

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Fourth Session — Tenth Legislature

10th Day

Wednesday, February 12, 1947.

The Assembly met at 3:00 o'clock p.m.
ON ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Mr. J. Gibson (Morse) for an Address-in-Reply.

Hon. J.T. Douglas (Minister of Highways and Public Works): — Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in the debate, I want, first of all to join with those who have preceded me in complimenting the mover and the seconder of this motion. I want to state that I am pleased to offer my congratulations to the mover for a very fine job he did in moving the Address-in-Reply. I also feel that in doing so I should compliment the people of Morse constituency in sending to this Chamber so worthy a representative. I know that from his past experience in the municipal field he is going to bring considerable weight to this Assembly. I am also very pleased to know that the people in Morse, when they returned him with such an overwhelming majority, placed their stamp of approval upon the policy this Government has been following in expanding those services under public ownership since we have come to office. I also feel that it is a mandate from them for us to continue to expand that program of public ownership.

Personally, I was very much pleased that we should have this mandate, because within that constituency, very largely, was the route of one bus company that came under considerable fire particularly by our Liberal friends. But I noticed that after that campaign was only underway a short time, they dropped that like a hot potato when they saw that the people of Morse constituency were more than satisfied with the change that had taken place. I also notice that our Conservative friends were not so politically astute. They picked up the 'hot potato' and are still trying to carry it — but not in Saskatchewan. They have now gone down to the Province of Ontario and are trying to frighten the people down there.

I want also to pay tribute to the seconder of the motion — a young man who is taking a prominent part in this House, and it was with interest that I listened to him set forth, with all the earnestness and vigor of youth, the possible future of the north country and the very able manner in which he offset some of the propaganda that has been carried on in this province by the new Leader of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I have agreed to give up part of my radio time today to one of the other Hon. Members, I shall have to proceed as rapidly as possible. But before I comment on the remarks made by other Hon. Members of this House, I would like for a moment to refer to a statement made by the absentee Leader of the Liberal Party. In this statement he is supposed to have said that road conditions in Saskatchewan were the worst in many years.

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Well, you know, when I read that statement, my memory went back to the picture that I saw in the Leader-Post last summer; I think it was in August. This picture showed Mr. Tucker and his family standing beside the family car in Regina at the end of a long and tiresome trip from Ottawa. I could not help but think that Mr. Tucker would feel rather tired out, and rather aggrieved and possibly dissatisfied because he travelled long; and maybe not because of the roads! For if you made a trip of that distance from Ottawa to Regina with about fifteen people in the six-passenger car, I think that you would all be feeling rather tired, and I am going to suggest to Mr. Tucker that he buy a bus and ride in comfort. Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that even Mr. Tucker and most of his friends are going to get that favor.

Our memories, I know are short; but they are not that short. I know mine is not. I remember the three years before the election, when I covered this province from one end to the other and the roads on which I had travelled. No man knew better than I did the dilapidated conditions of the highways in Saskatchewan when we took over in 1944: a system of roads of over 8,000 miles, over 2,000 of which had never been gravelled and over 600 of that distance had never been graded. You had 100-some miles of 'black-top' in this province and over 50 per cent of that was in the most dilapidated condition. That is what I had to take over when I came in here.

Now you see that the people in Saskatchewan know that there is a great improvement in the roads in the province since this Government has taken office, and we have done that under a fairly great handicap. In fact, one of the toughest jobs that I have ever tackled in my life was to ask the Maintenance Branch of the Department of Highways to go out and do a job with the equipment at their disposal. Today, with the traffic that we have over our roads, we should have nothing but the best in maintenance equipment. What do we have! When we took over we had 69 power patrols, used; of that 69 used, 21 of them were the old gas-power type – obsolete and worn out and they needed replacement; the balance of the equipment, old horse-drawn machines that should have been in the ash can, years ago.

I want to say that it is to the everlasting disgrace of the former government that, in years when equipment was available and when it could have been purchased, no attempt was made to give their staff the necessary equipment with which to work. That, Mr. Speaker, is the reason that our highways took such a beating in the years when the former administration was operating, and why this Government was not ready to go ahead with the program which we had outlined. I want to say that just as rapidly as this equipment is becoming available, we are purchasing, and we will equip, with all possible speed, our men with the supplies and necessary equipment to carry on a decent program of work.

This is very necessary when we consider that in the province it has cost the people of Saskatchewan over \$84.5 million to build the road system which we have – at least the system we had when we took over – and out of that \$84.5 million I want to say that there was very little in the way of decent roads in the year 1944. We also had to take over a very heavy debt at that time of approximately \$32 million – very close to \$33 million in debt – in the fiscal year it has just cost the Province of Saskatchewan over \$2.2 million to service that

debt and of that \$2.2 million we paid in interest \$1.4 million – almost as much as we are paying in maintenance this year.

Well, now, to come back to Mr. Tucker's charge, I want to read to this Assembly a letter I received from a gentleman. He said:

After a recent motor trip to the West, I was talking to Mr. R.A. McEachern, Editor of the Financial Post. I was telling him how much I had enjoyed the roads in your province. Both Mr. McEachern and our own company have been interested in tourist trade promotion for some years and he suggested that I write a letter along the lines of our conversation. The attached editorial in the Financial Post was the result. We sincerely hope it may reduce the unwarranted impression against travelling by car through your province. Signed Hugh McKenzie.

I am not, right at this time, going to read all of this editorial. I will read just a little bit of it. There is such a contrast to read an editorial in the Toronto paper to what we get from the daily papers in Saskatchewan, that I think it is well worth calling to the attention of this House.

A lot of eastern Canadians seem to think that there is only one way to make a western motor trip and that is through the United States. Many apparently do not realize that there are roads in the Dominion and that except for one or two short stretches, they are in excellent condition. It is to be hoped that more of them will refuse to listen to this nonsense about no roads in Canada and will follow the example of Hugh McKenzie, General Manager of John Labatt Company. This summer, Mr. McKenzie took his family and car by boat to Port Arthur, and from there motored to Banff. Here is his first hand report: We are all delighted that we did so. Just for one or two very short stretches, which are not really bad, the roads were in good condition and we all enjoyed the trip thoroughly. I am writing this letter to you in the hope that other eastern Canadians who contemplate a motor trip to western Canada will not be discouraged by the ill-reports on condition of roads. It is true that there is not much pavement and the roads are not free from dust; but we met no difficulty in making almost as good time as we would have on the Ontario roads.

This of course, is from a Toronto paper.

Then again, I have an editorial from the Leader-Post. I do not know whom it refers to. I think I know – I am not sure although I think I do. It is an editorial on 'Tourists and Highways'. They refer to a business man, who recently travelled from the city out to Vancouver and back, who claimed that gravelled roads in Saskatchewan were better than the same type of road in any other province he had visited. Now, I can say that I can only surmise who this man may be; but about that time a young man came into my office. He was all worked up. He said: "Mr. Douglas, I used to live in Saskatchewan and I just read an article in the paper about the roads, and" he said, "this thing burns me up." He went on to tell me that, when talking to me, he had not only been through the west but he had been through several of the the United States and he said,

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“Nowhere I have travelled have I found gravelled roads in as good a condition as yours. Now, I am not telling you that they are all good, because I have found some bad spots”, -- and I know it, but he was very much upset by the report in the papers.

And, again, in the summer, when we had some architects from the East, who were doing some work for us on the hospital which we hope to build on the University campus, these men were in Regina for a conference and then they drove from there to Saskatoon and back. When they came back they were in my office discussing the matter with me and one of them said: “Mr. Douglas, I had a very agreeable surprise as I drove from here to Saskatoon and back.” I said, “Well, did you find the scenery in this country not just as monotonous as you had expected?” He said “Oh no! I had been in the West before, but I have been reading your local press and I want to tell you that in my own province I could not have driven that 200 miles and made the same time that I was able to make from Regina to Saskatoon and back.”

Now, those are opinions from men who do not live in Saskatchewan and I say that the Press we have in Saskatchewan, apparently for political purposes, are willing to go out and throw cold water and abuse on our highway system, should feel rather ashamed of themselves, particularly when we are trying to attract tourist traffic and tourist trade to this province. I would be the last one to stand up here and claim that our road system is the best that it could be; but I want to say it is the best that we can give you with the equipment at our disposal. It is the best we can give you until the great bulk of it has again been rebuilt, because, when we took office in 1944, there was less than 100 miles of road in this province built to the standard that we are now building and we are going to have to rebuild practically the entire system to that standard if we are to give you winter service.

We have now reached the stage in the life and development of this province, where we have to consider winter transportation. And again, I say, this Government need make no apologies for the service we have given you in winter transportation. I checked that on the snow-removal services given in former years, and I find that in the winters of 1940-41, 1941-42, 1942-43, and 1943-44, we had as follows: 1,500 miles; next winter 2,000 miles; next winter 1,800 miles; and in 1943-44, 2,500 miles. There were none of those four really bad winters. Now the last few winters have been exceptionally bad so far as snow-removal work is concerned. Yet what is the record of this Government? In 1944-45, 3,500 miles; 1945-46, 3,849 miles, plus 3,000 miles to which we gave partial service; and this year, the worst winter in the history of this province, I find that on January 31st we had 3,000 miles of highway open for traffic, or 500 miles better than anything the former Government was ever able to show.

Well, now, there is one other thing I would like to deal with and that is the vote for municipalities . . . No! First of all. Mr. Tucker made another statement. He accused us of adding to the cost of administration. Well, I find that in the last vote brought down by the former Government in the winter of 1944, there was allocated for administration purposes, \$32,700, and last winter, you will recall, the vote which I brought in this House called for \$34,100; just slightly over \$1,000 difference, largely taken care of by increased salaries. But, when we consider the extra amount of work being done by this Department, both in the construction field, in the field

of maintenance and in the field of research, that extra amount can very well be accounted for. So, when Mr. Tucker makes that statement he is making a statement that is beside the facts.

Mr. Procter: – Are you trying to tell this House that the administration cost of the Department of Highways is only \$37,000?

Mr. Douglas: – For administration purposes, yes.

Mr. Procter: – For all administration?

Mr. Douglas: – For administration purposes.

Mr. Procter: – Well, your report that you filed the other day shows that much for construction alone.

Mr. Douglas: – That is beside the point, Mr. Speaker, and there is no one knows that better than the gentleman who is just taking his seat, because he was at one time Minister in charge of the Department.

Mr. Procter: – Sure, I know when I hear something that is not right.

Mr. Douglas: – Well, now, I want to turn for a moment to a statement made by the Leader of the Opposition in this House. He said very little about the Department of Highways, but what he did say he said in a rather sneering manner. I want to tell him that, when he made the statement that never had so much been spent and so little done, at first I smiled; but I want to tell him that if that statement were true, I would not be standing in this House, today, as the Minister of Highways and Transportation. I would resign in shame. And I am going to recall to his memory the relief years of 1935-36 and the relief year of 1936-37.

I have before me a copy of Public Accounts for those years, and you will find in the years 1935-36 the vote of \$65,940 for relief purposes. Out of that, we find the grand total of \$138 went direct to the municipality, but we find that over \$27,000, approximately half of it went for salaries and expense accounts, to gentlemen, many of whom, I am afraid, we have had to consider as being in the political-organizer class. Relief indeed! And again, in 1936-37, a vote of \$60,000 for relief purposes. What did we find? Salaries of \$23,619 for mostly the same type of individuals and there we find that some of these men, drawing salaries of \$1,825 were drawing expense accounts of over \$2,000. I am sure the people back in the country, who lived on some of Jimmy Gardiner's codfish in those years, must feel rather happy when they realize that some of these men received over \$4,000 for their services out of relief accounts. Pretty good state of relief indeed!

Now, we will turn to grants to municipalities and see if there was so much spent for so little done. Well, for the year 1943-44, just before the election, when we would expect to find the Opposition would be doing their best and their grants would be good – the year before elections you know they are afraid generally in municipalities – their vote was \$128,199. For 1946-47, I find that I have authorized \$270,645 for grants to

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municipalities.

The Leader of the Opposition also sneeringly remarked that the only place that had something to show for the money was the constituency of Rosetown. I make no apologies for what I spent in Rosetown. Probably what he does not realize is that across this province we are carrying on worthwhile projects in most of the cases where we build, particularly where we can get to carry on the projects, and I can point to several projects in Saskatchewan much greater than the one they carried on in Rosetown. There, it is true, in order to eliminate two railroad crossings and four bridges and by shortening that route by 16 miles, I had to abandon a certain piece of road to take in a fairly long stretch of construction. It is built and it is a road and bridge that the people of this province can feel proud of, just as they can of the other sections we are building. But from Tisdale to Nipawin we have constructed a much longer stretch. From Clair to just a short way east of Humboldt, you have another exceptionally long stretch of road and again from Clair east to Margo you have still a longer stretch. On No. 13 highway we have several stretches of road of greater distance than the one in Rosetown. I have no apologies to offer, Mr. Speaker, but I notice that, in the year just before this last election, some of the municipalities in Cannington constituency fared very well indeed; but a lot of other municipalities across this province never received a five-cent piece. I want to say this, the province does not intend to give to any municipality we deal with, a grant if they ask for it. There has been no discrimination just because the Member who sits there does not happen to sit on this side of the House.

I was sorry that I was not in my seat when the Hon. Member for Moosomin spoke last Friday. I was home in bed; but I was able to listen to him via the radio and I enjoyed his address. I know that the people of Saskatchewan smiled with me when they heard him state that he was responsible for the introduction of the policy of widening our right-of-ways, and seeding them down. Well, I am not going to quibble with him about that. I know that there was a 20 mile stretch between here and Moose Jaw that has been just at that standard and I believe also seeded down. But it certainly was not his Government's policy, because I do not know where else in the province he would find it, until this Government took office. I can assure you it is now Government policy and since we have taken office . . .

Mr. Procter: – Have you enquired from your Department as to the instructions they got, and when they got them for the 100 foot right-of-ways? Actions speak louder than words.

Mr. Douglas: – I have it here – the policy of the Government; and up until the end of 1943, excepting for this stretch of road, the roads built in Saskatchewan were built on the 66 foot right-of-way basis. I have that from the Department. Well, now, I am not going to quibble and I want to be fair with this.

Mr. Procter: – Better lay off!

Mr. Douglas: – No, I am not afraid to lay off. I was prepared to go on for an hour and a half today, but I promised to cut down to half an hour, but I am not afraid to lay off; I have the

information right here. I hate to make the hon. gentleman feel badly and I hate to disillusion him but when he states that he gravelled more miles of highway, for less money than any other Minister, I am afraid I will have to take issue with him. Now, I will admit that he should (I don't know, I have not had time to check into it better); he should have been able to gravel cheaper than the other Ministers, because he was in charge of the Department when wages were at a low ebb and I do not think it has ever been the policy of the Liberal Government to increase wages of the working class. But I notice this: I have with me here a highway map of 1944, and if you will glance at it you will note that it would appear to me that the Minister backed away from any long gravel haul, because I think about one-half of the gravel work that I had to start was where the haul was exceptionally long. But for mileage, I did dig into his figures and what do we find? Well, in two years (I am not taking the year 1944 because it was split by the work that was done by the former administration); but in 1945-46 I find that I had gravelled or re-gravelled 1,946 miles of road. Now in the four years from 1940 to 1943 inclusive, I find the former Minister gravelled 1,099 miles, or 850 less in four years than I gravelled in two. Now when it comes to construction . . .

Mr. Phelps: – That woke him up!

Mr. Proctor: – Certainly. When a Minister makes statements like that it would wake anybody up.

Mr. Douglas: – These are statements of which he could get the information from the Department and I have them here as a matter of fact.

Mr. Proctor: – You ought to get your information from the Department and not talk that stuff.

Mr. Douglas: – In the field of construction, I find that in two years, we have built or rebuilt 725 miles of road. In four years he built or rebuilt 740; practically the same. But that does not tell all the story.

As I intimated a short time ago, we are building to a much higher standard than the other Government ever thought of and there is no comparison between the roads we are building today and the roads this province had previous to this administration taking office.

I also want to say that in the 1,500 mile trip that I took this fall, with my Deputy Minister, when we undertook to cross the line and investigate the work they are doing over there in hard-surfacing, I found that our roads compared most favorably with the roads I saw being constructed in the States of Montana and North Dakota.

Well, now, I promised I was going to hold down my remarks, but before I close I want to say a word about the penal commission which I set up here . . .

Mr. Proctor: – Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. gentleman another question. In view of your statement that your

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administration expense is only \$37,000, how do you account for this, "Administration and General Expense" of \$102,473 in the 1946 report?

Mr. Douglas: – That is "General Expense" and there is a vast difference and the Hon. Member knows that difference as well as anyone else in the House. I stated the amount as set aside for 'Administration', and I quoted exactly as it was given in your estimates in the winter of 1944 and I quoted exactly as was given in my estimates in 1946. Now that is all right; that is a different story entirely.

Premier Douglas: – "General Expenses" is not "Administration". You are not playing prosecuting lawyer now.

Mr. Proctor: – Well, this is not even all of the statement here; on the next page he says "increased \$50,000".

Premier Douglas: – You cannot take it!

Mr. Douglas: – Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue on with this highway work, but as I said, I would cut my remarks short, I want to deal for a few moments with the Penal Commission which was set up here, and I want to pay tribute to the members for the very fine work which they did. You will recall that when I spoke on the Budget Debate in this House on March 20th last, I said at that time, that I was not satisfied with the work we were doing in our penal institutions in Saskatchewan. I felt that, in too many cases, the young people were graduating from our gaol in Moosomin into the gaols at Regina or Prince Albert – too many repeaters; and I believe I quoted at that time that the percentage was approximately 50 per cent of the total gaol population. We set this Commission up and we asked them to do about four things particularly. We asked them to make a study of crime prevention and we asked them to make a study of the classification and rehabilitation of prisoners, the selection and training of the staff and the probation and after care of prisoners. That Commission made a very wide study not only of conditions as they existed in Saskatchewan, but of conditions existing in Ontario, other parts of Canada and in many States across the line. They have since reported to your Government and I had hoped that before this report would be printed and in the hands of the various Members of this Legislature. However, I have been in communication with the printers and they advise me that they will soon be off the press. When they are off the press I shall see that a copy of this report is on the desk of each Member of this Legislature.

I am not going to comment on the work which they have done any further. I realized at the time that the administration of our jails was possibly in the wrong department. It is a mistake that was made by the former administration, and apparently, in this line of work as in other lines of work, they placed property rights before the rights of human individuals. So it was our jails were placed in a department whose duty it was to take care of our public buildings. One of the things we will have to do here this winter, I hope, is to transfer these jails to the Department of Social Welfare, a Department whose staff is better equipped to handle this type of work than is the Department of Public Works. When I say that I am saying it

with no criticism whatever of the Department of Public Works; but, as I said before, their work is of an entirely different nature and we feel there is a job to be done here.

Judging from the reports which I have seen from editorials and feature articles in some of the most influential papers and periodicals across this continent, the work of this Commission and the fact that this Government has set up this Commission has brought very favorable comment for their work and to this province for the work they have done in this respect.

Now, before I close, Mr. Speaker, there is only one thing I want to mention here, and that is: when the Hon. Member for Moosomin spoke the other day he bemoaned the fate of the young people of Saskatchewan. He said they were destined to become, if I recall him right, 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. Well, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman may have forgotten, but I know the young people of Saskatchewan have not forgotten that it took two Wars under Liberal leadership to take the young people in 1914 and again in 1939 off the 'breadlines'; and if he will recall, that commencing in 1939 in our own University, when we held our first 'mock parliament' there, the CCF were the largest group and we have continued to increase the popular vote in that University every year until this year I note that we polled practically 50 per cent of the total vote. Just the other day, I read an article in the Edmonton Bulletin, stating that, in a pool held on the university campus at Edmonton, the CCF polled 34 per cent of the votes and the Social Credit, Liberals and Conservatives polled approximately 20 per cent each and the Labour Progressive less than 5 per cent.

I want to assure the hon. gentleman that the young people in this province and across this country are on the march. Tomorrow belongs to the young people and the young people in Saskatchewan – yes, and in Canada – are supporting the CCF. Mr. Speaker, I will support the motion.

Debate adjourned on the motion of Mr. Embury.

The Assembly adjourned at 6:00 o'clock p.m.