the open is that we wanted the issue to be looked at thoroughly, reviewed thoroughly. We wanted the truth to come out as to what exactly happened in '95, the 1995 general election. We also wanted to find out if any law was broken. We also, as aboriginal people, especially wanted to know where the Premier was coming from as he and his party went looking for the most vulnerable people in our community, as they went about looking around and trying to fool people and trying to bribe people to run for a bogus party just so that they could take votes away from the NDP.

* (1510)

Madam Speaker, we as aboriginal people are constitutional citizens of this province and of this country. It says so in the highest law of the land. That right incidentally was given to us not that

very long ago. I believe it was in the early 1950s, 1951 maybe, that aboriginal people were first allowed to vote in Canadian—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Diefenbaker.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, Mr. Diefenbaker—were first allowed to vote in Canadian general—and that is why he commanded a lot of respect from the aboriginal people, not because he was a Tory. We were allowed for the first time to vote in Canadian general elections.

You know, Madam Speaker, when you think about it, when you put it into perspective, that is not a very long time ago that we were first allowed to vote. Yet to put it into another perspective, in 1914 to 1918, and once again in 1939 to 1945, you know what?—our forefathers volunteered to go to war. They volunteered to go and serve their country. They were not forced to go; they volunteered.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, when our people volunteered, just to volunteer to fight for what we call Canada now, they lost their treaty rights. They were disenfranchised. They lost their treaty rights. The Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) may be smiling but that is the fact. It is not written anywhere in the history books.

Our people in order to go to war had to relinquish their treaty rights. When they came back, unlike other people from Canada who went to war, again, they were treated with disdain. When they went after the federal government for land, they were told you are already wards of the federal government, so, therefore, you do not deserve anything. Other soldiers got land, money, but our people did not get anything.

Now, given all that, Madam Speaker, you would think that we would get a little bit of recognition, we would get a little bit of respect. On a per capita basis in Canada, aboriginal people send the most soldiers to war, and you can look that up if you want. Now what happened in 1995, you know I thought about it, and at first I thought, well, it cannot be true, you know like, what would motivate a person to go and do that, because for one it is not fair; No. 2, you deny the democratic rights of a community, and No. 3, you dehumanize

people when you do that, so I could not believe it. It could not have happened.

So when this investigation was carried out by Elections Manitoba, I guess in a way I wanted to believe that it was true, but really I did not. When it broke open last year again, that is when I started to go back to the time I first came here in 1990 of September, almost nine years now since I have been here. I started to think about all of the conversations that have gone back and forth between ourselves, myself, with members of the government, and after a while I had it sorted out. Day in and day out, when I get up in this Chamber to speak on behalf of our people, either I get told that we are a federal ward and that we should not be coming here in the first place, that we should go to Ottawa because that is where we rightfully belong. We are wards of the federal government. This is what this Premier and his cabinet routinely say to my questions. I see how the fishermen are being treated in Manitoba, and when I try to raise it here not that long ago, the Premier had the gall to say that I was racist. When the election scandal broke out, the Premier, instead of taking responsibility, chose instead to attack Darryl Sutherland. And when he attacked Darryl Sutherland, he attacked all the aboriginal people of Manitoba. That is what he did. I certainly felt that way the day that he stood up there and attacked Darryl Sutherland.

Madam Speaker, I am not going to ask you to spank the Premier because I happen to treat this issue a little bit differently than others. I happen to treat this issue as being very, very important. It has to do with the democratic rights of the community that I come from, and it has to do with honesty, fairness, inclusion. That is why I treat it as being a very important issue, and I treat it very importantly because I happen to come from the community that the Premier and his government attacked in 1995. I have a vested interest to ensure that our people continue to participate in the democratic process of this province. I have a vested interest to ensure that our people become true citizens of Manitoba, and I also have a vested interest to ensure that this government recognize aboriginal people as being citizens of Manitoba not just during election time and not just during federal transfer payments.

* (1520)

I support this motion because I really believe in my heart that the Premier first of all compromised the principles of this Chamber back in 1995 and also last year. I really believe in my heart that as Premier he should indeed apologize to aboriginal people. I really believe that because I think that if he apologizes to aboriginal people, then he will have done the right thing in my estimation, so I urge him to do the right thing and apologize to aboriginal people.

Go to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs as you did to the convention not that long ago, as you did to the Chamber of Commerce not that long ago. You have that opportunity, sir, a good, great opportunity, and if you do that, you will earn back my respect. Thank you.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the motion put forward by my colleague the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) to censure the Premier (Mr. Filmon) for his actions and comments and also to support my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) for his comments that he put forward so eloquently.

The House leader for the Conservatives had just said that this is not a matter of privilege, that the Premier has already apologized, that it should be addressed in that way. But when you really listen to the comments that the Premier made, he really did not apologize. He said he apologized, but then he blamed it on his staff and then he blamed it on other people for giving him wrong information, but he never gave an honest apology for what he did and taken true responsibility for his actions. He has not, Madam Speaker.

We have heard people here say, well, he has apologized to Manitobans already. When the federal government made apologies to the Chinese for actions that were taken against them, the Prime Minister did not say he apologized to Canadians. He apologized to the Chinese for the actions that were taken against them, and this Premier can do the right thing. Of course, apologies were made to

the Ukrainians, and I appreciated those apologies because I am Ukrainian.

I can understand where the aboriginal people are coming from. I represent many, many aboriginal people who are very hurt to believe that they were taken advantage of in such a way by the Conservative Party just for the hope of forming government again. They were willing to walk over anybody. They were willing to buy anybody just so that they could form government again. That is wrong, and the apology that the Premier has put forward is wrong as well. He has to sincerely apologize to the people who have been most affected by this, and it was the aboriginal people who were taken advantage of. [interjection] That is right, and it was not the Manitoba party, it was the Progressive Conservative Party, and there were aboriginals involved. Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that in my constituency this whole voting scheme has been looked at, and it has turned people off on politics.

I want to tell you, as well, I come from a family where we were told that the right to vote was the most important thing you could have. People fought for this right to vote in other countries and we should exercise that right. When you start to take advantage of people by buying them off and telling them that you will give them money so that they will run in an election rather than talking about the true issues of politics and about why people should be involved so that they would stand up for people's rights, so that people will have the opportunity to play a role in this House, then you are abusing the system and it is wrong. In this case, I think that what has happened since the 1995 election and all that has come out is just a disgrace and has tainted the political process here in Manitoba, and it has to be corrected.

I believe the Premier should be censured, and I agree the Premier should go to those people who are most affected by this. He should go to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, not to the Conservative convention, not to some group of Conservatives that he apologized to in some small room. I appreciate the apology that you have, Mr. Premier, through you, Madam Speaker, made to us in this Assembly here. That is one apology. But

there are people who are not in this room today who are not hearing the apology, and it is your responsibility to go out of this building and go to the Manitoba Assembly of Chiefs, go to some of those reserves, go to Peguis where Darryl Sutherland is from and apologize to those people because those are the people who have been affected. It is their democratic right that has been eroded, and it is the Conservative Party that has hurt politics in this province. That is the issue that has to be addressed and that is why, Madam Speaker, you have to look very seriously at the motion put forward to censure the Premier and bring back the right recommendation to this House.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is indeed a serious concern. I will take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 1—An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that leave be given to introduce Bill 1, An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office; Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1530)

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Madam Speaker: I wish to inform the House that in order to prevent mistakes, I have received a copy of the address of His Honour which was read.

I am pleased to inform the House that Mac Allen has been appointed Sergeant-at-Arms replacing Mr. Dennis Gray who has resigned.

I am also pleased to introduce to the House seven of the eight young ladies who have been selected to serve as pages at this session. They are, beginning at my extreme right, Nicole Hennan, Independent Schools, Celia Valel, St. Vital School Division, Leanne MacDonald, Midland School Division, Renee Smith, St. Vital School Division, Sanela Begic, Winnipeg School Division, Sarah Marchand, Norwood School Division, and Karla Kvaternik, Norwood School Division.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), that the Votes and Proceedings of the House be printed, having first been perused by the Speaker, and that the Speaker do appoint the printing thereof, and that no person but such as the Speaker shall appoint do presume to print the same.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded

by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that this House do now adjourn.

Madam Speaker: Before putting the question to the House, may I inform all present that a receiving line composed of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Premier and Mrs. Filmon and the Speaker and Mr. Dacquay will form shortly in Room 200 at the north end of the building and that refreshments will be served in Room 254 at the south end of the building in approximately five minutes time.

Motion agreed to, and the House adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 6, 1999

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