

REPORTS ON LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES



THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS

The 1st Session of the 32nd Parliament, which had adjourned on July 22, reconvened October 6, nine days earlier than scheduled. The reason for the early recall was a Government resolution which would ask the British Parliament to make certain amendments to the British North America Act, and to renounce responsibility for future amendments. The resolution includes a Charter of Rights and Freedoms setting forth six classes of rights which henceforth will be binding on all governments. The principle of equalization whereby wealth is redistributed among the provinces so that all Canadians can enjoy a reasonable standard of public service is also recognized.

The resolution provides that for two years subsequent amendments must have unanimous consent of Ottawa and the provinces. Thereafter it provides two alternatives. If the provinces and the federal government fail to agree on a new amending procedure there could be a referendum whereby the people could choose either a method approved by eight of the ten provinces having 80 per cent of the population or one proposed

by the federal government. If the provinces cannot agree the second alternative would be the automatic adoption of a modified "Victoria" formula. Under that plan amendments would require approval by Parliament and by the legislative assemblies (or by a majority of the voters) in every province that has at least 25 per cent of the population; in at least two Atlantic provinces with combined populations of at least 50 per cent of all Atlantic provinces and in at least two Western provinces with combined populations of at least 50 per cent of all Western provinces.

Debate in Parliament was not on the resolution itself but rather on a motion to establish a Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to consider the resolution and to report to Parliament by December 9, 1980. In opening the debate, the Minister of Justice, JEAN CHRETIEN, argued that the resolution would not alter the distribution of powers between the federal and provincial legislatures but that unilateral action had become necessary after 53 years of inability to agree on an amending formula including the most recent attempt, the federal-provincial conference in September 1980. The Leader of the Opposition, JOE CLARK, took a strong stand against the government's proposal. He said it represented not simply a change in law but a change in the way of governing Canada. He called it a proposal that "could destroy our federal system" and said certain provisions "could not simply end the country as we know it but end the country itself". The Leader of the New Democratic Party, ED BROADBENT, supported the substance of the federal proposal but

said his party would seek amendments. He particularly emphasized the need to include a statement about provincial jurisdiction over resources.

On October 22 a non-confidence motion relating to the Government's constitutional position was moved by the Progressive Conservative Party. It was defeated by a vote of 158-93. The next day the House returned to the Government motion and Liberal House Leader YVON PINARD, introduced a closure motion which passed by a vote of 132-112. After a stormy session lasting until the early hours of October 24, the motion to establish the Joint Committee was approved by a vote of 156-83. After a week of debate the Senate also approved the motion and subsequently a Joint Committee was established with Senator HARRY HAYS and SERGE JOYAL as co-chairmen.

Activities of the Parliamentary Task Forces

For members of the six parliamentary task forces created last spring the summer recess has been a busy period. The Task Force on Regulatory Reform, chaired by JAMES PETERSON, held twenty-seven meetings between July 22 and October 6. It received briefs from a variety of public and private corporations as well as from interested individuals. The Task Force on North-South Relations, chaired by MAURICE DUPRAS, met thirteen times and travelled to Washington and New York where it attended the special session of the United Nations. It became the first task force to present an interim report which was tabled in the House of October 6. Among other things the

report called on the Government to begin moving toward the target of .7 per cent of GNP for development aid.

The Task Force on a National Trading Corporation, chaired by JESSE FLIS, met 35 times during the recess with hearings in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. The Task Force subsequently asked for an extension of its mandate and on October 16 the House gave it until March 31, 1981 to make a final report. The Task Force on Employment Opportunities, chaired by WARREN ALLMAND, was divided into two sub-committees which held meetings across the country as did the Task Force on the Disabled and the Handicapped, chaired by DAVID SMITH.

In a 15-day period in September the latter's two sub-committees, led by WALTER DINSDALE and THERESE KILLENS, held hearings in 18 different cities and towns in every province and territory. Each sub-committee, in addition to its regular staff of technicians, translators, clerks and researchers, engaged the services of two sign language interpreters to facilitate participation by the mute and the deaf. On October 30 the Task Force on the Disabled and the Handicapped presented an interim which contained two basic recommendations: that the *Canadian Human Rights Act* be amended to proscribe all discrimination against the handicapped instead of merely for employment; and that the precincts of Parliament be made immediately accessible to all disabled and handicapped persons both as visitors and as employees.

The Task Force on Alternative Energy and Oil Substitution, chaired by TOM LEFEBVRE, met 22 times during the recess including hearings in every province. From October 17 to 27 members also travelled to Germany and France where they held discussions with officials of various scientific departments and organizations. On October 30 the deadline for the final report of this committee was extended to March 31, 1981.

During the 75 day summer recess the six Task Forces spent nearly 400 hours in meetings both public and *in camera* in addition to the countless hours spent travelling. This works out to an average of more than an hour meeting per day per task force. The intense activity continued when the House resumed and there is every likelihood the hectic pace for both members and staff will continue until all reports are drafted and tabled.

Reports of Senate Committees

On October 8, the Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce, chaired by SALTER HAYDEN, presented a report dealing with the subject matter of Bill C-12, pertaining to bankruptcy and insolvency. The committee said the bill was an admirable attempt to take into account fundamental changes which have occurred in the credit system since the original *Bankruptcy Act* and other credit-related acts were passed. The committee noted, however, that the proposed bill would subordinate the claims of wage earners to those of secured creditors. It felt this was unsatisfactory and after examining several alternatives it recommended establishment of a Wage Earners Protection Fund from which the claims of unpaid employees of bankrupt companies could be met.

A report entitled "Child at Risk" was tabled in the Senate on October 16 by Senator LORNE BONNELL. The report studied childhood experiences as a cause of criminal activity. Hearings had begun in 1977 and a sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science was created under the chairmanship of Senator F.A. McGRAND. The sub-committee listened to expert witnesses in sociology, mental health, anthropology, education, criminology, as well as in medicine and law.

Its 28 recommendations called for changes in the *Family Allowance Act*, the *Unemployment Insurance Act*, the *National Housing Act*, and the *Criminal Code*. It made suggestions to provincial governments, municipalities, school boards, and public corporations such as the CBC. The final recommendation

called for the establishment of a Canadian Institute for the Study of Violence in Society which would be financed by the federal government and operated by an independent board representing a wide spectrum of disciplines. The purpose of the Institute would be to co-ordinate and evaluate research in this area. It would also initiate, promote and assist the funding of new research and pilot projects related to violence and crime in Canada.

The Editor



BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Legislative Assembly adjourned on August 22 thus ending the second longest session of any in the last four parliaments. While the House sat for just fifteen days since the last report it has managed to approve 31 bills and 12 packages of ministerial spending estimates. Ironically, it would appear that more business was dispensed with in the above three week period than the entire previous quarter. Once again, the House apportioned its time equally between the government's legislative programme and its spending estimates for fiscal 1980/81.

Legislation

In this period 20 bills were introduced in the House 18 of which were government bills and 2 private member's bills. This legislation could be categorized as follows: Financial Bills, 1, Policy & Administrative Measures, 14, (including the two member's bills) and Housekeeping Measures, 5.

The major financial bill was *Supply Act No. 3*. Of the balance of the Government's legislation, the most noteworthy, from a policy perspective, appears to be the new *Family and Child Services Act*, the *Utilities Commission Act*, and the *Holiday Shopping Regulation Act*. From an administrative viewpoint, it is interesting that the House was asked to approve updated enabling legislation for five ministries. Henceforth, the ministries of Tourism; Agriculture and Food; Universities, Science and Communications; Environment; and Intergovernmental Relations will operate under new legislative mandates. Only two members bills were introduced. CHARLES BARBER, NDP member for Victoria, recycled his familiar *Bikeways Development Act*. AL PASSARELL, NDP member for Atlin, introduced a bill entitled the *Uranium Exploration and Mining Act*.

In summary, the House passed 31 bills, 29 of which were government bills and 2 private bills. Of the 17 bills remaining on the order paper, 1 is a government bill, the *Company Amendment Act*, and 16 are private members bills. During the 1980 legislative session a total of 84 bills were introduced of which 60 were public bills and 3 were private and local bills. The Lieutenant-Governor gave Royal Assent to most of this legislation on August 21 and 22.

Supply

The House spent 36 hours and 35 minutes in Committee of Supply giving approval to the estimates of 12 ministries. The progress in Committee of Supply during August was nothing short of astounding when one considers the earlier rate of progress. For example, during the session 20 sets of estimates were considered in 209 hours and 41 minutes of debate. During August alone 12 sets of estimates were passed into law in less than 37 hours. In fact, some ministries had their annual operating budgets approved in less than five minutes.

Legislative Committees

House committees were relatively inactive in this period. However, the

Committee on Crown Corporations met twice under the chairmanship of JACK KEMPF, Social Credit MLA for Omenica. The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Economic Affairs scheduled four meetings under the chairmanship of ERNIE HALL, NDP member for Surrey. It's report to the legislature was adopted on August 22. Also, a report of the Special Committee on Privilege was adopted on August 22. During the inter-session period in British Columbia, legislative committees, except perhaps for the Crown Corporation Committee, do not generally meet.

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YUKON

The Third Session of the 24th Legislative Assembly resumed on October 14, 1980, following a six month recess. By the end of the month a total of twenty-three government bills and two private members' public bills had been introduced.

Following a practice established in 1979 the Progressive Conservative Government placed its capital budget before the Assembly during the fall sitting. The \$26 million budget for the 1981-82 fiscal year was brought forward at this time to allow the government to

grant contracts early in the spring and to, thereby, take full advantage of the short Yukon construction season.

CHRIS PEARSON, Government Leader and Finance Minister, said that the main goals of the budget are to improve the quality of life in all Yukon communities and to stimulate the Yukon economy. A majority of the budget was allocated to the Department of Education, Municipal and Community Affairs, Tourism and Economic Development, and Highways and Public Works.

The second major piece of legislation introduced by the government was the *Municipal Ordinance*. This total rewrite of the laws governing local government was called a "constitution for municipalities" by its sponsoring minister, GEOFF LATTIN. The bill does away with the current system of local improvements districts, towns and cities and substitutes a new regime of hamlets, villages, towns and cities with "enhanced powers and privileges". It also establishes a Municipal Board to act as an arbitrator and appeal board in several areas including planning and zoning.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, IAIN MACKAY, expressed a concern that there was no assurance that the proposed system of local government was acceptable to the Yukon Indian people. He contended that, without such assurance, the bill could be interpreted as interference in the Land Claims negotiations which include discussions on the form of government to be in place following settlement.

TONY PENIKETT, NDP House Leader, joined the Liberal Leader in criticizing the legislation. Mr. Penikett said that the proposed local government structure was based on "a model borrowed from Ontario" and that it was inappropriate for the smaller population of Yukon. In particular, he was unhappy with the establishment of a Municipal Board since its purpose was to minimize political pressure and he felt that maximizing political pressure through "appropriate and open avenues" was a more desirable course.

Committee Activity

On October 23 the Chairman of a Special Committee on Privileges, Mr. Penikett, tabled a report on a question of privilege relating to the wiretapping of a member's telephone. The Committee found the wiretapping to be a breach of privilege and a contempt of the House but recommended no disciplinary action since Canada's Solicitor-General, the Hon. Robert Kaplan, had made a commitment to the Committee that an operational policy would be developed for the RCMP which takes into account the privileges of Canadian MLA's and MP's. A motion for concurrence was agreed to on October 29 with one dissenting voice.

The Chairman of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, DOUG GRAHAM, has tabled two reports during the fall sitting. The first report detailed recommendations for amendment to Yukon's elections legislation. Committee Members expressed a concern that the current law is overly restrictive and that, as a result, too many voters "lost" their chance to cast a ballot in the last general election. Recommendations to alleviate this concern include a provision for swearing-in at the poll which was not previously allowed and the revision of existing rules on proxy voting. According to the Committee a voter, who would be unable to attend a polling station by reason of absence, illness or physical incapacity, should be allowed to fill out a proxy application naming his designated proxy voter before a judge, notary public or returning officer. The designated voter would then merely have to take the application to the poll where both he and the absentee voter are on the list of electors and to swear a required oath prior to receiving a ballot. It is expected that the government will be introducing a bill to give effect to this report later in the session.

The second report from the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges dealt with the conflict of interest rules governing Members of the Assembly. The Committee recommended that the legislation

embodying these rules be amended to provide for a system of public disclosure of a member's interests. Currently a Member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly is disqualified if he "executes or undertakes, holds or enjoys any direct or indirect interest in, alone or with another, by himself or by the interposition of a trustee or third party, any contract or agreement with the Government of the Yukon Territory." Members, therefore, have had to divest themselves of any business, assets, or shares which would bring them into conflict.

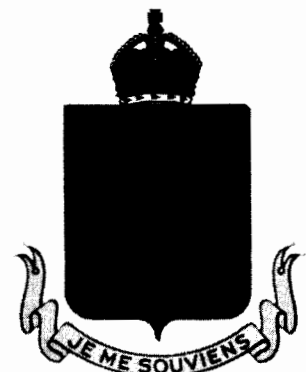
The Committee said, "Levels of government participation in the Yukon economy are too high to continue to adhere to the principle of divestment. Due to the pervasiveness of government in this community, virtually anyone with any kind of business or in any kind of business or in any profession will find the requirement for divestment so onerous as to negate the opportunity to seek public office." It then went on to recommend that the requirement for divestment be repealed and recommended "full public disclosure by members of their private interests, which may be, or may appear to be, in conflict with their duties as members." The Committee argued for its conclusions by saying, "Business dealings in Yukon are more apparent and the public more aware of such dealings than might be the case in other jurisdictions. This being so, Yukon politicians, subject to full public disclosure requirements, are not likely to abuse the trust invested in them." A bill reflecting the report of the Committee is expected to be introduced prior to prorogation.

The Assembly, apparently of the view that the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges should be kept active, passed a motion on October 29 referring all Standing Orders and procedures of the Assembly to the Committee for review and recommendation. Following two years of experience with party politics members feel that it is an appropriate time to reassess the rules of the House. The present Standing Orders were

adopted following the general election in 1978 and, in great part, reflect the Standing Orders in force in other Canadian assemblies. It is expected that the review will focus on adapting the rules to the needs of a smaller House.

Patrick L. Michael

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QUÉBEC

The National Assembly held a special session on October 24 to legislate the return to school of thousands of students who have been out of school for several weeks because of a teacher's strike. In the Three-Rivers region 20,000 primary and secondary school children were kept from returning to classes in September because of differences between the Vieilles-Forges Regional School Commission and the teacher's union affiliated to the *Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec*. In the Sorel-Tracy school district 9,000 students had been without classes since September 23.

The special session opened in the morning, was adjourned to give members an opportunity to study the proposed law and then resumed at 2 pm. The study in Committee of the Whole lasted about two hours. The rest of the time, until 9:30 pm, was devoted to debate on second reading which opened with a speech by JACQUES-YVAN MORIN, Minister of Education and

sponsor of the bill. All members present voted for Bill 113 at second reading except M. GUY BISAILLON, the Parti Québécois member for Sainte-Marie. He argued the state had gone beyond its authority by acting as both a party and a judge in the dispute. Following approval at second reading the bill quickly received third reading and Royal Assent, after which the special session was prorogued. An interesting point is that while the session was called the 5th session of the 31st Legislature, it did not begin with a Throne Speech but rather an oral question period, a procedure agreed upon unanimously by members.

The new law provided for the return to work of teacher's in the designated schools on October 27. For the first fifteen days after the return to work the two parties can continue to negotiate. If no agreement is reached the law provides that all differences negotiable at the local or regional level must be submitted to an arbitrator named by the Minister of Labour and Manpower. In that case his decision will be binding.

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ONTARIO

On September 15, the Honourable JOHN BLACK AIRD was sworn in as Ontario's twenty-third Lieutenant Governor. Hundreds of special guests and dignitaries watched the colourful ceremony in the Legislative Chamber and later

expressed their congratulations to His Honour and Mrs. Aird in a reception held in the Lieutenant Governor's suite. After the oath of office was administered by Chief Justice Howland, Premier WILLIAM DAVIS spoke of Mr. Aird's contribution to Canadian life in the Senate of Canada and in the private sector.

In taking over from the Hon. Pauline McGibbon, the first woman in Canada to serve as the representative of the Crown, Mr. Aird has a difficult act to follow, for Mrs. McGibbon proved an extremely popular Lieutenant Governor. Editorials in newspapers across the province praised Mrs. McGibbon's charm and dedication in a most demanding role. Mrs. McGibbon has recently been appointed Chairman of the National Arts Centre. In his remarks to the assembled guests, His Honour promised to continue Mrs. McGibbon's practice of extensive visits and public appearances throughout the province. He also stressed his intention, as Lieutenant Governor, to use his office as a means of fostering national unity.

Amid persistent rumours of a Fall election, the Ontario Legislature reconvened on Monday, October 6. The prospect of the Opposition forcing an election by combining to defeat Premier William Davis' minority government receded substantially as the House resumed so that the Premier's oft-stated intention of governing for a full four year term — that is, until the Spring or Summer of 1981 — seems likely to be fulfilled. The summer recess had begun on June 19, after 65 sitting days, but with nine committees holding more than 250 meetings, its debatable whether "recess" is the proper term.

Within the first two weeks after the resumption, both the Government and the Opposition moved to raise in the House the impact of plant closings on laid-off workers, a central political issue in Ontario this session. Labour and Manpower Minister Dr. ROBERT ELGIE announced the Government's intention to introduce a package of amendments to the *Pension Benefits Act* and the *Employment Standards Act*

while Liberal RON VAN HORNE and New Democrats BOB MACKENZIE and MONTY DAVIDSON introduced Private Members Bills on plant closings.

In addition, on October 28, a Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns and Employee Adjustment was struck to enquire into plant closings "and related issues". Hopes are that the Committee, chaired by Armourdale MPP BRUCE McCAFFREY will be able to issue an interim report before Christmas.

The Constitutional Committee

With constitutional change very much to the political forefront, it is fitting that one of the Legislature's busiest and high profile committees in recent months has been the Select Committee on Constitutional Reform.

Chaired by JOHN MACBETH, the Committee met continually during the summer to review a broad range of constitutional issues from language rights to resource ownership and family law. In addition to hearing from such experts as Eugene Forsey and former Premier John Robarts, the committee learned first hand about other provinces' views on constitutional change. The Committee met with Premiers, elected Members and senior officials in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Yukon; it also held discussions with representatives of the Federal Government in Ottawa.

Mr. MacBeth tabled the Committee's Report on October 21. The report consists largely of a catalogue of principles on which a new constitution should be premised and of specific points it should include. In order not to deflect attention from its recommendations, the report contains very little textual elaboration of the proposals or supporting argumentation.

Due to pressures of time, the Committee focussed its initial discussions on the twelve items discussed by the First Ministers in September. On the crucial subject of patriation, it is the Committee's view that unilateral

patriation by the federal government is "tolerable" only so long as "all provincial powers, privileges, prerogatives and rights will remain inviolate until such time as there is federal and provincial agreement on an amending formula". The amending formula proposed by the Committee calls for ratification by the House of Commons, the legislatures of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, three of the four Legislatures in Atlantic Canada and two of the three Legislatures in the Western provinces. Should ratification not be achieved in this way, provision is also made for referenda to bring constitutional amendments into force; majorities of voters would be required in each of the five regions in order to so ratify an amendment.

The Committee details the provisions it believes should be incorporated into a Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, to be entrenched in the constitution. The fundamental rights proclaimed in this Charter would be inviolable even in times of emergency. On the thorny issue of minority language rights, the Committee favours, as a minimum, access to primary and secondary education in either English or French, if the number of children is sufficient to warrant such facilities. The Committee was divided on the question of publishing the records and debates of the Ontario Legislature in French as well as in English and on the question of an unqualified right to French language proceedings in the provincial courts. The majority supported these controversial extensions of French language service.

The report outlined a thorough-going series of reforms to the structure and function of the Senate, including the requirement that half of each province's Senators be appointed by the House of Commons and half by the provincial assembly, with appointments made in proportion to the popular vote garnered by each political party.

Among the Committee's other recommendations are greater provincial involvement in family law and in communications; the abolition of the

central government's declaratory power and its powers of reservation and disallowance; and the establishment of the principle that both federal and provincial governments are free to tax natural resources in any fashion. Although the Committee notes that energy pricing is outside the strict definition of constitutional reform, it recognizes the pivotal importance of this issue and accepts the need for higher prices.

The Committee recognizes the centrality of the concerns of native peoples to the process of constitutional change, but offers no specific recommendations in this regard.

Finally, the Committee's travels left it "dismayed by the general distrust of Ontario that exists across the country". It emphasizes the importance of personal contact among Members of Canada's legislatures as a means of overcoming misunderstanding and of facilitating constitutional reform.

Select Committee on Ontario Hydro

Ontario's nuclear reactors are "acceptably safe". This is the controversial conclusion reached by the Select Committee on Ontario Hydro Affairs in their Final Report on "The Safety of Ontario's Nuclear Reactors". The report was tabled in the Legislature by Chairman DONALD MACDONALD just before the summer adjournment, and was the subject of an important debate in the House of October 9, which culminated in the Legislature's formally adopting the report.

The Committee's review of this extremely timely and complex concern represented over a year's work. Dozens of expert witnesses, government officials and concerned citizens testified before the committee, and hundreds of technical documents were filed with the Committee. The Committee's hearings, both at Queen's Park and at several locations throughout the province, received constant press attention, with the result that the Committee's thorough, and open review of nuclear safety came to be viewed as a major test

of public confidence in Ontario's massive nuclear generating system.

Although disagreement remains as to whether the system is "acceptably safe", the importance of the Committee's work is very substantial. The Hydro Committee also demonstrated that legislative committees composed of Members without special expertise are quite capable of dealing with even the most complex, technical issues of a highly political nature.

Statement by Speaker Stokes

Responding to widespread dissatisfaction with the conduct of question period Speaker JOHN STOKES recently instituted a new policy designed to allow more backbench members an opportunity to ask questions. At the end of question period one day recently NDP member ODOARDO DI SANTO and Liberal SEAN CONWAY complained that for two days running only two backbenchers had been able to ask questions. The lion's share of the hour long question period had been taken by the two opposition leaders Dr. STEUART SMITH for the Liberals and MICHAEL CASSIDY of the NDP.

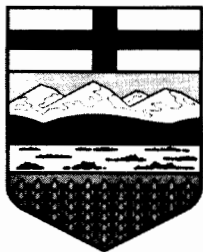
On October 27 Speaker Stokes announced to the House: "In checking the records and listening to the tapes I find that we have indeed spent an inordinate amount of time on questions from party leaders, in supplementary questions, and in very lengthy responses. It is not unreasonable that a question be posed without preamble and, similarly, that an answer be given with equal precision... "it is the responsibility of the Chair to see that all members will have ample opportunity to participate to the greatest extent possible in the question period."

Preliminary indications are that the Speaker's tougher approach is having the desired effect. On October 28, Speaker Stokes informed the House that: "Yesterday we had 16 new questions and 16 supplementaries, in the course of which 15 members questioned 8 different Cabinet Ministers."

New Pages

This fall, for the first time, all the pages serving the Ontario Legislature are girls. Normally, eleven girls and eleven boys are chosen. The all-girl complement of pages is a reflection of the very high proportion of girls on the waiting list of successful candidates. The next group of pages will have the traditional fifty-fifty split between girls and boys. The pages, who work in the House for about six weeks, are top Grade 7 and 8 students selected from across the province.

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Ontario Legislative Assembly
Toronto



ALBERTA

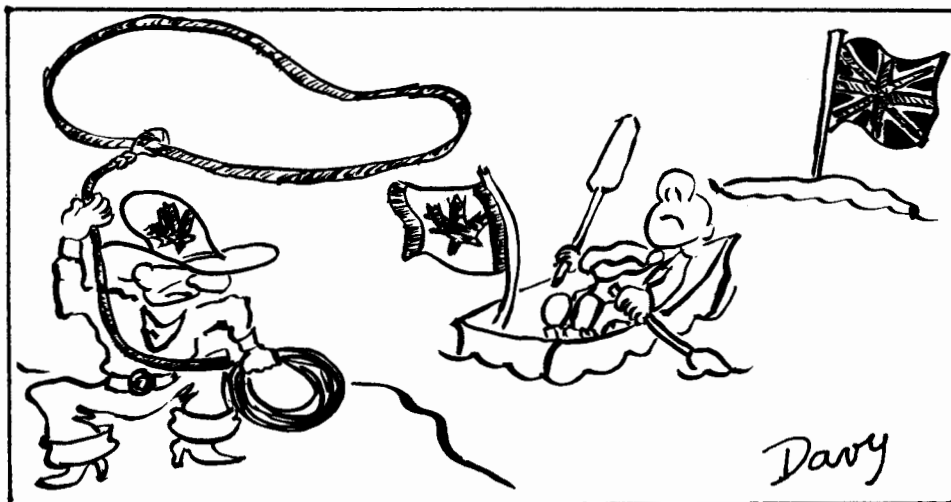
The Legislative Assembly began its second sittings of 1980 on October 20, with a slight change in the seating arrangement. TOM SINDLINGER, MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, previously had his membership in the Progressive Conservative caucus terminated by a unanimous vote of that body. On the first day of the sitting, Mr. Sindlinger rose on a point of personal privilege, to relate the reason for the action, and to acknowledge the need for party discipline in the parliamentary form of government. He will sit as an independent member for the remainder of his term, following his rejection of the party's stance regarding the federal government's resolution on repatriation of the constitution.

Another significant event marked the commencement of the sitting. DICK JOHNSTON, Minister of Federal and Inter-Governmental Affairs, introduced legislation enabling the government to call a referendum. Bill 60, *The Referendum Act*, provides that the government may seek the expression of public opinion on any question approved following debate by the Legislative Assembly.

Debate began on a motion by Premier PETER LOUGHEED to approve the actions of the government since the adjournment of the spring sittings. Several announcements were made regarding recent government decisions, including the creation of a scholarship fund to be drawn from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and the establishment of a Social Care Facilities Review Committee. As well, the Minister of Agriculture announced, on October 23, plans for the construction of a new Food Processing Development Centre, as a further step in the government's attempt to diversify the economy of the province. Of major concern to the Assembly have been the constitutional talks and the energy-pricing negotiations. Premier Lougheed

informed the Assembly of Alberta's activity in this regard since the spring sitting. On October 27, he notified the Legislature of a letter to the Prime Minister, of October 17, calling for a meeting of the two government leaders. The response to the letter was also provided: that further negotiations were impossible until the federal budget was finalized.

The October 28 federal budget aroused the ire of the Government of Alberta, and a response to its provisions was issued in the form of two government motions. LOU HYNDMAN, the Provincial Treasurer, proposed that the Assembly condemn the Federal Government for the budget and the energy program, on the grounds that they attack the ownership rights of Albertans to their natural resources and their right to a fair return on those resources, and that they weaken the Canadian economy and jeopardize the opportunity for oil-sufficiency. In debate on the motion, Mr. Hyndman argued that the budget was an instrument of discrimination against a small province and an attack on one of the few strengths of the Canadian economy.



A second motion, advanced by MERVIN LEITCH, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, outlined the action that Alberta plans to take against the energy program. The motion recommends that limitations on oil production, initially of 60,000 barrels a day and rising to a maximum of 180,000 a day, be implemented following three months notice. The limitation would only be in force to the extent that the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council was satisfied that no oil shortage was developing in the rest of Canada.

Several pieces of legislation have been introduced to the Assembly. The government has proposed Bills which would increase the funds allocated for the purchase of land for highway construction, increase the number of institutions which can participate in the student finance program, provide the Petroleum Marketing Commission with "the legislative authority . . . to market and otherwise deal in products from the Alberta Oil Sands", increase the funds for rural electrification, modernize the liquor laws, and extend natural gas rebates to 1985. Non-government Bills dealing with child abuse, standards for medical and psychological care of children, and small business development have been presented to the House.

The Surface Rights Committee will begin public hearings during the month of December in northeast Alberta. These hearings will extend into January and February, and will terminate then until after the spring sittings. Over the last few months, the Committee has travelled to Manitoba and Saskatchewan to discuss the handling of surface rights and associated problems in those provinces. It will travel to Ontario in December, to meet the officials of Ontario Hydro and with representatives of industry and agriculture. Members of Parliament interested in surface rights will also be invited to discuss the topic with the Committee.

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MANITOBA

The Fourth Session of the Thirty-First Legislature of Manitoba was prorogued on July 29, 1980 after 112 sittings days. This is the longest session, in terms of continuous sitting days, in the history of the Province. A total of 98 Bills were assented to, including a new *Elections Act*, an *Elections Finances Act* and amendments to The *Legislative Assembly Act* providing for increased indemnities for members of the Assembly. A total of 358 hours were spent examining the various items in the Estimates of Expenditures.

A statement was made by one of the members of the Opposition, Mr. BRIAN CORRIN (Wellington) in which he said that the Attorney-General had placed government staff in the unfair position of participating in political debates and defending pro-

posed legislation. In reporting the interview, a Winnipeg newspaper made the statement "Legislative counsel R.H. Tallin and deputy counsel A.C. Balkaran participated in political debate Monday during committee review of a bill introduced by Mr. Mercier."

J.R. BOYCE (Winnipeg Centre) presented a resolution, unanimously agreed to by the House, which referred the allegations to the Standing Committee of the Legislature for study and report to the House. The matter was taken under advisement by Mr. Speaker H.E. GRAHAM. In a ruling presented to the House, Mr. Speaker Graham stated that, in his opinion, a *prima facie* case of privilege was made by Mr. Boyce's resolution and ruled it in order. The Committee met on October 14, 1980 and decided, by resolution, that the allegation was without foundation and recommended no further action.

The Standing Committee on the Rules of the House recommended changes in the Rules, adopted by the House, which has resulted in a shorter work week for MLA's By meeting at 2:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and on Friday morning, the Assembly has reduced its sittings to 4½ days per week, without reducing the compulsory hours of sitting per week.

Jack R. Reeves
Clerk
Manitoba Legislative Assembly
Winnipeg, Manitoba

