

**Third Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**Vol. LXI No. 43A - 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 19, 2009**

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 19, 2009

**The House met at 10 a.m.**

*PRAYER*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you canvass the House there would be leave to move straight to Bill 230, The Mental Health Bill of Rights.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House for second reading of public bills to move directly to Bill 230, The Mental Health Bill of Rights? [*Agreed*]

**SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 230—The Mental Health Bill of Rights**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 230, The Mental Health Bill of Rights; Déclaration des droits des personnes ayant une maladie mentale, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, Bill 230, The Mental Health Bill of Rights, is the bill we're discussing today, and I'd like to talk briefly to members of the Legislature about the origin of this bill. As a physician and as a politician and, indeed, particularly as a politician, one of the things that I have found is that individuals with mental illnesses—some call them invisible disabilities in our society, and it's not just Manitoba—tend to be treated in a way that is discriminatory. They are not treated nearly as fairly, as well as we should be treating them, and this is something which has come up repeatedly, over and over again.

I have tried to approach this in a number of different ways and, at one point, a very sad episode happened. A friend of mine committed suicide. It was a sad moment. Committing a suicide or even attempting to commit suicide is, as I think we all know, basically a call for help. A person who is so desperate that they feel that they can't go on living, that there's nothing worth living for, and they are calling for help in dealing with the circumstances.

In this case, it was very tragic, and there were, as I've been told, some difficulties with the support that he received, that he had in fact gone in to an emergency room and was sent home with a bus ticket. Then he committed suicide. The people had known that he was suicidal, and yet the kind of support that he was given was nowhere near adequate to what he needed. It was tremendously tragic and a sad episode.

It led me to working with a number of people to try and look at what we could do. We decided to bring forward The Mental Health Bill of Rights to try and at least put in place the assurance that people who have brain health issues or mental health issues in a broad context, sometimes called invisible disorders, are given the kind of basic and fundamental rights and supports that they should be receiving in Manitoba today.

So you will note that one of the introductory clauses includes: AND WHEREAS one of the most serious consequences of a mental illness can be a progression to suicidal thoughts and even to suicide . . .

One of the clauses dealing in the bill is 2(1)(e): in respect to diagnoses and treatment, the right to receive (i) timely access to optimum health care, including urgent support for those who may be suicidal . . .

These were included as part of this bill in recognition that we need to understand, to support and to prevent suicide, to support those who are calling for help.

I noticed today in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, a headline, a disturbing story, suicides on Manitoba reserves, that children in northern communities are calling out for help.

I would ask all members to consider very seriously. Today, I would ask you to support this legislation. It's not perfect. It will need certainly some changes at committee stage, but that is an opportunity for people to have input. But I believe it is the right step for all of us to take in reaching out to children who are thinking about committing suicide, and reaching out to people all over our province who have mental health or brain health issues.

What we have tried to do in this bill is to put a number of basic rights in place, and these basic rights are to cover all those who have, whether we use the words mental illness, or brain illness, or invisible disability, it is meant to cover those people who are often not well covered now. Those who have a physical disability, it is readily apparent, but a mental health problem or a brain health issue is not as well recognized and are often stigmatized, often not provided the kind of basic rights that they should have.

\* (10:10)

So we're putting in this bill that a person who has a mental illness, a brain illness, has the right to be treated with compassion, respect, understanding, dignity in all circumstances—straightforward, and hopefully all of us will agree with that; the right to be treated equitably in relation to those with physical health issues in regard to public services, and I hope we can all agree with that; in the community, the right to full and equal access to social, recreational and employment programs that are open to others.

Too often, for a wide variety of reasons, people with mental or brain illnesses are not treated equitably, and they don't have the same right and the same ability to access programs, or the programs are not tailored for them in a way that works. In the community, the right to adequate housing. The stories of deficient housing are legion; in the community, the right to a supportive environment that considers the optimum lifestyle factors for persons with mental illness and the prevention of mental illness; in the community, the right to information about the beneficial effects of lifestyle choices, and we list some of these because there's been a tremendous amount of work and there will be ongoing work. It's not that we know all the answers but that we know some of them, and that this information should be available to people in a broad sense and should be taken into consideration.

In respect of advocacy on the person's behalf, the right to have an advocate of his or her own choice. The advocate, the person's circle of friends to be informed and be able to advocate on his or her behalf to the extent that he or she desires; the public advocate, when the person is unable to choose an advocate for himself or herself; the right to have a mental health directive; the right to timely access to optimum health care; the right to a second opinion; affordable access to pharmaceutical treatment; the right, when discharged from an institution, to have a

plan that meets his or her needs and provisions within the plan to be adequately supported; and when in contact with the justice system, the right to be treated with understanding and respect and to have his or her mental illness considered in the provision of legal and justice services; and that these rights can be enforced in the courts.

The aim here is to be inclusive. This aim, in terms of the list of standing of mental health organization, there are other organizations like the Manitoba Brain Injury Association which need to be included.

I think, with some modest changes, that this bill can stand us all in good stead, and we, if we can pass this, will be able to hold our heads high and say that we are standing up for those with mental illness and brain injuries and doing the very best that we can. Thank you.

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living):** We started our morning off here in Manitoba with those headlines, with headlines about the tragedy of suicides in northern Manitoba. I can probably speak for everyone in this House, our hearts stopped for a moment. We know the loss of anyone to suicide represents a loss of future, family, a loss to family and friends.

Our condolences go out to those individuals in those communities that struggle with those issues related to suicide. And as we send out our condolences, we've also stood beside them and continued to provide support, and help them find that hope and opportunity for their communities, for their young people.

There is no easy answer to this, Mr. Speaker, but what I can say is action is essential, action around the issue of mental wellness, promotion and providing those necessary services for people who identify with mental health illness.

We have made progress through continued investments but I'm here to say that we have more work to do. That headline screams to us; the work is not done. We must continue working with all of our partners. When we look at services for people with mental illness the one aspect that we have to address, as all Manitobans, is that issue of stigma, that fear of repercussion, personally, that fear of loss of employment, the embarrassment of standing up and identifying and reaching out for help. That's got to be the first thing that we do. We need to make sure that we provide a system and services that have open

doors, that have the front-line professionals, that have the knowledge, and that people are willing to receive the service, and receive that service with dignity.

It's a lot easier to say the word stigma than it is to deal with the discrimination that people face. I think by ensuring that we educate all Manitobans about the resources that are available, ensuring that service providers have the tools that they need, and that we don't give up on these individuals, and that we look at these people not as the labels that they present but as mothers and fathers, as children, as aunties and uncles, as grandparents, as community members that have a lot to contribute to all of us.

In doing that, this government has taken upon itself to review mental health services. The last time it was completed was 2002. We have pulled together our community partners and we sit around and discuss what are the issues, but, most importantly, what are the actions that need to happen to provide that foundation of support for people with mental illness. We'll continue to do that work but it is all of our responsibility as policymakers, as community members, to move forward and to ensure that we see the people.

The member mentioned that it is an invisible disability and that it is, and that's what makes the stigma that much greater. So, as a government, we have continued to invest money in prevention programs and those prevention programs are invaluable. They include the investments in Healthy Child Manitoba through the parent-child coalitions. They include Triple P parenting. They include the services that are provided within the education system, programs such as Healthy Buddies, the clinical services that are provided, as well as providing services to individuals that have the diagnoses of a mental illness.

I think we need to be able to put it on the record, to talk about what these diagnoses are: depression, manic depression, schizophrenia. And by providing supports to these individuals it is essential, and we know research has told us, that we provide a continuum of supports, the community supports that are offered to the individual and to the family, some of them through initiatives such as PACT, as well as the mobile crisis teams. The most important piece in the community that we can provide to these individuals is affordable safe housing. That's a commitment that our government has made, and we will continue to work towards that.

\* (10:20)

As well, it's important that we provide support to the self-help organizations that every day are that front line that meet those individuals and provide them with energy and encouragement to move forward and continue to make those contributions to their communities.

Recreation and social activities, employment opportunities, are extremely important because we know by providing opportunities of employment readiness that as individuals they will continue to make many contributions to our province.

One of the philosophies that we have in our community-based services and throughout our whole system is the co-occurring disorders initiative, and what that really means is that there is no wrong door. We know that statistics show us that people with mental health issues also have addiction issues. So ensuring that when persons present themselves, whatever they present, mental health or addictions, that they are given the services that they need, and that is essential. We've continued to make investments around addiction services. We have a five-point plan that we are implementing, as we speak, across the province to ensure timely, accessible service to all Manitobans, and we will continue to do that. Part of our community-based services is mental health education, and that is educating all Manitobans so they can identify issues for themselves, for their family members, and also to deal with the issues of stigma.

We know that part of our continuum of services is that there are services when a person is in crisis, and in those crisis moments we need to make sure that there is a foundation wrapped around them. They need to know that they can access those services and that we will provide throughout the province, as crisis stabilization beds, as inpatient services, if that's what they need, and, as they reintegrate back into the community, ensuring that they have the supports necessary so that they can be successful as individuals.

We know that there's a lot more work to do. We've started that work and we're building upon those foundations, from the moment where we adopted the philosophy of deinstitutionalization, and now we're into community-based services. We'll continue to work with all of our partners around the issues of mental health and addictions and provide the best quality of services that we can to Manitobans with mental health issues.

We work alongside the many self-help organizations: AA, Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba, Canadian Mental Health Association, and the list goes on. We will continue to show our commitment to these organizations, and the value that they have in ensuring that we can provide the adequate supports.

So, in summary, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you that we continue to treat people with mental illnesses with dignity and respect, and we will continue to provide them the necessary treatment. But as we make those investments, trust me, we will continue to make those investments in prevention services so that too will make a difference for all Manitobans. Thank you.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this bill brought forward by the Member for River Heights. I certainly look at mental health from a number of perspectives and one is certainly as a politician, but another is certainly as a nurse as well.

I can recall some nursing experiences working with the mentally ill that actually left a very, very profound effect on me. I can recall, in particular, one evening as a nursing supervisor having been over at the youth ward at St. Boniface Hospital where mentally ill young people were being looked after. I had gone through some charts that evening to get a sense of what the patients were like. I was staggered by what these children, these youths had gone through as young people.

I was so amazed at their resilience, but I was also profoundly affected by the kinds of lives these young people had had and the challenges that they had. It certainly was a profound experience and a realization that there is so much that we have to do in the area of mental health. I think there is a long way to go for us to establish a mental health system of excellence, and I think that is what we need to achieve in this province and not only in this province but probably in this country. But I think we've got a long way to go in Manitoba in order to reach that.

We see before us a bill that establishes the mental health rights for all Manitobans, and I think it raises some very, very interesting aspects that would take us down the road to developing a mental health system of excellence. For a long time, decades probably, people have talked about the challenges of mental health in this province, and, you know, it's often been referred to as the poor cousin, the second cousin, the orphan system because it has never been

able to achieve the same successes as the acute care system or any other aspect of health care. It always tends to be the one that sort of brings up the rear as we talk about health issues, and it is something where I think we do have to see a shift.

Reports say that one in five Canadians are affected one way or another by mental illness. I believe, in Manitoba, a report not that long ago, a few years back, actually said one in four. So, when we look around this Chamber and we look at the people that are in here, one in four will be affected in some way through mental illness.

Those should be very startling statistics for us and something that I think we really need to pay significant attention to. There is a struggle in taking this beyond what many of us see as—many of society, not necessarily many of us, but definitely many in society have looked at mental illness with a stigma, and that's been reinforced over the years by different kinds of movies that might have been out there. Not all of it has really been of the best service to those that are trying to work and make things better in the system, and it hasn't always been certainly in the best interests of patients.

Stigma is something that even today we still have to address within the system. It's not like somebody having diabetes or heart disease or high blood pressure; it's not looked at the same. Yet, it is an illness. I think that's where I think a lot of the stigma comes is because some of the public don't necessarily look at this as an illness, but it is an illness. It is something that should be addressed just like we do with any other illness and that there should be no stigma attached to it.

Unfortunately, in our society, we still do have that. It creates many challenges, and certainly, when we look at what the legislation asks for in terms of establishing mental health rights, there are some of these rights that do need to be addressed, and there are no two ways about it. When we look at how mental illness has been approached and the challenges of that, we do need to do something, and something fairly significant, to move things along.

One of the rights is the right to adequate housing, and I think, probably for 10 years in politics, that is one of the biggest issues I keep hearing over and over and over again. Just recently, a big headline in one of the local newspapers: "Poor housing big strain on mentally ill." A report came out that said that if you're a Winnipegger living with mental illness, there's a good chance you're living in

substandard housing in an unsafe neighbourhood. It was a 46-page report entitled *We got evicted... did I leave that out?* Last year there was a community forum called, From Knowledge to Action, and it talked about the existing housing crisis in Winnipeg facing low-income people with mental health issues, indicating that it was a serious problem.

\* (10:30)

It is a serious problem, and I think we've seen those headlines for a long time. We hear politicians talking about it for a long time and that seems to be the one area that for many, many years does not get addressed. So we need more than just rhetoric when we talk about housing for those with mental illness.

I note that Wayne Helgason spoke at the MNU annual meeting this year, and indicated that there are thousands on the waiting list for housing in Manitoba. Those are very serious numbers and it's numbers that the government definitely needs to be paying more attention to, instead of having all these resolutions they're bringing forward lately. They've had several on housing and yet the crisis, the housing crisis, is happening around them and yet they're standing in this House talking about what a wonderful job they're doing of public housing, and they're not.

You know, I look at public housing in my community and it's crumbling. I've got people that are commenting that some of these areas look like slums, and yet we see the government patting themselves on the back here with a number of resolutions. Then, when you add mental illness on top of all of this, and homelessness on top of all of this, I think it paints a picture in Manitoba that is not even close to being as bright as it should have.

In the '90s, there was a lot of work that was done, and I know that within the mental health community Don Orchard's name comes up many times as somebody that really started perhaps an evolution or a revolution in mental illness, in treating it, in looking at it and addressing the issues. I've certainly been pointed in that direction by a number of people in the mental health community. I think we have seen some achievements in this past decade but certainly not near enough.

You know, we certainly see Senator Michael Kirby's report, *Out of the Shadows*, and he indicated that people suffering from mental illness and the issues they face have been in the shadows too long, and it is time that we really moved beyond that, and

that we need a genuine system with people living with mental illness at its centre, clearly focussing on their ability to recovery. He indicates that recovery must be the primary focus of mental health policy reform.

I think we've got a lot to do in this province in terms of addressing that issue. There are many, many challenges. Certainly this legislation would help to move some of that along. Government certainly has to step in and be much more proactive and address prevention in a much stronger way than what it has. Right now Manitoba is short nine psychiatrists, the worst shortage of specialists in Winnipeg. The psychiatric nurses only graduated something like eight nurses in this last year.

I just spoke to a nurse this weekend from the Selkirk mental health institution, and she says, you won't believe it, but there are still beds lining walls, 12 in a row, no curtains between patients and that that is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. There are more challenges to deal with. Thank you.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to take part in debate on this bill as well.

This bill proposes to expand the definition of mental illness found in The Mental Health Act to include FASD, alcohol and drug addiction, Alzheimer's disease, personality disorder and brain injury, and the bill sets out the rights of Manitobans that have a mental illness.

I know that our government is committed to working with communities to address the needs of Manitobans with mental health problems and illnesses in order to support them in gaining greater self-sufficiency, and I believe we've made great progress in strengthening the services available to Manitobans living with mental illness and their family members. We do, however, acknowledge that there's more work that needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, this government's funding for mental health services in regional health authorities has nearly doubled, from \$55.2 million in 1988-89, to \$104 million in 2007-2008.

I would like to concentrate on just a couple of areas, beginning with our commitment to housing, since that was mentioned by our minister and by members opposite, and I think it is important. We know that many people with mental health concerns experience challenges maintaining housing when they do not have appropriate support services, and that's why we're working to provide more affordable

and supported housing alternatives that can meet a wide range of mental health needs.

Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation provides public housing with supports in approximately 36,000 units for low-income individuals throughout the province, and assists by subsidizing the rents for approximately 2,000 tenants.

I would like to mention something that the former minister of Family Services and Housing, the Member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) did when she was the minister. It began in her constituency. It was a wonderful idea, and myself and others went to visit a public housing project in her constituency, I think, called Greendell—

**An Honourable Member:** Woodydell.

**Mr. Martindale:** —Woodydell. This, I think, was the first location in Manitoba Housing Authority where there had been a tenant's association, and the tenant's association was replaced with a family resource centre. This became the model for family resource centres in other Manitoba Housing Authority projects, and a very successful one, I might add, including in Gilbert Park, in Burrows constituency.

What happened was, fortunately, the Family Centre of Winnipeg came through and provided some staffing at Woodydell. The people that were hired did an excellent job of gathering people in the community to provide a number of services. In fact, all the services that they provided, I would say, were in response to needs identified by people who lived there, and so it became a support group.

They did some very simple things to attract people. They didn't say, we're going to put on a program. They started baking, and so people dropped in for coffee and cookies. As a result of that, they got to meet people that lived there and provide services that were in demand. These individuals and the people that they worked with really became a kind of informal support group for people who lived at Woodydell. This same model was replicated, I believe, with great success elsewhere, so that people who lived there, who had needs, found that those needs were being met by their neighbours and by the staff. I commend the former minister for taking this initiative, a very successful initiative.

The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation provides public housing with supports in approximately 36,000 units for low-income individuals throughout the province, Mr. Speaker,

and assists by subsidizing the rents for approximately 2,000 tenants. In 2006, the Manitoba Shelter Benefit was introduced, with \$7.8 million set aside to assist low-income individuals and families dealing with rising shelter costs. This includes people with disabilities who will qualify for a new benefit of up to \$2,400 per year. In 2008, \$3.5 million was directed to the program to extend the Manitoba Shelter Benefit and help more people in need. Benefits will now be extended to single adults and couples without children receiving income assistance. Increased financial support will be available for individuals and families through the increase of benefit amounts and income thresholds, and a pilot project will be launched that provides benefits to individuals with mental health issues.

The Government of Canada announced funding for the Mental Health Commission of Canada in its March 2007 budget. Former Senator Michael Kirby was named the chair of the non-profit corporation. The federal government has given \$110 million to the Mental Health Commission of Canada to help homeless people who have a mental illness.

This is something that I have done some reading about, and there's actually been a lot of research in this area, especially over the last 20 years, as we've watched what has happened as people who formerly were in institutions were, I guess, you could almost say released from those institutions. They were put back into the community. But the problem was that there weren't a lot of supports for those people in the community, and a lot of them became homeless. Many of the statistics that I have read suggest that at least 50 percent or more of the people who are homeless, in Winnipeg and other cities, have mental health issues.

\*(10:40)

I look forward to learning more about this because there's actually a conference taking place in Calgary this week called the Canadian Social Forum. They used to focus only on poverty issues, but now their focus is on poverty and housing issues. I'm sure there are going to be many papers presented there that will give us more information not only about what the needs are of people with mental illnesses, especially amongst the homeless, but examples of successful pilot projects, programs and services in cities and communities across Canada. So I think there are things that we can learn from what is happening in other places in Canada so that we can continue to improve our services here in Manitoba.



So we support the work in HOUSINGFirst philosophy of the Mental Health Commission and Senator Kirby. We welcome the partnership and collaboration with our partners on the demonstration research project in Winnipeg.

I think it's important to explain even briefly, because I know that we have interested parties in the public gallery today, the philosophy of HOUSINGFirst. You know at one time people that were providing housing sort of thought of it like health care where health-care providers talked about the continuum of care. So people who were involved in housing thought that, you know, there was kind of a parallel with regard to housing. So some people who are homeless, we provide them emergency shelter, with temporary kinds of shelter. Then some of those people move on to second-stage housing or to semi-permanent housing. Then those who are lucky move on to another stage where they get permanent housing. So different housing providers, mostly non-profit organizations in the community, successfully, you know, they lobby and they get government funding and they provide housing but of various kinds to people in the community.

But now the dominant philosophy, which is being adopted almost everywhere I think, is that what we really need to do is to provide housing first. Then when people, including people who are homeless, go into permanent housing, good things can happen.

The last time I spoke on a housing topic last week, I quoted Stan Fulham who was the first executive director of Kinew Housing. I'm familiar with Stan and the Kinew Housing and the book that he wrote, in which he said that when they began, 70 percent of their tenants were unemployed and that 10 years later, 70 percent were working and only 30 percent were unemployed. The reason was that they had stability in housing. That enabled them to go back to school and get education and training and find work. The key was permanent and stable housing for them and their families. So I think this HOUSINGFirst philosophy is very important.

I see that my time is almost expired, but I'm pleased to take part in this debate. It's an important topic, and I look forward to listening to remarks by other members.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, it's interesting listening to individuals who speak with passion and express care on the whole issue of mental illness, in particular, this bill which would go

a long way in terms of protecting the interests of mental illness and clients thereof, in particular, family members that are quite concerned and in fact, all Manitobans. So it's nice and it's encouraging when you hear these types of comments and the elevation of the debate to the degree in which one gets the feeling that government is being sensitive to the issue.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, it would be encouraging if the government would actually allow this particular bill to proceed to the next level. There are many stakeholders in the province of Manitoba that would welcome the opportunity to actually come before a committee of the Legislature and express as to why it is so very important, critically important, to have these types of issues acted upon in a very real and tangible way.

As much as it's nice to hear the comments that are being made, one has to ask the question, well, why then would the government not necessarily allow the bill to go to committee stage where members of the public would then be afforded the opportunity to contribute to the debate? As the Leader of the Liberal Party has said, we're not saying that this bill is the end-all and catch-all of all the different issues, but it is a significant step and we are open to making amendments which the government feels might be appropriate to make the bill even that better. The government, for all the good words and kind words that it says, I challenge the government to allow the bill to go to the next step and allow it to go to the committee stage so that we can hear what other stakeholders have to say about the bill.

The mental health and brain health issues have been here for many years. I can recall Dr. Gulzar Cheema, and it's interesting that both my current leader is a medical doctor and spoke passionately about it, made reference in terms of personalizing it with a friend, and I know speaks at great length about the issue even outside of this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Well, a former colleague of mine, Dr. Gulzar Cheema, again, as a medical profession, recognize just how critically important it is for government to come to grips with this particular issue.

The Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) makes reference to some of those other health-related issues: cancer, acute care services and how they seem to generate the public attention and a great deal of public sympathy. Well, we would ultimately argue

that these types of issues related to mental illnesses are of equal importance and need to be addressed.

I know, and again I reflect back on the '90s where the then-minister of health, Don Orchard, would often make reference to the Member for Kildonan back then, Dr. Gulzar Cheema, and his efforts to try to raise the profile of this particular issue. I think it's no coincidence that Dr. Cheema actually then had left our province and went over to British Columbia. In British Columbia, I believe what they did is they actually broke the department into two and there was a separate department for mental health that was actually established in the province of British Columbia. I believe, and I could be corrected on this, but it was Gulzar Cheema that was actually made the first minister of mental health, and, Mr. Speaker, I think it goes to show just how genuine Dr. Gulzar Cheema was here in opposition when he advocated things of this nature.

Then it has kind of been passed on and we see now the Leader of the Liberal Party doing the same thing, again, of a medical background, recognizing how very important it is that, as legislators, we not only debate the issue but we take action where we can on such a critically important issue, Mr. Speaker. That's why, in terms of whether it's the seconding of the bill or listening to my leader on this issue. Whether it's here or it's outside the Legislature, I know an individual that cares deeply about the issue and wants to see action.

I think that is the essence. Some members might have noticed the Leader of the Liberal Party approach me as the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) was concluding his remarks and comment in terms of, gee, it sure would be nice. Why won't they allow the bill to pass? I believe that he's being very genuine in wanting to raise the issue and challenging through me, challenging the government to really act on the legislation. Here is a wonderful opportunity to actually see something very tangible occur.

It's fairly significant. This is a good time to do it. I understand that it's Mental Health Month in the province of Manitoba or even across Canada. Is it across Canada? Here is a wonderful, tangible thing that can be done in appreciation of the significance of this particular month, Mr. Speaker.

\* (10:50)

Mental health issues are obviously of a very serious nature. I know first-hand, in terms of the

types of impact that government not acting in a fashion which it should be acting and the ultimate outcome of that inaction in many ways, Mr. Speaker. The minister herself made reference to the tragedy of the suicides. I have a copy of the *Free Press* and the headlines from up north, and it is tragic. It's very tragic: only see stories of this nature, only see young people that are committing suicide because of that sense of helplessness, sense of frustration that they're not being able to get the type of attention that's necessary.

Mr. Speaker, it goes far, far beyond that. There are, you know, different times in a person's life when there is a need for that service, and, whether it's in a mild or more acute setting, there is a need for treatments dealing with mental illness issues. There are transition periods, individuals who will have maybe been in the work force, supporting a family, and then all of a sudden they find themselves unemployed, and the amount of pressure that that quite often puts on an individual. So, as a result, an individual of that nature will quite often think of many sorts of thoughts of a depressing nature.

We know in terms of addictions that are out there. That's why, you know, I think it was about two weeks ago I raised the issue: Why are we now putting ATM machines in our gambling casinos? We're going to have more addiction-related issues. There are steps that the government can do that can make a real difference in dealing with this issue, Mr. Speaker. We look to the government for signs, for indications, in terms of those positive steps.

You know, for all that's said and done, I don't know in terms of—and I don't have the facts, but it would be interesting to see, are the number of suicides amongst our children, in particular in northern Manitoba, down from previous years? The government tries to give the impression that they're doing so much, but at the end of the day are the numbers down? At the end of the day, can we be doing more? Absolutely. The minister herself said it, Mr. Speaker, that we could be doing more.

Well, let me make, in conclusion, a very positive suggestion. Allow this bill, don't talk it out, allow this bill to go to committee so that other stakeholders can come, participate. Let's make changes if necessary, but let's just do something. We can do it in a legislative framework that'll make a real tangible difference. We ask the government to give this consideration and not talk it out today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. There's to be no participation from the public gallery, please. That also includes applauding.

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** I'm very pleased to speak to this issue. I have worked for more than 30 years in both corrections and psychiatry, forensic psychiatry and health. My last 12 years I worked in psychogeriatrics at Deer Lodge Centre.

In corrections and psychiatry, I often found there was very little difference in the behaviours and the symptoms. The only big difference was that one patient or client broke the law, so there is so much overlap in mental health and addictions and the law.

I have experienced the effects of mental illness in both family and close friends. I have a cousin who lived many years and died in an institution. Addictions have been closer than I'd even care to talk about. Mr. Speaker, I've watched friends deal with children with schizophrenia, autism, bipolar and eating disorders, one whose daughter died of anorexia, and I am so pleased to say that our government has addressed this issue by announcing funding for community-based treatment program. I hope this puts the family to some ease.

I daresay that almost everyone can say that they have been touched by a friend or family member dealing with depression. Dealing with mental illness health issues can be devastating to families as well as the individual.

My point is that I have been close enough to mental illness for many years, both in work and my personal life, enough to see how much has been done—or not done, in years while I was still working in the field—over the years to provide help to individuals and families. Systems have had to change, and we all know that's like turning an ocean liner around. It takes a long, long time, and we have been working a long, long time.

I'm very proud of what our government has achieved since 1999. Mr. Speaker, I came into government from the front lines of mental health in the elderly—sort of paving the way, so to speak. Burnt-out schizophrenics with nowhere to go was a common problem. Alzheimer's was really not just of part of my job, it was a big part of my job, and that was to help caregivers cope in the community. This is what makes me appreciate some of the things we've done in the community.

There's the PACT teams in the community which provide comprehensive community-based treatment to individuals with persistent and severe mental illness in their environment, and helping these caregivers living with this makes me appreciate the kind of help they're able to get now. PACT teams are a best practice program which offers intensive, 24/7 support to individuals in the program. Co-occurring disorders outreach team—as I said earlier, the corrections and psychiatric institutions have very similar clients often, and the co-occurring disorders initiative was initiated by this government in January of 2002, and we continue to advance mental health and addiction system integration using a no-wrong door approach.

Since 2005, this government has invested \$42 million to significantly enhance mental health and addiction programs. In May 2008, \$2.8 million was announced to improve community mental health and addictions services. Of this funding, \$1.8 million was earmarked to hire 20 additional mental health and spiritual health workers in the regional health authorities and CancerCare Manitoba. These new funds built upon the \$17.7 million invested since December 2005, when major expansions to the province's mental health and addictions strategy were announced.

I think that budget 2009 demonstrates this government's continued commitment to improving mental health services for Manitobans. Budget 2009 provides funding for a range of housing options for individuals with mental health issues at risk of homelessness. Budget 2009 provides more funding for capital investments in addictions and mental health, and this budget includes funding to the expansion of mental health crisis stabilization services in Thompson and the Interlake to provide short-term intensive care and treatment for youth in the community. Budget 2009 provides more funding for capital investments in addictions and mental health. We are continuing the development of Magnus Centre, a multi-agency facility in Winnipeg that will offer a comprehensive range of services under one roof. We are investing in a residential care and outreach facility for addictions in Thompson. We have also invested in supports for people with acquired brain injuries, including opening a new facility at Selkirk Mental Health Centre.

We have made great progress in strengthening the services available to Manitobans living with mental illness and their family members. However, we do acknowledge there is more work to be done,

and I am confident that our government will make as great an impact in the years to come as it has in the years past, and I'm very proud to be working in this NDP government.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining.

\* (11:00)

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 10–90th Anniversary of 1919 Winnipeg General Strike

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to resolutions, and we'll deal with resolution 10, the 90th Anniversary of 1919 Winnipeg General Strike.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that:

WHEREAS for more than six weeks in the spring of 1919 Winnipeg experienced an unprecedented display of labour solidarity between local union and non-union workers from the private and public sectors; and

WHEREAS the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was precipitated by opposition to the principle of collective bargaining and the need for better wages and working conditions; and

WHEREAS the strikers were seeking to achieve social and economic justice by peaceful means, but were nonetheless confronted with aggressive reactions from their employers and various levels of government, including the events of June 21, 1919, known as Bloody Saturday, a day when the Royal North West Mounted Police, riding on horseback, charged and fired into a crowd of strike supporters, resulting in many injured, numerous arrests and one death; and

WHEREAS the Winnipeg General Strike was fundamental in influencing legislators to oblige employers to recognize the rights of workers to bargain through their union; and

WHEREAS the people of Winnipeg showed their support for the goals of the strike by going on to elect many of the strike leaders to public office, including Canadian social gospel pioneer J.S. Woodsworth, who later became the founding leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognize the significant historical contribution of the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919 to the struggle for social justice in Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike as an important historical event in the development of this province.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Member for Elmwood, seconded by the honourable Member for Burrows:

WHEREAS for more than six—dispense?

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak about and to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. As I'm sure many members know, the strike, at this time 90 years ago, was in full flight, shall we say. The strike commenced on May 15 of 1919 and didn't end until June 25, 1919.

I want to begin by extending congratulations to the many Winnipeggers who have been involved in a variety of events, some of which have already occurred and some of which are yet to occur, commemorating the 90th anniversary of the 1919 strike. I had the opportunity to attend one such event, at the book launch for a book of poetry by Ron Romanowski, and I found that to be a very interesting event. I hope that other members of the Legislature have opportunity to participate or to attend at other events that are being sponsored by an organization called Mayworks, and other events that may be occurring to commemorate the 90th anniversary.

Just taking the Chamber through the resolution, **Mr. Speaker:** as I said, the strike went on for about six weeks in the spring of 1919. It was both union and non-union workers. Even the police were on strike—that was the extent of the solidarity that existed—police and fire, a great deal of public sector workers, about 12,000 union and 12,000 non-union workers. I believe that ultimately the police were fired en masse because they wouldn't agree not to go

out on any further sympathetic strikes with the workers. So a great deal of solidarity and unity of mind amongst the working people of Winnipeg at that time.

The second WHEREAS, Mr. Speaker, says WHEREAS the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was precipitated by opposition to the principle of collective bargaining, and the need for better wages and working conditions. This prompts me to say that we still live in a world, unfortunately, 90 years after the Winnipeg General Strike, where there is still opposition to the principle of collective bargaining. Not here in Manitoba—we may have our disputes about collective bargaining and how it ought to be organized and whatnot—but there's opposition to the principle of collective bargaining to be found in many places in the world as yet. I had many opportunities, as a member of Parliament, to meet with representatives from different countries who would tell me about—and you'd be surprised just how many labour activists and labour leaders are murdered every year around the planet as a result of their commitment to organizing working people in their own interests.

So it's something to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, also having to do with wages and working conditions. Again, here in Manitoba, this government has certainly, by way of its policy of increasing the minimum wage every year, is trying to address the overall condition that I think exists in Canada and many other places in the world, is that the general buying power of the wages of working people has diminished greatly over the last 20 or 30 years. This is as a result of economic conditions and global economic policies that I don't have the time to go into here except to note that the struggle for decent wages continues. It's not something that has been won and, even when it gets won from time to time, there's always downward pressure on wages for a variety of reasons, and something we need to keep in mind.

The third WHEREAS, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the events of Bloody Saturday. I want to put on the record the name of Mike Sokolowski, who was the person who was unfortunately killed in the events of Bloody Saturday. It came to my attention only recently that there was another person who actually passed away as a result of that event—but some time later, as a result of infection from gangrene from a wound that occurred on that day. So another person

who died as a result of that event, Steve Schezerbanowes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you might think that, again, these things are things of the past, but again I want to remind members that there's still an inability on the part of many governments around the world, even here in Canada from time to time, to make the proper distinction between political activism and dissent, and subversion and sedition.

Having been at many protests over the years, Mr. Speaker—I'm thinking particularly of ones having to do with the WTO or the FDAA—many, many innocent protesters, who had nothing in mind other than exercising their perfectly democratic right to protest what they thought were bad agreements that were being entered into or contemplated by the governments, were tear-gassed, they were the object of rubber bullets. There's still this inability on the part of governments to distinguish between legitimate dissent and subversion or, as in the case of the strike in 1919, sedition, where we had, I think it was a dozen strike leaders who were charged with sedition. It may be the case, I'm not sure, but perhaps the honourable Member for Burrows will have more to say about these trials, as the debate proceeds here today. But it continues to be a problem.

One of the more shameful aspects of the politics of that at the time, of course, Mr. Speaker, was the extent to which the people who were opposed to the strike at the time, wanted to caricature the people who were participating in the strike as Bolsheviks or, even more shamefully, as aliens, because they didn't have Canadian citizenship. Again, there's always this temptation in political life to caricature the other, to demonize the other.

The Robson commission, the royal commission that followed the strike, it was very clear in its conclusions that strikers were engaged in peaceful protest and that it wasn't an alien conspiracy or a Bolshevik conspiracy, it was simply working people asking that their demands for better wages and working conditions be met by their employers and be respected by the various levels of government.

Another WHEREAS, Mr. Speaker, reads that the people of Winnipeg showed their support for the goals of the strike by going on to elect many of the strike leaders, including J.S. Woodsworth of course. But it wasn't just J.S. Woodsworth, there were many other strike leaders who were elected to public office, some of them while they were still in prison.

Yes, people were jailed as a result of the trials that took place, and I've always found it interesting, Mr. Speaker, the triumph of democracy over the perversion of justice that occurred at the time of these trials when the people spoke very clearly about whether or not they thought these people should have been treated the way they were by their government and charged with sedition. Always interesting to me, although I think the charge was ultimately dropped against J.S. Woodsworth, but he was charged with sedition. The quote that was used was a quote from Isaiah, from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, when the prophet Isaiah was chastising the powers that be at the time for how they were treating the poor and the powerless. This was quoted in the strike newspaper, and this was cited as grounds for suspicion of sedition

\*(11:10)

My goodness, Mr. Speaker, there's only two minutes left. In any event, as we know proceeding from the events of 1919, there were many, many political developments, not the least of which was the election of J.S. Woodsworth to Parliament in 1921. He became the centre of a very small group which in 1933 morphed into the Canadian co-operative federation, no, the Canadian commonwealth federation, I'm sorry, and later, of course, morphed again into the New Democratic Party which we all know today. I was going to say which we all know and love, but I don't want to speak for the members on the other side of the Chamber.

I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that this resolution might find bipartisan support. I know that there's a history. Apparently when the Conservatives were in power, the Minister of Labour at that time, Darren Praznik, erected a plaque, I think either on the 75th or 80th anniversary of the strike in the Legislature here. Doesn't matter what your political ancestry might be, it's hard not to recognize what this resolution asked people to recognize and that is the strike of 1919 was a significant event in the life of Manitoba and that it was a significant event in the struggle for social justice in Manitoba. On that basis I would certainly urge all members to support the resolution.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to put a few words on the record in regard to the resolution brought forward by the Member for Elmwood.

A 90th anniversary is a significant milestone to mark when you think back of what may have

happened in this city in 1919. It was a completely different time, a different era, a post-war era. Many people had returned from overseas from conflicts over there and of course many, many new Manitobans at this particular time were flocking to our province, to our country looking for renewal and a new start after the turn of events that had occurred over in Europe for the preceding four years.

*Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

So it was a time of class struggle, of racial and ethnic struggles, I believe, because many, many newcomers when they came to Manitoba would tend to settle in areas and congregate together and there was competition. Unemployment was significant at the time so we can imagine that people who came looking for a new beginning were not finding exactly what they had envisioned. There were struggles to not only get a job, but to be successful in one's job but also that success would be measured in relation to others in the same occupation that you were trained in, and other occupations, because people were struggling with a lot of people looking for jobs and perhaps not enough jobs.

Of course when we see these kinds of struggles we do know that there is a lot of unrest. As the member has stated, there was an increasing agitation among not only the unionized population, but non-union workers as well who I think probably found this an escalating process. When more and more people get involved in a cause it becomes much more of a building emotional thing and becomes quite an event.

I think that when you look at different times, different eras, different needs, different people, there are times and there are places for everything and at times there's a need for balance to the workers' side of the scale and at other times there's a need for balance on the employer's side of the scale, but if we can get to a balance where people are basically happy both ways, then we have achieved something.

You know, I think, when the member opposite talked about opposition to the principle of collective bargaining, I'd like to just speak to that from personal experience, having been a union representative and a member of a union at one point in my career and another time where I was an entrepreneur where I started my own business and employed people. So I've seen it from both sides, having been an employee, as a unionized employee, and then a person that started my own business. I'm never opposed to the principle of collective bargaining. I

believe, though, that often people don't see it from the other perspective, and certainly, having seen it from the perspective as a union member and as a representative of my group, I could see the way in which people viewed the employer.

Having been on the other side and been an employer, I can see, as an employer, how important it was to me to be able to run my business in a way that would be beneficial for everybody involved, and sometimes that doesn't get translated and communicated in the way so that everybody can benefit. I want to also mention my own family's business—has been in business for 50 years, have never had a unionized shop, construction labour, never been opposed to the principle of collective bargaining, but I want to say there have been times when union leaders have come and asked, should you want to have a union shop in your business. It's not happened, and it's always up to the employee to decide that.

But when you have a group of people that consider themselves more in this business together and working more as friends and family instead of—I think sometimes what happens is when you create a split, then you have we and them and you don't have us. I know that with this it's worked very well for my family's business because when the business does well, the employees profit share and they get bonuses. Everybody appreciates that sense of we're all part of this. It's not we and it's not them. That has been the basis whereby we have—I shouldn't say we because it hasn't been me at all, but that has been the basis where the people that work in our company have decided that this is how they would like to continue.

So I think there's balance that can be brought forward when we're talking about the principle of collective bargaining. Sometimes what happens is, yes, it swings in one direction or it swings in the other direction. When the balance of power, if I can use that terminology, swings too much towards an employer, employees, justifiably so, may stand up and say, this isn't right and we're not treated fairly. On the other hand, when the balance of power has swung to the—and I would say, more so—not particularly the people that are involved in the bargaining unit, but specifically certain members that hold themselves in charge of that and would like to see it their way, if it swings too much that way. The employer, on the other hand, may dig in their heels and say, I have put my life on—I've put everything I have into my business and I'm trying and struggling

to keep it going, and I don't want people to tell me how to run my business. And that's kind of not—I basically say that because those are perceptions that come when struggles between employer and employee sometimes happen.

\* (11:20)

The whole fact that in 1919 this struggle escalated to the point where many, many, many people in this city—in fact, by all accounts, sounds like a huge number of people were involved in this strike. It speaks to the strife, the unrest and the social problems that may be occurring at that time. Those don't always occur at every time in history, Mr. Acting Speaker.

But in any event, it is worth recognizing that this did happen in Winnipeg. Certainly, it's too bad that it escalated to the point where people lost their lives. Certainly, we would not like that to ever happen when we have opposing positions on anything. We would not want that in today's society to escalate to any point where people would actually lose their lives because of differences of points of view and differences in social equalities. Today we would like to be able to sit down and talk it through in a very equitable manner.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** It's a pleasure to take part in this debate. I want to congratulate the MLA for Elmwood on his resolution on the 90th anniversary of the 1919 General Strike. I hope that all members will support this non-controversial resolution and see it pass today.

I would point out that both the Member for Elmwood and I follow in the footsteps of one of the strike leaders, J.S. Woodsworth, since we both worked at what was originally All People's Mission, Stella Avenue, now known as North End Community Ministry. On the outside of that building there's a historic plaque from the Government of Canada about the life and contribution of J.S. Woodsworth.

In 1919 the strike divided the city of Winnipeg and communities, between those who were pro-strike and anti-strike and between working-class neighbourhoods such as the North End and Weston and Brooklands, from the more affluent areas of Winnipeg such as Armstrong's Point and Wellington Crescent. Some of these divisions continued for generations and for decades.

For example, I officiated a wedding once and the reception was in a mansion on Wellington Crescent. I got talking to some of the guests and discovered that one of them was the daughter of Fred Tipping, one of the 1919 strike leaders. When the other guests were out of the room, she told me that her friends from Wellington Crescent had been telling her for, at that time, about 75 years, that the strike was evil and the strikers were evil because they wouldn't even let milk be delivered to babies. I said, well you tell your friends that that's not true, that there are pictures of the milk wagons with signs on them saying By Permission of the Strike Committee. So we know that the result of the 1919 strike were divisions in the city of Winnipeg for many decades after.

Today, the strike is really part of history. In 1994, as was pointed out by my colleague for Elmwood, a plaque commemorating the 75th anniversary was installed on the wall behind the Chamber. It says: In the years since the strike, the Province of Manitoba has enacted legislation which recognizes workers' rights to participate in free collective bargaining, to organize, and to healthy and safe workplaces. Mr. Acting Speaker, this was dedicated in June 1994 by the Honourable Darren Praznik and the Honourable Gary Filmon.

I think, if you look at the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED clauses of this resolution, that really that's the legacy of the strike, that the result was not only an historic event but gains in the rights of workers in Manitoba and elsewhere.

Now, I'm indebted to an excellent book by the late Jack Walker, QC, who began the research, and it was actually completed by some of his colleagues, and it's called *The Great Canadian Sedition Trials: The Courts and the Winnipeg General Strike, 1919-1920*. He interviewed the surviving strike leaders and the surviving lawyers who took part in the trials, the sedition trials.

I think it's quite interesting that, in 1919, the contemporary view would have been that the strike and the strikers were crushed because the strike was called off, their goals were not achieved, the strike leaders were convicted of sedition, and it appeared that the Citizens' Committee of 1000, business and professional elites of Winnipeg, were victorious. But that changed very quickly because the Robson commission, who issued their report in 1920, found that the strike was a protest against existing living conditions and a demand for general relief. Robson insisted that the question of the cause of the strike

was rooted in basic economic concerns and was different from the issues of sedition being tried in the courts. Robson said that the leaders who had brought about the general strike were not responsible for the parades or riots which took place and, in fact, tried to prevent them. The commission found that the strike was not a criminal conspiracy by foreigners and suggested that if capital does not assure labour a contented existence, then the government might find it necessary to step in and let the state do these things at the expense of capital. So, very quickly, the strike leaders were vindicated, I would say.

Another example of that is that, in 1920, during the provincial election, 11 Labour members of the Legislature were elected, and four of them were strike leaders. On the federal level, J.S. Woodsworth was elected as a Labour member of Parliament. Since then, a school was named after R.B. Russell, one of the strike leaders, and a building, as was mentioned, was named after J.S. Woodsworth. Fred Tipping, who was a teacher and a strike participant, had a seniors apartment building named after him, the Fred Tipping seniors building. The A.A. Heaps Building commemorates A.A. Heaps, another strike leader, and there is a historic plaque about him at 254 Portage. Another legacy of the strike would be, I believe, the founding of the CCF, the predecessor of the NDP, because some of those people who were involved as strike leaders, like J.S. Woodsworth, were founders of the CCF.

Now, Jack Walker, in his research on the sedition trials, examined court records and interviewed survivors who were participants in the trials, either as those people who were accused, or lawyers. It's interesting to note that this was a private prosecution, that the Government of Canada chose not to try these individuals. The Province of Manitoba didn't want to have anything to do with trying the strike leaders and so, a group of private citizens. And these private citizens, led by a lawyer named Andrews, were really in a conflict because they were part of the Committee of 1000, but they were also part of the private prosecution as lawyers.

When Jack Walker was doing his research, he tried to interview as many people as he could. One of the survivors, I believe who was 95 years at the time, was Isaac Pitblado. So he went to his law office, and he said, you were one of the prosecutors in 1919. He was still of very sharp mind and Walker wanted to hear his side of the story, and Pitblado refused to be interviewed. Almost all of those who were part of the private prosecution refused to go on record.



There were some exceptions, though. One of them was a person who was a lawyer, but quite young at the time, who went on to become a very prominent Canadian jurist. His comments were very telling because he commented on the fact that the jury was rigged. It was, he believed, rigged because the private prosecution got the RCMP and others to interview prospective jurors, or their neighbours, and build a profile of them as to whether they were sympathetic to the strike or not. The result was that the jury were farmers, interestingly, people from outside Winnipeg, who were all opposed to the strike. So this jurist commented that it was impossible to have a fair trial. His name was Justice Joseph T. Thorson, who became president of the Exchequer Court of Canada, and he, decades later, expressed his continuing shock over the events. He said: when I look back at the trial of the strike leaders of 1919, I am shocked at the fact that it is possible to pack a jury strictly in accordance with the law in such a way that there is no possibility of an acquittal.

\* (11:30)

The second major injustice, which I believe was uncovered by Jack Walker, is that even though it was a private prosecution, the federal government was secretly paying the private prosecutors for their billing hours, and this was something that was not known at the time. It was suspected at the time, but not known, but due to the excellent research of Jack Walker, it was discovered years later.

So the federal government secretly paid for the prosecution, and it is now, I believe, viewed as a very unfair political trial, as it was by those who were on trial at the time.

I'd like to conclude, because I'm running out of time, with just one quote that I think is relevant to those of us who are here today, and it really only deals with one part of the 1919 strike, and that has to do with a speech by Dixon to the jury. He said: You are here to consider the public interest and to take into consideration all the circumstances. Remember your oath and your conscience and use your judgment and give us your verdict according to the evidence which has been laid before you.

So, I think we, as members of the Legislature, need to remember that, that we are here to govern in the public interest, and that means fairness and justice for all, not just workers, but for all. If we carry out that mandate, then I think we have learned

something from the trials, and from the history of the 1919 strike.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** It brings me great pleasure to put a few comments on the record about the 90th anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. None of us who have grown up in the city of Winnipeg and have gone through our education system won't have gone through without having studied this strike to some degree or the other.

I can remember Elmwood High School, which is my alma mater, we had a wonderful history teacher by the name of Tom Forrest. He was trying to lay out for us the conditions that would have existed that day, and he said, history reports that it was one of these very warm days. It was a beautiful spring day, and the strike started to grow. It was one of those things that more people attached themselves, got involved with what was taking place. There were obviously issues that were festering and burning in the city at that time. It was a general sense that working standards were low, and also we had the post-war inflation and unemployment had risen significantly. So there was a lot of tension anyway, but it was one of those times when everything sort of came together and people decided that they were going to let their displeasure be known and they were going to walk.

At that time, Winnipeg, of course, had been going through substantial changes, as was the province. We had come through an amazing growth period in the history of our province, of our city. In fact, if history stands me correct, the boom in downtown Winnipeg, the Exchange District, still, in history, is one of the largest booms that ever existed, and it would have come to an end by this point in time. Winnipeg was, at that time, considered to be the Chicago of the North, hence we're called the windy city, not just because we also have very strong winds, but we were seen to be the Chicago of the North.

Things really did look up for Winnipeg and the province. It looked like we were going to be an amazingly powerful city, a powerhouse on the prairies. In fact, even as the Manitoba Legislature was built, at that time it was built to house the entire government. It was viewed as being a sort of a beacon on the prairies. In fact, it was built, if I understand correctly, that it would eventually represent—it would be there to take a government that would represent about two million people in the province of Manitoba.

So there was a lot of vision. There was a lot of planning. Things were exciting for Winnipeg and for the province of Manitoba. People were coming to this province. There was a lot of construction going on. For those of us who've worked and travelled through the Exchange District, if you have the opportunity, go into some of those historic buildings. You will see amazing architecture. You'll see amazing work. It was a time when capital was, by our standards, still fairly cheap. Pardon me, I'll correct that. Labour was still fairly cheap, capital was expensive. Look at the kind of buildings that were built, the bricks that were laid. It's just phenomenal what was done in the Exchange District in a very short period of time, but, like with most things as we experience it today, what goes up must come down. The boom days did come to an end, and it's interesting, 90 years later we seem to be in a similar position.

At that time the workers felt that things were not where they should have been. There was an era of change and instability. We even saw then the beginnings of an urbanization. At that time Premier Norris, a Liberal premier, was overseeing a province that was changing dramatically. Not just had we seen a substantial boom in the city of Winnipeg, but again we were starting to see the urbanization of Manitoba.

One of the major issues leading up to the Winnipeg General Strike was the role of collective bargaining. Unions in the middle and construction industries wanted to negotiate not just a single union basis but with the umbrella unions for the entire industry. In addition to this demand the Building Trades Council demanded an increase of 10 cents an hour. On May 1, 1919, the Building Trades Council went on strike; a day later the Metal Trades Council joined, and there was definitely a push towards bettering of wages by those trades that had participated in the boom that preceded what was basically a decline in the economy at that time in Manitoba.

The strike itself probably wouldn't have been as historical or as momentous if it hadn't culminated in the violence that we saw taking place in the city of Winnipeg. In fact, I believe it's on June 21, 1919, that's called Bloody Saturday, was when the strikes climaxed. That's when the North West Mounted Police or the RCMP charged on horseback into the crowd, killing one individual, and by the end of the day federal soldiers had occupied the streets of Winnipeg.

I appreciate that we've had some historical recounting of what was taking place, and there was a lot of fear throughout the world about the political changes that were taking place. Again, often fear isn't the best thing to be taking and trying to apply to every situation. In this case it was genuinely workers exercising their right to go out and protest, but, as happens in a lot of situations, things get out of hand, and so, too, did it here in Winnipeg. It was very unfortunate because, first of all, not just did one individual lose his life and many others were injured, it ended up dividing the city. It ended up pitting individuals against each other, and from what I understand, it also brought the realization to a lot of individuals that this wasn't the way to proceed with labour relations in Manitoba.

So, out of a dark moment in the history of our city, I believe positive things have come forward because we do now have legislation that protects the workers' right to become collectivized, to have a union represent them, protects a right of individuals to withdraw their labour to go on strike. It also has provisions for employers to lock out their workers and force a strike, but it's all done in a very legal and orderly fashion. I think that is a benefit to whether you are a worker or whether you are a business owner or those of us who use those services. What does take place should be done in a very lawful, in a very respectful manner and we saw what took place back in 1919. None of that took place.

Workers have come a long way in our province, and we understand we still have a way to go. We believe that there are things like workers' injuries which Manitoba has the highest injury rate among the provinces at 4.31 people injured for every hundred workers. There are a lot of things that can be changed and should be changed, keeping in mind the working men and women are the real economy that drives this province. Again, we commemorate the 1919 strike and its impact on our city and our province and towards making things better for working men and women in Manitoba.

\* (11:40)

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington):** I'm grateful for the opportunity to stand here this morning and speak in favour of the private member's resolution of the honourable Member for Elmwood. I thank him for bringing to the attention of the members of this House very important historical accounts of events during the two months of May and June in 1919 which defined the citizens of the city of

Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba and is now considered the watershed events in the annals of the labour movement in the country.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if I were alive and of working age in 1919, I would be working in a factory or any other workplace. I would be, just like many if not all of those members of the working class, a first generation immigrant or child of 19th century immigrants who came to Canada to seek greener pastures or escape repression from the homeland. Just like many of those immigrants in 1919, I would be hardworking, grateful for the job I had and would do my best to be worthy of the pay I received. Just like many of the workers then, I would be inclined to join a movement which advocates for workers' rights. I would believe then, as I do now, that workers put in their best efforts of work to make sure the company or business they work for became as productive and profitable to its owners as possible. Just like many of the workers during that time of the general strike in 1919, I would express my beliefs and aspirations for fair and just wages and humane working conditions through peaceful means.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba will forever occupy a special place in the country for the events that happened in 1919. The Winnipeg strike in 1919 will forever be etched in the history of this province for its significant contribution to the struggles for social justice which reverberated its eloquent message not just in this province but throughout the whole country from coast to coast to coast. I'm so proud and grateful to be a resident of the city of Winnipeg in the province of Manitoba where the seeds of social justice sown by the events that led to the general strike in 1919 inspired community leaders and workers like J.S. Woodsworth to endeavour to obtain fair wages and working conditions for all workers.

My pride is even made bigger knowing that the Weston-Brooklands area which I'm honoured to represent was home to many workers at the time of the general strike. What a wonderful footnote in history that the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was one of the most influential strikes in Canadian history, as it was the first organized large-scale strike in the country, and it became the platform for future labour reforms.

Mr. Acting Speaker, speaking of labour reforms, especially the reforms initiated by this government, brings me much joy and pride to be a member of this government that has been trusted by the people of

Manitoba with three terms of majority mandate, but my joy and gratitude is tempered by the very sad situations happening in many parts of the world where labourers and labour leaders are penalized for working for reforms.

With the advances in communication technology, it has been so easy to gain information on what is happening around the world. In the old country where I come from, the Philippines, a very sad situation has been happening to workers and labour leaders who were seeking just and fair wages and working conditions for labourers. For the last eight years I have read so many news accounts where labour leaders and workers were abducted, tortured and killed. I have even heard the story from a nun who was a member of a privileged family in the southern province in the country who witnessed first-hand a peaceful demonstration of farm workers who worked very long hours but were paid inadequately. The nun knew first-hand the poverty of these hard working labourers and believed they were demonstrating for a just cause. To her unimaginable surprise, the peaceful protesters were gunned down by the security forces of the landowner. Several of the farmers died. This scene forever changed her life. She left the religious order where she belonged and left the comfort of the very privileged life and went to live and work for the cause of the oppressed workers and urban poor.

Very sadly, Mr. Acting Speaker, not only labour leaders and workers were killed for their beliefs and advocacy for social justice, but many church people, ministers, priests and one who was even a bishop, and many lay church members were also extrajudicially killed for working for reforms for workers and the poor.

I digressed a bit, Mr. Acting Speaker. I'm sorry.

In closing, I want to express my full support for this private member's bill and hope the importance of this event will be recognized by all members of this House. Thank you.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** To put a few words on the record of this 90th anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, and the Member for Elmwood brought forward this resolution. As I was thinking about comments to make on this, I couldn't help but think that of all the years that he spent travelling to Ottawa and back, if he was still travelling to Ottawa today, if his baggage got lost or if he had flight delays, he could be compensated now

for that. All those years where he didn't, so, funny how things work out.

In regard to the 90th anniversary—*[interjection]* We'll see how it goes in committee, then, whether that actually comes in, and ultimately, we know, when we're talking about lost baggage, we ultimately know who will pay for that. It will be the passengers who will pay for it.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

But, in regard to the 90th anniversary, it's always interesting to go back and look at history and events in history and whatnot, and to look at the context in which—when this general strike happened, you have to realize that it was right after the First World War, the Great War as it's referred to. There was high unemployment, just the trauma from the veterans returning from what they faced and none of us, none of us, can appreciate what those veterans went through in the Great War. And then to have as which was mentioned this morning about an economic downturn here in Manitoba, after so many years of building and of great expectations, being considered the Chicago of the North in terms of the job potential that was out there and the buildings that were taking place.

Then suddenly we're into facing a downturn we had with high inflation and a downturn in the economy. Jobs were not easy to come by, and it certainly put a lot of tension within the job market. While there certainly would be cause for concern about low wages, working conditions, and again, it's many of those jobs are pay rates and working conditions that we cannot really relate to today. We feel that we've made so much progress since then, but that's ultimately what triggered the strike and the general strike; it was to highlight the struggle for collective bargaining, higher wages and improved working conditions. They were all very valid causes at that time.

When you mix the political reality in with the events from the First World War, there were a lot of, perhaps, unjust accusations being made about some of the strikers. One individual was killed. The Member for Elmwood mentioned another one died afterwards from wounds received there. Whether that was the case or not, it's always unfortunate when anybody dies because of an event.

Nonetheless, the strike was called off, and life did return somewhat to normal after that, but it was

the birth of the unions, particularly here in Manitoba, and across Canada and North America.

\* (11:50)

But if we move ahead now—and you want to look back and, yes, it's an anniversary and whether you celebrate it or whether you just recognize it, that it actually happened, that's a good point. But if I move ahead to today, it's interesting to compare where the unions, their struggles back then, what they were negotiating for with the employers, and what's happening today in today's unions.

Certainly the Canadian Auto Workers, the United Auto Workers, are good examples of this, dealing with General Motors. Here we have the negotiations that are ongoing—and I don't know, I haven't checked the latest news, whether they have another agreement, one more agreement again on top of the other agreements—but what they've been talking about is not about wages and working conditions, it's about concessions. The union is dealing now with how many concessions they're willing to recommend to their membership. The pension plan that GM has is probably the most bloated plan in the world, and GM's on the edge of declaring bankruptcy, whether it happens or not. Chrysler's already gone through this. So it certainly highlights the unions into a much different playing field. They're finding themselves in a new role now. It's not about just wages and benefits; it's how much they can actually hang on to, which is certainly different from what was happening back in 1919.

Of course, if you look at unions across Canada and across North America—here in Manitoba, we know that the unions are a major political force, no doubt about it. I would think members opposite would have to agree that they're the major fundraiser for the NDP party in Manitoba. Certainly, they are a lobby force to be reckoned with here in the province, and all parties recognize that, all people recognize this.

We also know that it's interesting that our industries here in Manitoba and in North America in general are competing with many of the Asian countries, and I'll use China as the example. They have extremely low wages, and I would think, along with the low wages in China there's also some working conditions that are somewhat less than desirable. Yet I don't foresee the unions going into China any day soon. I think they have a government

that's slightly opposed to union. They have the union and it's called government in China. Perhaps the unions will be looking how they can go into countries like China, and boy, I'll tell you, the union dues would certainly be welcome there with however many billion people there are in China. Just think of the political force that they could become there, but we'll wait to see if they actually get there anytime soon.

Again, as you recognize, I don't think anybody wants to celebrate the 90th anniversary, but as you recognize the 90th anniversary of this general strike, it's where the unions—the more interesting thing—and if you're a historian, you can spend all day looking at this—but today and in today's economy, where are we going right now? What is the role of the unions that they can play? I really do believe—and I'm sure that the members opposite will not agree with me—but I think they've lost focus. They have to find their role in, if I can call it, the new economy these days. It's not necessarily about higher wages and better working conditions. It may be about job retention, and GM is struggling with that right now. How do you retain those jobs and still be competitive around the world? To me, the unions must take a more proactive role in that. Simply saying that we're not going to give any concessions—we know it's going to happen if there are no concessions with GM, they will be in bankruptcy, and then that is really putting the employees, the actual people who are working there, it puts them in a terrible financial position based on this.

So how do you resolve this? It's something that I think the union leadership itself is struggling to decide what their role is in this. I've been an advocate and many in our party been an advocate for—this government in Manitoba has this fixation on raising minimum wage. If they would look at the tax, the personal exemptions, and raise the personal exemptions instead of raising minimum wage, you'd actually put more money into employees' pockets, and that should be the ultimate goal.

However, politics is getting in the way. It's much easier to—*[interjection]*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in this morning's debate as it pertains to the resolution brought forward by the honourable

Member for Elmwood, the 90th anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed something that it has made what our province is today, and I will say that I have hesitation to support this resolution, as it is brought forward to us today, on the basis that we have to, in this province of ours, foster a greater understanding and respect between management and labour. The 1919 strike is a perfect example of when those relationships break down.

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of little information pieces that I'd like to share with the House. At the time of the general strike, Winnipeg was not just competing as a centre of economic activity for western Canada, Winnipeg was competing for the economic engine of our nation. Here in Winnipeg we had 18 millionaires; Toronto had 19. We were neck and neck with Toronto for the economic engine of this nation.

A number of other things that did take place after the general strike that changed this dynamic significantly. Those persons that had the wealth and were willing to invest here in Winnipeg were frightened, not only for their own personal well-being, but for the investment capital which they had at their disposal. They took their investment capital, and they went west to Vancouver. So the economic activity that we saw from 1919 onward could very well have taken place in Winnipeg, but, had it not been for the strike, and evident currently, you can see the prosperity that has taken place over the decades since 1919 in Vancouver.

The other point of note, Mr. Speaker, during some of my research at the University of Manitoba recently, was that the coincidence that this strike took place, when the men that had been fighting overseas during the First World War came home, came home to find that Manitoba had entered into the prohibition of the day where alcoholic beverages were no longer available. I would say also, too, that that may have had a bearing on what took place on that very warm summer day.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade, on a point of order?

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** I'm not sure if the Member

for Portage la Prairie knows how close we are to noon. I'm hoping that we could proceed to a vote on this resolution, and we could pass this very important resolution. Thank you.

\* (12:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** I can ask for leave, but it's never been the practice of the House to interrupt a member that has the floor until all members that wish to speak have concluded their comments.

But I've been requested to put it to the House, so I will put the question to the House.

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No? There was a no there.

So, the member please continue that has the floor.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Faurshou:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that the—

**Mr. Speaker:** When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie will have six minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, we will recess and reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, May 19, 2009**

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