

March 22/90

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Toth.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Prior to the supper break, I was discussing the important initiatives that are taking place in the Department of Education, and the tremendous effort that is being made by this government to ensure that our boys and girls are prepared for not only the remainder of this decade but also for the 21st century. We understand that with times changing so rapidly that it's essential that we ensure that our educational programs change as well, because when we consider that the last major overhaul of our curriculum took place back in 1963, we can fully understand why there was a necessity to take a very broad look at changing all of the programs, and as a result we see what is happening with our core curriculum today.

This is something, Mr. Speaker, which is very much in line with the throne speech and our emphasis and the significance of Consensus Saskatchewan, because this government has over the last number of years been very involved with consultation with the Saskatchewan people, and very specifically with education.

When we consider that some six or seven years went into the planning for the new core curriculum as a result of the Directions report, there was a tremendous amount of consultation that took place over that period of time, and the fact that so many people have been involved and all of the different players involved in education, this is going to be very, very successful. We know that it will be successful for the fact that the teachers were involved. They have a role to play; they have a stake in this. We also know that the parents have been very, very involved, the trustees' association, the directors of education.

So as a result of all of the input that we have had and the consultation that has taken place over this number of years, I am very, very optimistic that this will be successful as we move into the implementation. We are now just completing the first year of that implementation, and I look forward to the changes that are going to be taking place over the next number of years. We also have emphasized, Mr. Speaker, the tremendous importance in having that partnership between home and school and community, and that's something that we want to continue to build on.

Prior to the supper recess, I had also indicated that 1990 is International Literacy Year. And we have a concern in this province, as you'll find in many other parts of the world, with the fact that there are so many people that have difficulty with reading and writing -- when one considers that in

this province that probably around 20 per cent of our population doesn't have an education beyond grade 9 and many people probably would have very few reading and writing skills. So in line with that, Mr. Speaker, we have a major campaign under way to attack the literacy problem. And in 1988 we entered into an agreement with IBM Canada Ltd. to introduce computer-based literacy instruction into Saskatchewan. Now this represents the first major application of such instruction anywhere in Canada.

Literacy programs are being made available through our regional colleges, through the campuses of SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), Read Saskatoon, and the Regina Public Library. The regional libraries are assisting by providing additional reading resources.

To this point, Mr. Speaker, over 4,000 adults have enrolled in literacy programs, and over 1,500 volunteers are helping to provide instruction, and that's really tremendous, Mr. Speaker, and it points out the tremendous effort that is being made by Saskatchewan people to attack this very pressing problem. Seven permanent instruction sites are already in place, along with four mobile units that can travel from community to community, and by 1991 we expect that 26 Saskatchewan communities will have regular access to computer-based literacy training.

I was very pleased this morning to have the opportunity in the city of Yorkton to participate in the official opening of the PALS (Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System) lab in that particular centre. And we had several graduates that received their certificates today, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, a tremendous amount of pride and satisfaction with these people of a variety of ages that have spent the last 20 weeks involved in the PALS program in that city. Our province-wide reading campaign, an undertaking of the provincial library, further promotes the development of literacy skills. Its purpose is to promote good reading habits among kindergarten to grade 4 students and their parents.

Another area that I want to deal with, Mr. Speaker, is that of evaluation. We have major new initiatives in evaluation under way at the present time. The Saskatchewan school improvement program helps more schools with each passing year. Our various teacher exchanges and student award programs recognize and reward achievement on the part of the key players in the school system. Our independent schools and private vocational schools continue to make major contributions.

Our commitment to French education remains strong. At the same time we are responding to Saskatchewan's demographic realities with new emphasis on heritage language instruction. We're continuing to explore new ways of getting the community at large more actively involved in what transpires within the school walls. At the same time we're examining ways for the school to reach out into the community in a more direct fashion and address some of the social problems that we know can hamper learning.

Undertakings such as these require resources, they require funding. And I want to clarify, Mr. Speaker, this government's record with respect to financial support for education. Our level of funding, Mr. Speaker, is almost 80 per cent higher than it was at the beginning of this decade.

More than \$840 million was committed to education in the 1989-90 fiscal year. One out of every \$5 the government now spends goes to upgrading the potential of our students of all ages.

Now we've heard members on the other side of this House try to point out that this government spends less on education per capita than any other province in Canada. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is just absolutely not true. They've indicated that we spend something in the neighbourhood of \$744 per capita. Well when you consider that we have a million population, and we've spent nearly \$850 million in this current year, Mr. Speaker, you can see that it is substantially higher than they have indicated. In fact we're not at all lowest in Canada, we rank somewhere around fifth or sixth in the nation in regard to the expenditures, but they continue to put out this misleading information. We heard the Leader of the Opposition indicating that here in this House just a couple of days ago.

Since 1982 we have increased annual funding for the kindergarten to grade 12 school system by over \$160 million, or 60 per cent. A total of \$360 million has been provided for upgrading existing facilities and building new schools over that same time period. Post-secondary funding has increased by over \$150 million or 90 per cent since 1982. Financial assistance to our post-secondary students is eight times greater than that provided in 1982, and the number of students receiving assistance has tripled. New measures have also been put into place to help students with special financial needs such as the disabled, natives, Northerners, and single parents.

Members opposite like to talk about cuts to education funding, Mr. Speaker. This makes it necessary to provide them with a few facts. The province's share of funding for the total cost of the kindergarten to grade 12 school system now stands at approximately 51 per cent. This is roughly where it was in 1982. The most recent survey by the Council of Ministers of Education showed that Saskatchewan student-teacher ratio was the third best in the country, better than the ratio for all three of the so-called "have" provinces.

We spend the same proportion of our provincial budget on education as our more well-to-do neighbour to the west, a healthy 20 per cent. Manitoba spends 18 per cent of its total budget on education.

During the past fiscal year, our two universities received \$207 million in operating and capital funds. This figure does not include substantial allocations from other departments.

A further \$70 million was provided to SIAST in 1989-90. Keep in mind that university enrolment has increased by almost 70 per cent in the past decade while enrolments in skill training programs have grown by 20 per cent since 1982.

Mr. Speaker, we know that all levels of education could use more money, but the fact of the matter is that the amount of money that we put into education has to be in direct relationship to the ability of the taxpayers to pay.

We hear a lot of concern raised today about the fact that there's a shortage of space on our university campuses, particularly in Saskatoon. We understand as well that when surveys were being done by the Liberal government back in the 1960s and the NDP government in the 1970s, that the analysis was showing that the enrolment in Saskatoon would not exceed 10,000 students. We can from that obviously understand why there was not much happening in so far as increasing the space. Now what we have seen though in the 1980s is that there has been a rapid increase in the number of students who want to carry on with their university education. So we're caught in a time of trying to catch up with building more space at a time when the economy has been down and dollars are just a little bit scarcer.

The past few years have not been banner ones for Saskatchewan economically, but we have maintained and increased our level of support for education despite the combination of drought and low resource prices. We have maintained our level of support even though transfer payments from the federal government have struggled to keep pace with provincial needs. Our schools can always use more money, Mr. Speaker. What we must ask ourselves is, where it is to come from?

Both municipal and provincial funding for schools is borne by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. Federal transfer payments are borne by the taxpayers of Canada, including Saskatchewan. We can therefore increase our education funding in two ways: we can either raise taxes or reduce spending in other areas, neither of which is very, very popular, Mr. Speaker. Fiscal responsibility is part and parcel of good leadership. This means being able to prioritize and allocate in a time of stiff competition for scarce resources.

We have consulted, Mr. Speaker. We have responded to the feedback we've received. We have prioritized on the basis of legitimate need rather than greasing the squeaky wheels. In short, we have maintained financial support for our schools in a fiscally responsible manner and we will continue to do so.

Our task through the 1990s and beyond is threefold. First, we must provide our students of all ages with the knowledge and skills they will need to play rewarding, meaningful roles in our knowledge-intensive society. Their employment prospects are directly dependent on their level of educational achievement. Moreover, their ability to play constructive, meaningful roles as citizens is similarly dependent on their ability to understand the issues that confront them.

Second, we must impress upon them that the process of learning is one that lasts for a lifetime, not just for 12 or 15 years of formal schooling. The world store of available knowledge is growing at a tremendous rate, Mr. Speaker. This touches all forms of gainful employment and all forms of social interaction outside the work place. To stop learning is to lose touch, to become alienated from the world around you.

Finally, we must impress upon our students that there is more to education than preparing for responsible citizenry and acquiring marketable skills.

Our schools are training grounds, in a sense, but they're also much more. They are also the custodians of learning for learning sake. If our students do not acquire a love of learning here, then where?

The debates surrounding our school system overlook the fact that learning is just plain fun. We learn much of what we do, not because it is likely to have market value but because it gives us pleasure. It broadens our horizons. It helps us to understand the other 5 billion people that reside on this planet. We must never lose sight of this, Mr. Speaker. If we do, we reduce the learning process to a mere shell of what it can and should be.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne, and I do so because it enables us to build on our strengths and make Saskatchewan an even better place to live. It charts a course whereby our schools can continue to contribute to economic growth and diversification through contemporary courses of instruction and other innovative programs. It allows us to focus our schools on the development of Saskatchewan's greatest resource: our human potential, in all its manifestations. It looks to the local needs of communities of all sizes by recognizing that our learning institutions are central to their security, central to their economic well-being, and very often social centres as well. By maintaining the health of our existing learning institutions and making programs more widely accessible, we help bring stability to communities all over Saskatchewan in what is a relatively turbulent time.

(1915)

Mr. Speaker, when you consider the four main points within the Speech from the Throne, economic diversification, developing human potential, helping local communities, and continued fiscal responsibility, Mr. Speaker, we have indeed an excellent blueprint for this government and for this province in the months ahead -- four good reasons, Mr. Speaker, why all members can support the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: -- Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to enter into this throne speech debate this evening, a historic debate in the sense that it may be the last throne speech debate before a general election is called. In entering the debate, Mr. Speaker, I want to address four pressing issues that I believe we face in Saskatchewan and in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

The first of those, Mr. Speaker, is the constitutional crisis that we currently face in Canada. The second is the out-migration crisis that we face in the province of Saskatchewan as a result, in large part, of the policies that the PC government has pursued over the last eight years. The third, Mr. Speaker, is the environmental crisis that we face globally and here in Saskatchewan. And the fourth issue, Mr. Speaker, that I want to address is the pressing question of poverty and hunger in our province, with 45,000 people in the last year having had to rely on food banks in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I want to turn now, Mr. Speaker, to the question of the constitutional crisis that we face in Canada, and I particularly want to comment on the English-only resolutions that we see being passed by municipalities here in Saskatchewan and in other parts of the country. Because, Mr. Speaker, I think the unity of our nation is in jeopardy today as it has not been for some time.

The disunity is in large part being flamed by the debate around the Meech Lake accord. And that accord, Mr. Speaker, in my judgement, has some serious inadequacies. But it's also a reflection, Mr. Speaker, the disunity is also a reflection of many other serious grievances including regional inequality in Canada, increasing economic hardship in the poorer parts of our country, and the unfairness of the free trade agreement.

Recently, as I mentioned, a number of municipalities in Saskatchewan have been passing English-only resolutions. Whatever their intent at the local level, these resolutions are clearly being interpreted by Quebec and by francophones across Canada as a rejection of bilingualism. Mr. Speaker, I believe that members of the legislature in this province must stand up in opposition to these English-only resolutions. We live in a bilingual nation with a multicultural composition. These English-only resolutions are not consistent with the bilingual multicultural vision of Canada that I believe the vast majority of Canadians share.

If we do not speak out in opposition to these resolutions, we will run the risk of watching a continued build-up of the sentiments that could ultimately cause Canada to break up. At the same time the inequities in Canada, which are flaming dissension in our country, must be addressed. The Mulroney government must begin to work with the provinces to eliminate regional inequalities in Canada. And unfortunately since Prime Minister Mulroney has been elected, Mr. Speaker, we have seen increasing regional inequality in this country.

We need a national government, Mr. Speaker, that will work to end poverty in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: -- What we have seen instead, Mr. Speaker, is a government at the national level under which the poor become poorer while the rich become more wealthy, and a tax system that has simply made those inequities even more severe.

And, Mr. Speaker, we need a government that will act to remove Canada from the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the economic hardship that that is creating for Canadians. That, Mr. Speaker, I believe, would go a long way towards creating a more united Canada. And on all those fronts the Mulroney government has failed Canadians, Mr. Speaker, and has created disunity in this country.

As for the Meech Lake accord, I believe some form of amendment is imperative. And one of the elements of the accord that most troubles me is the proposed formula for future constitutional amendments. The Meech Lake

accord in effect locks the hands of future generations of Canadians to change the constitution, because there must be unanimous agreement by all 10 provinces and by the Government of Canada under the amending formula proposed by Meech Lake.

Historically, history clearly tells us that such an amending formula is totally unworkable. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the current inability of the 10 Canadian provinces to agree on the proposed accord shows us that such an amending formula is unworkable. And one of the things that must clearly be changed if Meech Lake is to be approved is that unworkable amending formula, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to turn the question of the out-migration crisis in this province, which I believe is one of the issues most on the minds of Saskatchewan voters and most on the minds of the voters in my constituency -- my own constituents, Mr. Speaker. There is a lot of insecurity that is being created in communities around this province as people watch their friends and neighbours leave for other parts of Canada. And as members of this legislature will know, last year we saw more than 23,700 people leave the province of Saskatchewan, a higher level of out-migration than at any previous time in our history with the exception of the year 1970, when under the Liberal government of Premier Ross Thatcher, 28,358 people left the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party has put forward a number of proposals for turning this out-migration crisis around. And we have said, Mr. Speaker, that to begin with, it's time to change our approach to economic development in the province of Saskatchewan. Instead of relying on foreign investment from foreign companies like Cargill and Weyerhaeuser to stimulate our economy, it's time instead to begin a process under which the Saskatchewan government works co-operatively with small business here in Saskatchewan and with the co-operative movement here in Saskatchewan to rebuild our economy.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, for the Saskatchewan government to begin using the public sector again as well as a vehicle for stimulating the economy in this province. And in this sense, Mr. Speaker, our commitment to a mixed economy model is fundamentally different from the members opposite, and we believe it's one of the key vehicles for stemming the out-migration that's currently taking place in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party are calling for a policy of full employment in this province, that that should be the number one priority of the provincial government here in Saskatchewan. And we have advocated that there are many approaches that can be taken to this, but one of them involves, Mr. Speaker, investing in our environment in the province of Saskatchewan. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that jobs can be created in Saskatchewan through a government investment in recycling, through a government investment in reforestation and replanting our clear-cut forests, and in many other environmental initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

We have said, Mr. Speaker, that one of the keys to stemming the out-migration exodus in this province is to begin addressing the deficit.

And instead of running up a higher deficit every year, as this government has over the last eight years, a deficit that in government departments alone now exceeds \$4 billion, it's time instead, Mr. Speaker, to see a plan as our leader has proposed whereby the deficit in this province will be retired over a 15-year period. That is key to stemming the out-migration exodus in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have said that one of the keys to keeping our young people at home is to make sure that they can gain entrance to our post-secondary education institutions in this province once more. And we have said that we will provide the money to the University of Saskatchewan to lift quotas in the College of Arts and Science at that university, and that we will re-establish the spaces that this government has eliminated at Kelsey, the 500 student spaces that have been eliminated, Mr. Speaker. Those, Mr. Speaker, are some of the keys to stemming this out-migration crisis that we face.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we are saying that it is time that the privatization of our public assets, including our natural gas resources and our potash and our forest resources, was stopped in the province of Saskatchewan. It's only by regaining control of our natural resources in this province, a control that is being forfeited by the members opposite, that we can hope, Mr. Speaker, to have any real ability to control unemployment in the province of Saskatchewan. You can't control unemployment if you don't have any control over your natural resources, Mr. Speaker, and this government is forfeiting that control, and we in the New Democratic Party will work to regain that control for Saskatchewan people after the next election, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to a third issue, and that is the pressing environmental crisis that we face at a global level and right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I was disappointed with the lack of new initiatives in the throne speech that would advance the state of the environment in the province of Saskatchewan. The one positive initiative which will provide . . . was the proposal for an annual State of the Environment report, which will provide the public with an overview of current trends in resource conservation. Depending on how this is prepared, Mr. Speaker, it could prove to be a useful monitoring and education tool.

But I was hoping, Mr. Speaker, to see the government make some announcements with respect to recycling or reducing greenhouse emissions into the environment or banning the sale of products that contribute to the depletion of the ozone layer, and I heard no such announcements in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the Government of Saskatchewan today to implement a six-point program to protect Saskatchewan's environment, and I want to outline what I personally believe those six points should be, Mr. Speaker.

Point number one, Mr. Speaker, is that the government should set an example in environmental protection in the province of Saskatchewan. It's time, Mr. Speaker, for government cabinet ministers to drive smaller cars in this

province. It's time, Mr. Speaker, that all paper used by government departments and Crown corporations should be recycled in the province of Saskatchewan. I'm tired, Mr. Speaker, I'm tired of us constantly throwing away tons of paper every month, just in this legislative building alone, and it needs to be brought to a halt, Mr. Speaker.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, that the provincial government purchase only environmentally sound products -- only environmentally sound products, Mr. Speaker -- and that would involve a fundamental change in the purchasing policies of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Point number two, Mr. Speaker, is that I believe the Government of Saskatchewan should work to encourage reuse, recycling, and a reduction in wasteful consumption such as unnecessary packaging, in the province of Saskatchewan. In this regard, I would like to see the Government of Saskatchewan promote the use of bottles again -- for pop, juice, and beer purposes. I urge the Government of Saskatchewan to work with municipalities in this province to institute a blue box recycling program throughout the province of Saskatchewan, beginning with our major urban centres.

Mr. Speaker, hundreds of people in my constituency have told me over the last year that they want to see a recycling program put in place in this province and in the city of Saskatoon, and I say that the time is now for the Government of Saskatchewan to act on that need.

Mr. Speaker, I want to urge the Department of Consumer Affairs in this province to introduce legislation that will introduce a phased-in ban on the sale of product lines that use excessive amounts of packaging. I think, Mr. Speaker, it's time to say no to the sale of products that use excessive packaging in the province of Saskatchewan, and force manufacturers to market their products in packaging materials that will be less environmentally harmful and that minimize the amount of material that is used in that packaging.

Third, Mr. Speaker, the third key point in such a new environmental program for the province of Saskatchewan should be that the provincial government should pursue a purer food policy and should seek to reduce the use of pesticides in the province of Saskatchewan. Active support should be given to all producers in Saskatchewan seeking to convert to more environmentally sustainable forms of agriculture.

(1930)

Organic food production and marketing should also be supported by government. The provincial government should ban aerial spraying within one mile of lakes and rivers in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The provincial government should introduce legislation that would require all persons living in cities, towns, and villages to post notices on their properties when applying pesticides or herbicides.

I would also like to see the province, Mr. Speaker, encouraging urban municipalities to ban pesticide use within their municipality completely.

I'm very conscious, Mr. Speaker, that the process of reducing pesticide use in agriculture must be a gradual and phased-in one. But as an urban representative, Mr. Speaker, in this legislature, I see no reason why the application of pesticides in urban centres could not cease immediately. Such a step would enhance the safety and well-being of all urban residents and particularly children, who often play on lawns or run in parks that have recently been sprayed with pesticides.

Point number four, Mr. Speaker. I believe that Saskatchewan must do its part to respond to the global environmental crisis specifically by addressing the questions of our province's contribution to the greenhouse effect and to the depletion of the ozone layer.

I call upon the Saskatchewan government to stop constructing coal-fired generating stations like Shand in the province of Saskatchewan, because coal is clearly the fuel that most significantly contributes to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and the world, Mr. Speaker, just can't stand to have any more coal-fired generating stations.

I call upon the Saskatchewan government to invest in a massive program of energy conservation designed to increase the efficiency with which we use energy in our province, designed to reduce fuel bills, and designed to reduce energy consumption in our province.

And I also call on the Saskatchewan government to place restrictions on the sale of new ozone depleting products in our province, and to require that material containing CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) be recycled at local solid waste disposal sites across the province. And I think for instance, Mr. Speaker, of refrigerators and air-conditioners in automobiles. When they are disposed of, Mr. Speaker, right now in Saskatchewan, no effort is made to remove the CFCs from those products. Those CFCs just leak out at local dumps around the province and then, of course, make their way into the atmosphere. There is no reason, Mr. Speaker, why we in Saskatchewan couldn't be doing the same that Burnaby is in British Columbia, and that is requiring that those CFCs be recycled when those waste products are disposed of.

Mr. Speaker, point number five: the Government of Saskatchewan should undertake a major program of reforestation and soil conservation in the province of Saskatchewan. Some progress is being made in this regard, Mr. Speaker, and I want to acknowledge that the government has taken some preliminary steps in the area of soil conservation in terms of its recent agreement with the federal government, but much, much, more needs to be done. With more than a million clear-cut acres of forest in northern Saskatchewan and with Saskatchewan soils having in some cases lost up to half their organic matter, this program of forest and soil renewal is key to the economic future of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And finally point number six. The Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I believe -- and I call on the government again to do this and to do this now as I have over the last many years in this legislature that I have served -- the Government of Saskatchewan should phase out uranium mining in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, as alternative employment is put

in place for all workers affected. We can not, Mr. Speaker, continue to ignore the fact that the two countries to which we sell most of our uranium do not use much of the uranium that we do sell to them for civilian purposes, and stockpile the large bulk of it for military purposes, Mr. Speaker.

As I have said in this legislature before, out of every 10 pounds of uranium that leaves the Key Lake mine and is exported to the United States, only one and a quarter pounds is used for civilian nuclear electrical generating purposes, and the other eight and three-quarter pounds, after 90 days, become the property of the U.S. military, Mr. Speaker, and remain in the U.S. enrichment plants built primarily for manufacturing nuclear weapons. And that depleted uranium is drawn on in those plants to manufacture things like the hydrogen bomb and the MX missile. And, Mr. Speaker, as long as I am in this legislature, I will continue to oppose that practice that the government of Saskatchewan refuses to do anything about.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also call on the Government of Saskatchewan to abandon its plans for a nuclear reactor in the province of Saskatchewan. We don't need a nuclear reactor in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That will not be a solution to our energy needs in this province. Those energy needs can be met through a program of energy conservation and investment in safe renewable forms of energy like solar energy and wind energy and hydrogen in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I say as part of this sixth point, that the Government of Saskatchewan must say no to a slowpoke reactor at the University of Saskatchewan being proposed in the middle of my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I say no to a slowpoke at the University of Saskatchewan for four important reasons.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, because I don't think it makes sense to take untested technology, which this slowpoke reactor is, untested technology, and locate it in the midst of the most densely populated part of Saskatchewan -- the University of Saskatchewan campus. That just makes no sense whatsoever.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I say this project doesn't make economic sense. It's going to cost \$50 million to revamp to infrastructure and the heating systems at the University of Saskatchewan just to accommodate a slowpoke reactor on the campus. I say to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan: think what could be done to improve the quality of education at the University of Saskatchewan if this \$50 million was instead applied to an investment in hiring more faculty and staff at the University, upgrading library programs, improving access to computer facilities at the University, and above all, lifting the quotas in the College of Arts and Science.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that a slowpoke reactor does not meet our needs in Saskatoon because, Mr. Speaker, it will vent low levels of radioactive gas into the atmosphere and poses the risk, the remote risk albeit, but nevertheless the risk of a nuclear accident occurring at the University, particularly in the event that the radioactive fuel bundles, when they are

being removed from a slowpoke reactor on campus were dropped, Mr. Speaker, and radiation went into the environment as a result of that.

That kind of a nuclear accident, Mr. Speaker, is something that the home owners in my constituency who live in the neighbourhoods adjacent to the slowpoke reactor, Mr. Speaker, if the reactor was to be located on campus, that is something, Mr. Speaker, that those residents are very concerned about. And I might add, not only are they concerned about it from a health and safety point of view but they are concerned because their insurance policies provide no protection in the event of a nuclear accident. And, Mr. Speaker, finally I say that this project should be put aside, Mr. Speaker, because the proponent, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., has lost its credibility. Mr. Speaker, it's lost its credibility with the people of Canada, Mr. Speaker. It has lost its credibility first of all in the sense that it has not been able to sell a reactor anywhere in the world for 10 years; and secondly, Mr. Speaker, in the sense that every reactor that it has sold has lost money; and thirdly in the sense, Mr. Speaker, that AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.) was prepared to sell reactors to countries like India and Pakistan and South Korea, knowing full well that those countries would use those reactors for nuclear weapons purposes, as they have done. And so, Mr. Speaker, I say this slowpoke reactor project is a desperate attempt by AECL to maintain their economic viability in Canada, and we should not artificially keep this useless Crown corporation alive any longer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on one other important issue before I sit down, and that is the pressing concern that we have on this side of the Assembly about the growing crisis that we see in Saskatchewan at our food banks. As I mentioned, 45,000 people in the province of Saskatchewan last year relying on food banks -- half of that number, Mr. Speaker, being children, 22,000 children in the province of Saskatchewan -- relying on food banks in the last year alone. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that that is immoral, that in one of the bread-baskets of the world we have thousands of children going hungry. And this government has watched that situation develop over the last four years and they have done nothing, Mr. Speaker. The first time, Mr. Speaker, that we have a recognition of hunger in this legislature is in this throne speech where finally, six months before an election, the government is acknowledging that hunger exists in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party say that it is time for a government that is prepared to make a commitment to end hunger and to end poverty in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that is a commitment that our leader has made, and it's a commitment that I, as a member of this side of the House, am very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have outlined a detailed program for ending hunger and poverty in the province of Saskatchewan, and I want to comment on just a few of the highlights of that program in the three or four minutes that I have remaining to me.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, we believe on this side of the Assembly that the key to ending hunger and poverty in Saskatchewan is a government that is

committed to a policy of full employment in the province of Saskatchewan, and we believe that the best way to achieve that is a mixed economy approach to economic development.

And we also believe, Mr. Speaker, that special efforts must be made to provide economic opportunity for Indian and Metis people in this province who have been hit particularly hard with unemployment, Mr. Speaker. And we believe that it is time for a government that will structure economic development for Indian and Metis people, so that it takes place under Indian and Metis control. And that is a very significant policy change, and one that members opposite have consistently refused to follow.

Third, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the pressing problem of unemployment in northern Saskatchewan, where unemployment rates exceed 60 per cent, we believe that the time has come to create a northern economic development fund financed with a portion of northern mineral and forestry royalties, and directed towards community and co-operatively controlled economic development projects and low-interest loans for small business owned by Northerners, so that we can begin to get real community-based employment creation in northern Saskatchewan.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, a second key element to ending hunger in the province of Saskatchewan is that at long last we have a government that is prepared to establish a special provincial fund that will allow any school board or school or day-care centre in this province that believes it has a problem with hunger in its school or in one of its schools or day cares, to apply to the special provincial fund and to obtain sufficient funding to establish and operate a school breakfast and school lunch program with a nutrition education component, anywhere in the province of Saskatchewan where hunger is a demonstrated problem.

And third, Mr. Speaker, we say that the time has come that the Government of Saskatchewan must ensure that the working poor in this province, people who are working full time -- 38, 40, 45 hours a week -- can make ends meet as a result of their labour. Mr. Speaker, we have a government in this province that has created a cheap labour policy, and I say it's time to end that cheap labour policy. It is time, Mr. Speaker, to talk about a higher minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan, because right now, Mr. Speaker, someone can work at minimum wage full time and they're still living more than \$1,500 below the poverty line even if they're a single individual. And that is truly shameful, Mr. Speaker.

We say that it's time to have an independent minimum wage board in the province of Saskatchewan with representatives from employees and employers across this province that will establish a just minimum wage for Saskatchewan people, and that will have as part of its mandate a minimum wage policy on a phased-in basis that will ultimately eliminate poverty for single individuals living on minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1945)

We say, Mr. Speaker, that it's time for changes to the labour standards legislation in this province that will ensure that part-time workers

receive employment benefits prorated to those provided to full-time workers in the same work place. That is key, Mr. Speaker. There is no reason in Saskatchewan why part-time employees should not receive the benefits on a proportional basis that full-time employees do, and yet we see that happening again and again in work places across this province, and that injustice must be ended.

And Mr. Speaker, we say that it is time to ensure that we expand publicly funded and administered educational programs in this province to meet the demands for training that we have in Saskatchewan. It's time to move away from the government's approach of expanding and fostering private vocational schools in the province of Saskatchewan, all too many of which rip off students who are attending those schools, and start investing our resources again in publicly funded, affordable, post-secondary education in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we say it's time to tackle the poverty and hunger problem in this province in the North by seeing the reinstatement of the northern food transportation subsidy in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I recall when that subsidy was dropped, Mr. Speaker. I recall that it was a government, Mr. Speaker, that was so uncaring about the people of northern Saskatchewan that in the same week that it dropped the northern food transportation subsidy, and as a result of that sent food prices in remote northern communities sky-rocketing, the cabinet who did that in the same week, Mr. Speaker, set an unlimited amount -- lifted the cap, in other words -- and allowed an unlimited amount of money to be spent by cabinet ministers on accommodation for out-of-province travel and on meals, Mr. Speaker. And I say that that symbolized everything about the priorities of the PC government opposite, Mr. Speaker.

We say, Mr. Speaker, finally, that it is time to revamp income security programs in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, that not only means higher social assistance rates and higher family income plan rates in the province of Saskatchewan, both of which have now been frozen for more than five years -- in fact, Saskatchewan assistance plan rates have been frozen for eight years by this government. But perhaps even more important, Mr. Speaker, what it means is revamping the social assistance system so that there are some real financial incentives for those who want to work and can work to go out and take work without being penalized by members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

The longer I'm Social Services critic, the more I understand, Mr. Speaker, what this government has really done to the poor in terms of keeping them down. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the key elements of their policy is to establish regulations under the Saskatchewan assistance plan Act in which, when people work, they can keep virtually nothing of what they earn if they're on social assistance.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, someone is on social assistance in the province of Saskatchewan. They get self-employment in the summer; let's say they're landscaping. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that under the policies of the members opposite, someone can work full time at a landscaping job, be on social welfare to support a family, and not keep one cent of what they

earn, Mr. Speaker, all summer? Talk about injustice. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, that says that if somebody is working part time and they can't quite make ends meet, Mr. Speaker, and they have to apply for social welfare, that for the first three months they're on social welfare every penny they earn at their part-time job will be deducted from their cheque. What injustice, Mr. Speaker.

These regulations are being proposed and implemented by the same government that rhetorically talks about getting people off welfare. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've discovered from the hundreds of people who come through my office that that rhetoric is just nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

And we on this side of the House will revamp the social assistance system to ensure that people are always further ahead when they work than when they are on social assistance, Mr. Speaker. We will provide real financial incentives for those who want to work and can work, to be able to take work and be further ahead. And if they have to be on social assistance to supplement their income, they will still be much further ahead than under the policies of the current government. And I challenge the government opposite to revamp their policies to fall in line with our philosophy, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the ways that we on this side of the House intend to tackle the problem of poverty and hunger in the province of Saskatchewan. We want to see a decent income security program in this province, Mr. Speaker. We want to end the eight-year freeze on income security payments in this province, and we feel, Mr. Speaker, that if this government would take the family income plan and use it as a vehicle for providing an income supplement, a fair income supplement to working families to take them up close to the poverty line, that that would make an enormous difference in terms of eliminating poverty in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying that those are some of my personal priorities and some of the priorities of the New Democratic Party. These, Mr. Speaker, are priorities that the throne speech has totally failed to address, Mr. Speaker, and for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the throne speech when the vote comes next week. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hopfner: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been listening very closely to the members opposite but before I rebut to what I've heard and what I want to say this evening, I'd first of all like to congratulate Her Honour on a very fine throne speech which she presented to this Assembly a couple of days ago. I want to also indicate to you, sir, that my congratulations on your appointment of the Clerk of this Assembly and a Deputy Clerk for their first times in those capacities here in the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: -- And also welcome the new pages that are serving us very well here in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, if you would have noted that when the throne speech was read, that the thrust of the throne speech basically came back to the basics of Saskatchewan -- the basics of Saskatchewan which is agriculture.

Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, is in one of the most devastating situations we've ever had in Saskatchewan's history since the 1930s. And I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very upset here because basically from the members opposite, other than the first day of trying to become a . . . put this Assembly into some sort of a showboat scene, they indicate that they were going to go with us on this emergency debate. We shut down the throne speech for a day just to speak on agriculture alone as an emergency debate here in this Assembly. And we gave them as a government, we gave the NDP the opportunity to join with us in passing a resolution of this Assembly asking Ottawa, asking the federal government, to help us with aid for our farmers here in Saskatchewan.

And when we went back into the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to you I have not heard one word from the members opposite, one word mentioned about agriculture. That is where their priorities are, sir. Their priorities are in the gutters of politics. They do not wish to discuss farming because, Mr. Speaker, the NDP know nothing about farming. And I want to indicate to you that that is my greatest disappointment. I have gone through two question periods now, Mr. Speaker, two question periods in this House since we've had this emergency debate, and not as of yet had the NDP asked any one of our ministers of an agricultural question, as an update as to what's happening in Ottawa if there is any update to be given. And if we stood on this side of the House to ask those questions, Mr. Speaker, they would say that we were staging something.

I challenge these members to get back to the basics in Saskatchewan. The farmers need us to get together here in this province and work together and get some consensus across this province as to what the direction we want to take with agriculture.

All I've heard is a mockery, Mr. Speaker, of decent people, a mockery that they've made in trying to get into the . . . and accuse ministers and accuse board members, and prejudge people in what had taken place with STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company). They've been trying to get back into some pretext of a GigaText scandal, and all this kind of stuff, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that's all behind us.

We have a future. We have to look at a future here in Saskatchewan, a future that is out there where real people are after some real answers. And I'm appalled; I'm appalled by the Leader of the Opposition where he was on a television talk show, phone-in talk show the other night, and what does he do? He accuses farmers in Saskatchewan of having RVs (recreational vehicles) and toys on their farm lands, that that's what they're doing with all the moneys that the government's been handing out to them -- buying RVs and toys for their farms. This is what the Leader of the Opposition is saying about farmers, about agriculture, about people. I could not believe it.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when I speak, I speak on behalf of my farm

communities in the constituency of Cut Knife-Lloydminster, and I speak with the communities in my constituency. I look in my constituency and I like to say this much to you, and I'd be fair and honest to the members of the opposition. My riding had an opportunity of have rain, and no grasshoppers, and next to no drought. There was a couple of areas that had less rain than others, but on the whole our area had been fairly well off, and in the area of having a good return in bushels of . . . during the harvest time. And when it comes down to where the hurt really came in was just basically in the commodity prices, and that hurts everyone. And when I see what's taken place and how it's hurt, the commodity prices have hurt my farmers in my area, I can understand the double and triple hurt of the people in the South and the central and eastern regions of this province. The north-west was not as beat up as the rest of this province and we've tended to hang on a little longer and not feel that hurt as others have for the last, well, since 1982 when the interest rates have actually sky-rocketed at 24 per cent.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, if you go back to the years of '81 and '82, I want to indicate to you that it's not me that's saying it but it's farmer friends of mine, that have indicated that when interest rates had sky-rocketed to the 24 per cent margin, that that's when the troubles of agriculture began. I want to say that when they asked for help from this provincial government in that day it was under the NDP administration. The now leader was an attorney general at that time and the premier was Allan Blakeney at that time. And when they were asked to help the farmers, both of them and all members -- and I see some of the familiar old faces over there that were there then -- they turned their backs on those farmers, they turned their backs on Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, what has happened, they had a more interest on bringing back an unfinished constitution to this province, to this country, and that's our legacy of the attorney general of the NDP in those days and now the Leader of the NDP Opposition. No interest, no interest in what really makes Saskatchewan tick at all. The man is out of touch with Saskatchewan, and I don't think he's ever had a real feel for Saskatchewan.

I want to say that when the members talk here, they've talked about the exodus of people. Yes, I'll be the first one to stand up and say, yes, we've had some people leave Saskatchewan. But I want to remind the members opposite that under the good days where you had a good royalty return on oil and potash and our resources here in the province of Saskatchewan, what did you do? I'll tell you what you did: you closed in oil wells and gas wells, and you closed down forestry in this province, and you closed down the every little bit of resource that could have created many jobs in the days of when the world economy was still flowing fairly strongly. Those people left and were forced to go into the Williston basin area for oil jobs and forced to go to Alberta for jobs and down East, etc. And I want to say that you closed the doors to business.

(2000)

If you would have been inviting . . . If you would have invited the people, the business people into this province when you had the opportunity to

invite them, when you had the dollars, when you had a flow of resources, we could have been what Alberta is today. We could be what British Columbia is today, with a population base, with a growth base, with a business base in this province that would have been next to none. What do we have to do? We have to take over an era . . .

An Hon. Member: -- I think you grabbed the wrong speech there, Mike.

Mr. Hopfner: -- Well make fun . . . The member from Elphinstone is making fun, and fun he may make, but I'll say this, that the people on the street are not going to be fooled any longer. I want to say to you that there are people that have gone into Alberta and there are close friends of mine that are in Alberta, but I'll say this; I'll say this. They're coming back, they're coming back because . . . I'm going to give you an example of an upgrader in Lloydminster -- Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, just outside the RM of Wilton. We're going to have a \$350 million injection into the Saskatchewan economy in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan. We're going to have people from all over this province, young people coming to work in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan. Prince Albert, Yorkton, Saskatoon, Hodgeville, Belle Plaine -- you name it; they're coming.

And they say where we went through, we went through hard times in Lloydminster. We had a 48 per cent vacancy rate in Lloydminster, and now they're claiming that by December of this year we'll be down to a zero. There won't be a place to be gotten in the city of Lloydminster and outlying areas.

People are going to have to come back and build because it was the initiative of this government, the initiative of the federal government, and the initiative of the Alberta government, along with Husky, that the member from the Quill Lakes has condemned in his speech, in his rebuttal in this Assembly in this session. He condemned the upgrader in Lloydminster. And I want to indicate to you that it's just the return of the condemnation that you people had given to the people of Saskatchewan when you had the 10 or 11 years under your reign.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: -- I want to indicate to you, I want to indicate to the NDP, Mr. Speaker, and I want to indicate to the people of Saskatchewan, that it was our government that has finally brought some competition with other governments into this country, and we are now competing along with other governments to bring industry into Saskatchewan. And I'll say this, I'll say this: if you would have done that same thing when the Lougheed administration in Alberta was competing with Ontario and Quebec and all across this nation for industry to come into Alberta, if you'd have done that under your Blakeney administration here in Saskatchewan, we would have had those kinds of businesses here. Those kinds of resources and technology and everything else . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Why aren't you doing it, then?

Mr. Hopfner: -- Well, the NDP ask why we aren't doing it, and the member

from Regina Rosemont he sits there babbling from his chair, Mr. Speaker.

I want to indicate to you that let's take the Alameda-Rafferty project. That member from Regina Rosemont, he was against the project. He is the one that got all of his little red-neck colleagues outside this Assembly and banned against the project, and they, Mr. Speaker, have done everything and anything to stop that project. But I want to indicate to you that that little member there is just about on his last leg as far as leaving his central little army here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, because the guy, along with his leader, were asked to leave the Estevan area. They were asked to leave the Estevan's constituency. They couldn't stand him. They couldn't stand him, and he . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right, a member said he does not have the kind of guts to go back into that riding at all, even himself.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is just one project that if the NDP would not have opposed, that we could have had jobs and young people working over the term.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm proud of the throne speech. I'm proud of the way the throne speech had gone, basically because, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak to you on the idea of the consensus, the Consensus 100.

I'm kind of excited about this, Mr. Speaker. The NDP have made a joke about the Consensus 100 as they were speaking, but I want to indicate to you that that's just exactly what it is to them -- it's a joke. They, as a government back in the '70s, have never consulted with the people in Saskatchewan. They never consulted about potash take-overs and uranium and all this other thing that they now so much agree with our administration that we did the right thing in doing what we're doing to get it out of debt. But they don't admit it, Mr. Speaker; they don't admit it. They admit it to us on the sly, but they won't admit it to the people out there.

But this Consensus 100 is one of the most positive things that this province . . . ideas that this province could ever have come up with, in our Premier. As far as I'm concerned, this gives everyone an opportunity, one of the greatest opportunities of getting a most broadest consensus that you would ever be able to ever establish in this province. And I'm excited about the fact that some of my people out in the riding Cut Knife-Lloydminster -- away from me as just their member, but away from the government and away from this rhetoric -- can sit down and establish policies and present their outlook and their viewpoints to the government and to suggest the direction they'd like to see the Government of Saskatchewan take into the 21st century.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm sure when we get a consensus that the members opposite will finally find that agriculture will be one of the main parts of the focus of this consensus. I would say that without . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The members asked me how would I know. I would say that, without guessing, because agriculture is the mainstay of Saskatchewan, is number one. I want to say in a comparison, and if the member really wants to know why I feel this, I'll say this: we have a

megaproject in Lloydminster, the upgrader, the Lloydminster upgrader. That project is about a \$3 billion project. Once in its lifetime it's a \$3 billion project. Agriculture in this province is that yearly. Agriculture spends through every community in this province, every city in this province, over \$3 billion every time they plant the crop, every time they go into the field, seasonally. That is an annual megaproject, and that is why I say you can have all the megaprojects, you can have all the other things and frills that you wish to present in Saskatchewan, but agriculture is the main source. So I want to say that I'm looking forward to their consensus as to the way that they'd like to see this government head in terms of agriculture.

The Premier, Mr. Speaker, when I speak of him I want to speak of him as saying this. I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, that our Premier is probably one of the greatest leaders that's ever been in Saskatchewan's history or indeed in Canada.

I want to say it for this reason, Mr. Speaker. Because if it was not for our Premier, the Premier and the member from Estevan, agriculture I don't know where it would have been if it would have been for relying on other people to bring it to the forefront. But our Premier brought it to the forefront. And he brought it to the forefront, not this year, Mr. Speaker, but he had brought it to the forefront years ago.

And I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that over the years, although we have had contributions from the federal government . . . We cannot allow the contributions to stop. And I want to say this. Our Premier and this government has over the past years brought over \$6 billion into the Saskatchewan farm economy, and, you know, Mr. Speaker, we all know that it hasn't been enough to do the job.

So when it comes to the members opposite talking about education and talking about health care and talking about all these other sorts of things, I want to say, although we're having to shore up in agriculture, to go to the wall for agriculture, we also had to maintain our education and our health standards in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when we took government in 1982, the budget for health care in this province was something like around \$700 million. Mr. Speaker, the new budget is not . . . But I would kind of guess myself without not knowing the final figures, but I'll guess that there's going to be an increase in health care in this new budget, I'll just guess that.

But I'll tell you this; I'll say this to you, sir, that we've more than doubled health care under this administration. And that, Mr. Speaker, was basically due to the fact that we took the moratorium off of health care in this province. We took the moratorium off of health care in this province, and we also, Mr. Speaker, we also have decentralized health care in this province.

I want to indicate to you that now where I come from, as far as the moratorium is concerned, is where the members opposite have shut down a hospital in my riding in the community of Lashburn and have refused to

build hospitals in Lloydminster, in Maidstone, and Cut Knife. And I want to say to you, sir, and I'm proud of this government and this administration, that those hospitals are now replaced and running strong. I want to say to you that it is one of the economic benefits to a community as well as a good care facility and good opportunity for these people to stay close to family.

I want to say with the fact of education, when we came to power in 1982 we had about a \$600 million budget in Education. Mr. Speaker, we now today, being criticized by the NDP because we haven't done anything in education, have now more than doubled education expenditure in this province. And now I'll tell you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The members are criticizing.

(2015)

There is over \$800 million just in governmental expenditures in education, Mr. Speaker, and then when it comes to the other portion which brings it up to about \$1.2 billion, is the actual local ratepayers' tax hit out in our local areas, which comes out to about \$400 million roughly. I will say to the member opposite that that's where you can come up with your \$1.2 billion educational fund in this province since we've come to power.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, we've been working for families. We've been working to keep families closer. We've been working to expand in our education facilities. And we've also been expanding, and trying to expand, the attitudes and ideas and the individualistic drive of people in their own areas.

We've been, Mr. Speaker, trying to our best to also give the people an opportunity to believe that Saskatchewan . . . believe in themselves and to believe that Saskatchewan is the place for them to settle. And I know, like up in my particular constituency, sir, that the average age in my riding right today is an age of 33 or 34 years of age now, and it's full of young, aggressive people starting up in new businesses and also, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the younger fellows and gals are taking over the family farms and taking on a big challenge.

So I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that these are the kind of fundamental things that we should be talking about in this Assembly. We should be talking about togetherness. What people out there tell me is, why can't the opposition and the government get along so that we can solve some of these economic dilemmas? Why can't you quit the desk-beating and all these kinds of things and the name-calling and . . . They make fun again, they make fun again, but this is what they're saying, sir. And anyway, when it comes down to the real thing, Mr. Speaker, we gave the NDP the opportunity to just do that, but they've refused. And they refused that, like I said earlier, on that emergency resolution for agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, we are in 85 years of confederation and, Mr. Speaker, above all, above anything, we should all be thinking in the realm of firstly being Canadian. And I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look back at our pioneers and the struggles and the aspirations that they would have had

years ago, I can only say to you, Mr. Speaker, that those challenges haven't gone away in the sense that there are no challenges today. I want to say that the challenges today are probably as tough and rough and hard as they've ever been. Maybe we've got more comforts in life but today -- and you look into the '30s and you look back at people starting into their farm life, farm career, and building a life for themselves -- our world economic situation, sir, is putting a real burden on the people here in this country and I think it's time that we all pulled together, we put our political differences away, and we try to come up with some nearby consensus.

The debate here symbolizes, Mr. Speaker, the importance of our democratic and parliamentary institution. Every member of the Legislative Assembly has taken a sacred oath to serve the best interest of the people who elected us. And this is a special bond, and it's a sacred and special bond between the people and their elected representatives. That's basically, Mr. Speaker, the point I'm trying to make. The Speech from the Throne affirmed that partnership between the people and government, and in the 1990s people want a government that is responsive, a government that listens, and a government that will work in partnership with them for the common good of society. Mr. Speaker, that's what they like to see in an opposition.

We live at a time in our history, as I had indicated earlier, when all around the world we see that people are saying they want governments that are there to carry out the will of the people.

The election in East Germany was a powerful message. The people there said they wanted freedom and economic prosperity. The election in Nicaragua was another powerful message. The people in that nation voted for freedom and economic prosperity. All around the globe, each and every day, we hear reports of the move to democracy and the march to freedom.

Now we live in Saskatchewan . . . I should say we here in Saskatchewan have a proud history and heritage when it comes to our democratic and parliamentary institution. At the opening of every legislative session we have this debate, and, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to hope that each one of us take this debate seriously. It is a time for us as a government and as a province and as legislators to affirm for Saskatchewan where we have been and where we are and where we are going.

In listening to the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the session, I was inspired by a genuine commitment of the government to listen to the people of Saskatchewan and work in genuine partnership with people to build for the future.

The history of Saskatchewan has been one of building through co-operation. The partnership of which I speak is not some political slogan designed for the moment, but rather the partnership of which this government speaks is a genuine commitment to the people and the long-range future of Saskatchewan. The times require leadership and, as I had indicated earlier, not partisan politics.

The Speech from the Throne clearly stated the goals and objectives we face in building a new and better Saskatchewan. Allow me to state the four pillars of building a better future for this province. Together, we as a province must expand and diversify the economy. We live in a world increasingly and more competitive. International trade is vital to our economic growth, and we cannot live isolated from the realities of the global economy. The member from Rosemont may think we can, but I have news for him. In the 1990s, to ensure new jobs, new economic development, and new opportunities for Saskatchewan people, we must have an expansion and diversification of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the second pillar of Saskatchewan partnership is the security and the stabilization of communities. Saskatchewan is the total sum of many communities that make up this great province of ours. We are indeed a province of communities; every city, town, village, hamlet, rural municipality, has a unique identity in Saskatchewan's mosaic. The future of Main Street in Lloydminster, Cut Knife, Maidstone, Delmas, Sweetgrass, is the future of every unique and special community this province is -- and this province is the future of Canada.

Together that makes us the province of Saskatchewan, and if they grow and prosper we all grow and prosper. Building communities is part of the special partnership in Saskatchewan. The security and stabilization of communities is one of the four pillars of partnership. Mr. Speaker, every community throughout Saskatchewan and indeed throughout Canada are a growing concern and about the very future of Canada.

And I have listened, Mr. Speaker, to those concerns on coffee row in constituencies all across the province, and people are very concerned about Canada's situation as a nation. At this crossroads in Canada's history, I'm reminded of the words of John Diefenbaker, and we all know them. He believed in one Canada, one nation, and he once said, before all else, let's be Canadians. Before all else, let us be Canadians and affirm our faith in the future of this nation.

Mr. Speaker, the third pillar in the partnership as stated in the Speech from the Throne is the growth and the well-being of people. This government has listened very carefully to what people have said about the quality of life they expected in the province. Saskatchewan people want us to continue building on our quality health care system -- it is very important to our people of the province -- and to have a health care system that is second to none in Canada.

Saskatchewan people want a clean environment, a healthy environment. They want this government to work in partnership in protection of the environment. Saskatchewan people want their children . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. There's too much interference with the hon. member from Cut Knife-Lloyd, both sides of the House. Would you allow the member to continue.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: -- Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating, want quality education for their children. They want a government that shares their desire to build a first-class education system in this province. Well, Mr. Speaker, I indicate to you that we have a first-class education system in this province, and we plan on maintaining that first-class education system.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(2030)

Mr. Hopfner: -- Through the new Family Foundation, and the Minister of the Family, we will work in partnership with Saskatchewan families to enhance the quality of family life in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth pillar in the partnership is the responsible and effective management of resources where we can do many of these very, very well thought out programs. Our water, our forests, our minerals, all of these precious resources must be managed in partnership with people for the long-range development of Saskatchewan in our programs.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a few moments to address some of the other remarks that were made by members opposite, and those, Mr. Speaker, where the member from Saskatoon University had indicated that we have no programs or would have no programs for part-time workers in the province.

I want to indicate to you, sir, that our Minister of Labour last year had presented a paper for proper benefits for part-time workers in this province. And what did the NDP and Barb Byers do? They opposed it. They unequivocally opposed it. Part-time workers could have had many benefits, many more benefits than what they have today if the opposition would not have been so radical in their approach to oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank this government for recognizing part-time and low income earners, and by that, thank them for the increase in the minimum wage. And I thank them on behalf of the young people and indeed all the people in my riding. And I'm sure it was accepted very well right across this province.

I want to indicate to you, sir, that when it comes to meaningful and responsible government, I want to give my ministers and my Premier a bouquet. I know it has not been easy for them. I know that the moneys are not there -- the people are taxed to no end, and they can't afford no more taxes. And I implore upon all governments, all levels of governments, to hold the tax, to trim where they can, because that's the request of my people in my riding. I ask my ministers and this government to become more efficient throughout all their departments because that is what my people are asking for me to say here in this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: -- I want to thank the Minister of Finance for the opportunity he had given people in my riding to actually take the role of Finance

minister in the province, for the province. And I want to thank those participants for taking the initiative and the leadership for indicating to the Minister of Finance to become more of a main organizer for all government departments and to make sure that they are spending their money in a very, very frugal way.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many things that could be said on the throne speech, many more things that I know my colleagues are going to be talking about. But I want to indicate to you that I am looking forward to serving my constituents for quite some time yet, sir, and I want to thank them for giving me the opportunity to represent them here in the legislature.

I know that there are many people that are maybe much more able to deliver a more colourful speech, sir. But I want to indicate to you, sir, that what I'm saying here tonight is not for me to be in some sort of a contest against the Leader of the Opposition that had been speaking for quite some time using quite a number of words that even I'm sure yourself would have to use a dictionary and find the meaning to. But in the substance of his speech I know I've said a great deal more than he has in the little time I've been here.

So I implore, I actually ask and beg the members of the opposition to take another thought on them opposing the throne speech, because when you do oppose the throne speech, you're opposing agriculture, you're opposing education, you're opposing health, you're opposing consensus, you're opposing seniors, you're opposing children, you're opposing families. Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of things, these are the kinds of opportunities where an opposition has a right, has a way to gain some respectability with the public of Saskatchewan.

And I don't know why I should be trying to have them come and join with us in our plight for the people here because it can only do me harm by having the opposition gain in popularity. But I want to say that, Mr. Speaker, if they are truly supporting agriculture, if they are truly supporting health and education, if they are truly genuine, there is no way that they can oppose the throne speech.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak in this debate on this throne speech. I don't have many complimentary things to say about it, but as the member for Regina North East constituency, it's an honour to rise in this House and speak on behalf of those constituents who I represent and have represented since 1985. It is a constituency that has people from all walks of life, people who I think it's fair to say are representative of every part of the world.

Those people, Mr. Speaker, are interested in the affairs of government. I know in the phone calls I have received since the throne speech there is a considerable amount of disappointment in the fact that this throne speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did not address the concerns of those people in Regina North East constituency.

Now I'm going to begin my comments on the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, by putting it into the Saskatchewan context. Let's look at what the situation in this province is today. It is important to point that out in order to identify, Mr. Speaker, how this throne speech and the lack of initiatives by this government have failed to address those issues.

Mr. Speaker, in this province since 1985 when this privatization government opposite began to apply their ideology to the privatization in Saskatchewan, we have had a net out-migration of 65,000 people -- 23,000 last year alone. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is the highest rate of out-migration -- the second highest rate of out-migration since the Depression of the 1930s.

We have thousands of children who are going hungry, and the number of children who are having to use the food banks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province grows every week. People are using the food banks in a way, Mr. Speaker, that we should not see in this province which used to be called, and still is called, and still should be called the bread-basket in the world.

Education is struggling. Now the Minister of Education rose in this House earlier today and he talked about the great things that this government has done in education, and the member who just sat down did likewise. Well there will be another time when I will want to speak on it at greater length, Mr. Speaker, but I want to just use one example to indicate how wrong those members are.

I have here a letter which has been written to myself, and I know it's been written to all Regina members by the Regina School Division, in which they indicate just exactly how well this government has treated school divisions. In 1981, the provincial portion of funding for education, the provincial grants, covered 43.5 per cent of the education costs in this Regina School Division. Do you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what portion in 1989 the provincial grants covered of the cost of this school division? It was only 34.5 per cent.

And this is the story, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Minister of Finance keeps interrupting because he knows that the answer that he will provide in his budget isn't going to be a good one either. But this is an example of the kind of neglect that this government has shown in the field of education, and that's the reason why, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order. Allow the member to make his comments.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for . . . The Minister of Finance, who was at one time the minister of Education before he was the Minister of Finance, feels very sensitive about this. And I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I was him I would be sensitive because I would not be able to hold my head up in public when it came to talk about the education record of this government.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- So I think all of what the members opposite have said, Mr. Speaker, is disproven by this one . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member inform the House whether the formula today is the same . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Seems to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have struck a nerve over there. But let me move on, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order. All members of the House will have an opportunity to address the throne speech, and I would ask you to allow the member for Regina North East for make his comments.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now that the Minister of Finance has left the House maybe we could . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order. Members know they're not to make reference to absence or presence of any other members of the legislature.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, a point well taken. Let me continue. I pointed out the problem that exists in education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to list a couple of more items. The job creation record in the province of Saskatchewan in the last several years has been the worst in Canada. We're losing farm families at a rate of 1,000 farm families a year, Mr. Speaker. Our deficit is \$4 billion, accumulated. That's not the total debt of the province, which is now in the area of between 12 and 13 billion dollars, but the operating deficit of this government which inherited a surplus of 139 million dollars, is now been jacked up to 4 billion dollars. We have small businesses in this province who are struggling, barely able to survive, and many of them are closing their doors.

(2045)

Before this session I wrote, in fact I had delivered to most of the small businesses in my constituency, a little survey. I wanted to know what they thought of the record of the government, and what the government was doing for them, and what the situation was.

I want on the record, Mr. Speaker to give to you some of the results of the survey which I took. I asked the question, because the government opposite has supported initially, very strongly, the GST, the goods and services tax that Mr. Mulroney is proposing to put in on January '91. I asked: do you

think the federal GST of 7 per cent will affect your business? Seventy-eight per cent of them said, a lot; another 19 per cent of them said a little. That's almost 100 per cent, and they all said it was going to affect them in a negative way. I said to them, some people say that the provincial government's policy of privatization will provide new jobs and investment opportunities, while others say that the government has gone too far with these plans. Which idea is closest to your own way of thinking? The government has gone too far -- 53 per cent of those businesses that I surveyed said the government has gone too far. I wish the minister of economic . . . the new super Minister of Economic Development was here to hear that . . . I'm sorry . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. The members are not to make reference to absence or presence of other members of the House. I would ask the member to refrain from that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- I agree. But for the record for the Minister of Economic Development, I want him to be aware of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I asked: do you feel that the financing for a business like yours is getting easier or harder to obtain? Seventy-five per cent of my business people said it is harder to obtain. I asked: should the provincial government be taking more of a role in helping businesses like yours to obtain financing? Sixty-three per cent said yes, there is a bigger role for the provincial government to take. I asked: do you feel the provincial government is doing enough to help keep local business taxes low? The answer was no, by 66 per cent. That is the response of that part of our community and our economy that creates 75 per cent of the jobs in Saskatchewan.

Now I give you these examples, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to, as I said earlier, put the whole throne speech into the Saskatchewan context. But what does this government answer to these things, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well they say they're going to establish a committee of 100 people which is going to develop some kind of a consensus.

I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there already is a consensus. The business community has a consensus, and the consensus is that this government is not doing a good job but is managing badly. School boards are expressing a consensus and they're saying that education has been given short shrift by this government opposite, and therefore they're finding it difficult to do the kind of job that they are mandated to do. The public of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, has developed a consensus and it's saying that it's time to have an election so that all of the people of Saskatchewan can express that consensus and set the direction for the 1990s and not some hand-picked group of a hundred people whose role it will be to prop up the government and hopefully be used to bail the government out of its political problem.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster talk about the need for ministers who will be more efficient. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is the member who I believe is the Legislative Secretary to some other minister as well as being the Whip or the Deputy Whip -- whatever his title is -- and he is one of almost every one of those members who has an extra paying job, in most cases for doing nothing.

Here we have a government that speaks about the need for ministers to be more efficient but it appointed in last fall a cabinet of 20. It appointed for the first time something called associate ministers. That's a first for Saskatchewan. Not a first that we should be very proud of. We have, I believe, 10 legislative secretaries. If that government is really serious in saying that there has to be more efficiency of government, that's where they could start, by reducing the size of the cabinet, by doing away with the associate deputy ministers, and by reducing, if not doing away with, all of the legislative secretaries.

I want to comment just briefly on the remarks of the Minister of the Environment who spoke earlier this afternoon. I'm not going to take a great deal of time, but one of the things that that minister said -- the member from Melfort

-- he said that the throne speech was about change, and that's where he ended. He didn't talk about the change except the change that's happening in other parts of the world. One would have thought that he would have spent some time talking about the change that's needed in Saskatchewan.

I know the kind of change that's needed here because it's reflected by people all over this province, the change that's needed here is a change in government. There is a crisis of confidence in Saskatchewan; there is a crisis of inadequate leadership in Saskatchewan, and before investors are going to make investment decisions and before people are going to make longer range plans, they need to have an election so that they know what the future is going to be, whatever the result is. And that's why it's more important than ever that there be an election called instead of structuring some silly notion of a consensus committee which people all over this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are saying is nothing but a joke. We need leadership, and what we have is a Premier and a government who has abdicated its responsibility.

Now the member also boasted, the member from Melfort also boasted about the free trade agreement. Well I don't know how anybody could stand in this House and boast about the fact that these people supported a free trade agreement that has resulted in a loss of 75,000 jobs in Canada. That's what he's boasting about. And what I found even most disturbing of all is that that was the Minister of the Environment who stood in this House and all he could say about the environment, and I quote to you, is that, "There will be more talk about the environment." That's all he said.

We've had enough talk. We've had enough reannouncements and reannouncements on reannouncing in throne speeches about the environment. We need some action. We need a government who is going to be serious about abiding by its own environmental laws. We need a government who is not simply going to reject the laws or put them aside when it makes a political decision on some project, as it has done with the Cargill operation, and decide they're not going to apply the environmental assessment process, for some strange reason. And the Minister of the Environment thinks that all that needs to be done now is some more talk -- trying to buy time for the election, Mr. Speaker, until it is over.

I want to make a comment about the situation in the agricultural sector. The Leader of the Opposition, the member from Riversdale, spoke eloquently about that in his remarks and in the debate here on Monday. I think the first question period we had in the House last Monday told it all. When the Premier was asked to explain the commitment which he said in his throne speech that the federal government had made to provide funding to Saskatchewan farm families, he stood in this House, in his place, and he could not answer any of the questions. He could not say the kind of funding that was there. He could not say how it would be made available. He did not say who would be eligible. He was not able to say how much was available.

And when the Premier was asked, Mr. Speaker, to incorporate in that resolution some responsibility on behalf of the provincial government, some responsibility through the agricultural credit corporation, he instructed his caucus to vote against it, and he washed his hands clean. I find that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, totally unacceptable. Why would not any government in this province, where agriculture is so important, take some of the responsibility that it is able to take? Forget about the banks . . . no, no, don't forget about the banks. Try to make them do what they should do. Try to make the federal government do what it should do, through the Farm Credit Corporation and through the assistance to farmers who need to put the crop in. Of course we should do that. But for Heaven's name, here is an opportunity for the Government of Saskatchewan to set an example by saying, through the agriculture credit corporation, that it will not take legal action against farmers until they are financially in better shape, until there is funding available -- and the Premier leads his caucus in a vote against that. That does not say very much for the commitment.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there is a reason for all of that. I think there is a policy that's being implemented in agriculture that has been unstated. I think that that policy was stated by the Premier back in 1977 when he wrote as a university professor, an agricultural economist. That is the philosophy that he adheres to and that is the policy that's being implemented, when the Premier said that, and I quote:

Realizing that most of our food is produced by less than 20 percent of the farmers, who tend to be good businessmen as well as producers, society may not wish to support higher food prices or "producer security" so that the non productive 80 percent of the farm population can live in the country -- at a profit.

The present Premier of Saskatchewan said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so is it any wonder that when farmers express concern about the continuous delays in providing the much needed cash so that they can get their crop in, and the Premier stands in his place -- he only uses political rhetoric and stalls some more -- that one can only conclude that that policy which he stated several years ago is being implemented.

That's the reason for those delays. Every time there is a delay when the farmers need help, more farmers go. One thousand farm families a year go. In 1985 they said there would be a long-term agricultural program. We still don't have it and 1,000 farm families a year have gone. The policy

of this Premier is being implemented, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think more deliberately than some people realize, by the kind of approach that they have taken.

Now let me turn now to some specific remarks about the area of the environment. Let me begin by saying that the failure of this government to protect our environment is no less than all of its other failures, in fact in some ways, Mr. Speaker, even worse. While all over the world the concern is growing and action is being taken, the government of this province only pays lip-service to the issue which may very well determine whether there is any future for human life on this planet.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- They try to portray their speeches as some kind of form of action. But yet all their approach is an approach of crisis management. And they only act when they get caught.

The throne speech makes some passing reference to -- and I'm going to read it: "State of the Environment report."

But I ask this: who will prepare this report? What resources will be provided in order that this report may adequately be prepared? Given the record of the government on not carrying out its commitments, can anyone really believe that this will happen, or is it another stalling tactic until the next election? And finally, will it only be used as a way for the government to cover up its own negligence as has been the case in the past? I say to you, sir, that such a report will serve very little useful purpose if it is not independently and objectively prepared. If it is simply prepared by the officials of this government and by the politicians, it will not be a report worth tabling in this House.

Now it's ironical, to say the least, for the throne speech to talk about environmental review process, and that's the other topic that it mentioned very briefly. And I read the words from page 10 of the throne speech, and it said the following:

Recent events have resulted in some uncertainty about environmental review procedures for development projects.

(2100)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the issue on the environment in this province has got nothing to do with uncertainty. It's got nothing to do with sorting out provincial and federal jurisdictional responsibilities. It's got a great deal to do with the credibility of the environmental review process which has been badly eroded because this government has deliberately set out to discredit it by not adhering to it.

The issue is clear and simple . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, the Minister of Education is back in the House . . . or the Minister of Finance trying . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. I think the member from Regina North East has been a veteran of this House for many years, and I think he knows better than to make reference to people's absence or presence in this House, absence or presence . . . Order, order. So I'd ask the member from Regina North East to refrain from making reference to absence or presence of other members of the legislature.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall continue and hope that the Minister of Finance does not continue to interrupt. The issue, as I began to say before he did so rudely interrupt, is very clear and is very simple. The government refuses to accept a notion that an adequate environmental impact statement and public review should be part of the approval process of any major project on any project which may have environmental implications. That government opposite refuses to accept that fact.

The Rafferty project is a very good example. It has received a considerable amount of debate. It was a deliberate attempt by this government opposite, by all those members opposite to bypass the environment review process in order to have a political project which the Premier and the member from Souris-Cannington wanted in their constituencies.

And what has been the net result of that? It has created suffering for workers in the city of Estevan, it has shattered some expectations that were there, and it even has resulted in the demotion of two cabinet ministers -- the former minister of the Environment and the former Deputy Premier, who are no longer holding their positions.

Now I ask, Mr. Speaker, has the Premier learned anything from that? Not at all, because the same kind of process continues. As I said earlier, nothing is clear about jurisdiction.

We have in Saskatchewan a proposal for a pulp mill at Meadow Lake by a company called Millar Western. It's a major project. It may be a good project, but the government refuses to allow a public review of this project to take place. It refuses to allow public hearings to take place so that the concerns which are legitimately expressed by people in the North, by people in the community, by people in Saskatchewan, so that those concerns can be addressed and be answered.

Now there's talk about a zero liquid effluent process at the pulp mill, and I think that's commendable if that's the fact. I don't question that. But these things should be given an opportunity to be provided as clear evidence at a public hearings.

I thought it very interesting that when this pulp mill was announced, the Minister of the Environment said, and the company said, that there would have to be two years in which effluent would be dumped into the Beaver River. And when asked at one of those public relations meetings in Prince Albert by one of my colleagues: why can't you do this right away at the beginning of the operation of the pulp mill?, an official of the Millar Western said at a public meeting: because it's not possible to do.

Well some politics come into this now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the minister now announces that he's going to give approval, and all of a sudden some magic wand has been waved and somehow it now is possible to be done. I say to the minister, look carefully at who's fooling who; or are you the one who's trying to fool the public? Why did you say at the initial announcement that there would have to be a dumping of two years? And the company confirmed that there was no other choice. And now the company says they can live by the new requirements. I think that should have to be proven in a public review process so that the public can be assured.

Now there's a question of the operation of the mill. And I'm not being critical of this one mill; I could apply this in any other situation. We have witnessed other so-called high-technology projects in the province which, to say the least, have failed to live up to their engineering standards and which have resulted in environmental contamination. That's happened, Mr. Speaker. You just have to look at Cominco . . . or Cameco and the spills that are continuously taking place, of wastes at that operation and uranium mines across northern Saskatchewan. Surely that should be the subject of a public review process. Surely the public should have an opportunity to be assured of what kind of safety measures are going to be in place to make sure that those kind of accidents don't happen.

And with respect to another question, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the fisheries. What was the effort that was done with respect to that in an environmental impact statement? Well essentially, Mr. Speaker, all that happened was that a few interviews with sports fishermen in the area were taken. There were no aquatic field studies conducted, only some interviews. The loss or the diminishment of the fishery would impact on not only the sport fishery but the domestic fishery and outfitting businesses as well. Don't you think, Mr. Speaker, that that should be subject to a public review so that the evidence could be provided to show that all of those questions and all of those things had been addressed, because they were not addressed in the environment impact statement, and the Minister of Environment knows that.

I give you another example why a public review should be done. Communities downstream from this mill, communities like Beauval, and Cole Bay, and Jans Bay, Canoe Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows, Dillon, Turnor Lake, and so on, people living in these communities come from the land. They live off the land. They fish and they trap and they hunt, and tourism is important.

But you know that the environmental impact statement failed to go far enough with respect to answering those concerns. It failed to go far enough in its demonstration to these people that their traditional life-styles and traditional sources of income would be guaranteed. A public review process was necessary and is necessary to address those concerns because they're still being expressed.

What about the impact of the demand of the pulp mill on the forest ecosystems and the associated resources? This environmental impact statement, which this minister has okayed, failed to discuss the impact of

the removal of several hundred thousand cubic metres of wood from the forest in the Meadow Lake area. All that has been essentially ignored in the environmental impact statement and must be considered to be a serious error in process, and yet no public review process is being required. Everywhere else in Canada it's required. In Alberta, the Minister of the Environment there is putting a stop to some of the projects that were being proposed there and is saying, look, we got to get serious about this and we're going to have to hold some public review hearings before they go any further. But in Saskatchewan, where they talk in two paragraphs about the environment in the throne speech, the Minister of the Environment has decided it's not necessary.

Mr. Speaker, Millar Western pulp mill has a mill in Whitecourt, Alberta. Millar Western in Whitecourt, Alberta has been served several control orders issued by the Alberta Environment department because effluent levels from its stacks have been beyond the limits set in the operating permit under the Clean Air Act. There is wood wastes and ashes that are spread around the community near which this pulp mill is located, and the community is upset. Has this been addressed in an environmental impact statement that the Minister of the Environment has approved? Of course not. And yet he refuses to require that there be an environmental impact public review process that takes place.

But let me turn now to another project -- and I'm only using these as examples to reinforce the proposal which I want to make to this House and to the government opposite. There is a proposal of a fertilizer plant by Cargill, mostly funded or backed up in its funding by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that in this case the government opposite has not even required that an environmental impact statement be prepared, never mind the fact that it won't ask for a public hearing process to take place. The government has arbitrarily decided that there would be no environmental impact review of any kind. I don't understand that because this is a government that governs by the polls, and yet every poll that's been taken in Canada and Saskatchewan, any responsible person in public life and even schoolchildren today will tell you that the environmental risks should not be taken any more. And yet this government opposite is prepared to take those risks.

It talks about consensus. There is a consensus about the environment. The consensus is that the environment has to be protected if the future of life on earth is going to be assured. There should not even be any question about an environmental impact review on such a project, no doubt about that.

I want to give you just a few examples of why I say this, Mr. Speaker, and why this project should be subject to a full public review. First of all, there's a matter of water supply. It has been said through the press, as provided by the government opposite, that water usage from Buffalo Pound Lake will be about 350 tonnes per day -- tonnes per day -- and Saferco or Cargill and the government claimed that this volume is insignificant.

But I question those numbers, Mr. Speaker because industry sources have indicated to me that those numbers are not in fact real. Industry sources

have told me that the actual volumes will be either in the order of 3,000 tonnes per day, which is the minimum water usage if this plan uses all air cooling, or in the order of 15,000 tonnes per day if they use evaporative cooling. In either case it's a very significant amount of water usage, Mr. Speaker.

We know, those of us who live in Regina and in Moose Jaw and communities around this part of the province, that it is not uncommon for us to have to ration water during the summer, and yet these people and the government opposite and the Minister of Environment think that that's insignificant. They won't allow or require even for an environmental impact statement to be prepared so that we can see exactly what is going to be the result here. The plant will use large quantities of de-mineralized water.

The waste effluence from this "de-min" plant will contain high levels of dissolved solids and are unsuitable for irrigation. Saferco could evaporate this stream or inject the effluent into deep wells.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that both methods have environmental impacts that should be reviewed in public, and yet the members opposite won't even require an environmental impact statement.

If the plant uses evaporative cooling, it must discharge the order of 1,000 to 2,000 tonnes per day of cooling tower blowdown. This effluent will contain small quantities of ammonia from time to time and relatively high levels of dissolved solids.

Now the company has stated that the plant will not discharge to a watercourse -- I'll take them at their word -- so therefore one can only conclude that presumably it will be disposing of this effluent through injection into deep wells or through irrigation of adjacent farm lands, or some other such way, and these disposal methods could have significant impact on third parties. And that should be a subject of public review, Mr. Speaker.

The plants will use a wide variety of chemicals and catalysts.

This plant will use a wide variety of chemicals and catalysts. The question is, are adequate plans in place to contain accidental leakages and to provide for responsible disposal of hazardous materials? We don't know that because there has been no environmental impact statement and there is no requirement by this government for a public review. Let me give you another example.

Ammonia and urea plants each produce process condensate streams containing significant quantities of ammonia, methyl amines, and urea.

You have to ask the question: is Saferco using the best available technology to minimize or eliminate the impact of these contaminated streams?

Don't you think that the public has a right to know? I think the public has a right to know. The public thinks that the public has a right to know, but the government opposite refuses to make it available to them because there's no environmental impact statement and there is no requirement for an environmental public review process. Where else in Canada do we see this kind of neglect and irresponsibility? Let's look at our neighbours to the west, Alberta.

In that province of Alberta the approvals for all industrial projects, including fertilizer projects, are subject to full public review before the energy resources conservation board, full public review. Environmental questions are addressed, competitors' questions are addressed, economic feasibility is addressed, but in Saskatchewan under this government . . . similar to the Rafferty-Alameda, none of those are addressed. The only thing that is addressed is the politics of this government.

No wonder all that the Minister of the Environment could say in his remarks on the throne speech today was that there is a great deal that is going to be talked about the environment. I say to the minister, talk isn't enough. Look at your record. Look at the failure of your environmental record and do something about it before some of the damage that is done is such that it is too late.

Mr. Speaker, the environmental impact assessment and review process in Saskatchewan is not working. It's not working because the government stands in the way. It's not working because the government interferes. It's not working because the government manipulates it to suit its own political objectives. It's not working because environmental concerns have been secondary considerations. And yet the environmental impact assessment and statement process should be the most effective tool in society's efforts to manage and maintain a healthy environment.

And I say to the House and I say for the record, as I have said to the press and in other places, that the time has come for the establishment of an independent environmental protection commission with a broad mandate to protect and to enhance our environment. The present process has no credibility and does not work.

In Rafferty, in the Millar Western project, in the Cargill project the government is either the proponent solely or is in partnership with the proponent. It requires the environmental impact statement, it is party to that statement, and it is party to that statement, and then it also sits down and has to decide whether that statement is adequate. Now that clearly is a conflict of interest. And so the Minister of Environment reviews his own EIS, or environmental impact statement, and decides whether it's adequate and whether it should go ahead. I say, Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious conflict of interest, and you can only look at the experience, and the experience has shown that the public is not being very well served.

This independent environmental commission would remove the politics out of decisions affecting the environment. It could require that an environmental impact statement be prepared. It could initiate one on its

own. And it, Mr. Speaker, would review any environmental impact statement and make a recommendation publicly to the minister and report it to the legislature so that the minister and the government would be held accountable.

I think it ought to have some other broader mandate as well. I think it would recommend standards of environmental quality and protection. It would supervise baseline studies to measure the present extent of environmental degradation. It would implement a system of effective environmental monitoring and identify areas where compensation or mitigation is required. It would publish an annual report on the state and the future of our environment by identifying developments and situations that endanger our environment or people, and make recommendations for action.

This is the kind of action, Mr. Speaker, that we need if we are going to assure that the interests of environmental protection are looked after in this province, no matter who the government is. This is an issue that's too important to leave to the whims of certain politicians like the members opposite, who choose whenever they so please to either ignore environmental laws, or actually break those environmental laws to suit their own purposes.

And that's why this kind of independent environmental protection commission is absolutely essential, and that's why this party, the New Democratic Party, is committed to implementing one after the next election when we hopefully are the government on the other side of the House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the throne speech did not mention a single legislative initiative in the environment. There was, last year, a promise of legislation that would complement the national legislation and Ontario's legislation to mitigate against the effects of CFCs to protect our ozone layer. One year later, Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting for that legislation -- it was not introduced. And yet there was no mention of it made in the throne speech and the Minister of the Environment didn't even refer to it when he spoke earlier today.

Workers on the work site are usually the first to become aware of an environmental hazardous situation. Unfortunately, in most cases they're put in a very difficult situation. They're put in a situation where their jobs may be in jeopardy if they report this environmental hazardous situation. Workers want to play a role in protecting the environment like the rest of the public, and they should be given an opportunity to play that role. They shouldn't have to fear for their jobs. They should be protected. And that's why there needs to be legislation that will protect workers, and that's why we need to have, as is being proposed in other parts of Canada, whistle-blow legislation which will provide such protection. One would have thought that the government might have looked at that and proposed it in the throne speech, but we didn't see anything about it.

Now there's a lot of examples of these kinds which I would, if I had the time, would have wanted to address. But I want to just point out some of

the failures which I will be addressing in other occasions during this session. I think we need to address the failure to remove PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl) from populated areas, which this government has not yet completed even though it's been over two years in the process; the failure of the minister to initiate a public inquiry into the numerous spills of waters at northern uranium mines, which was called for by people in the north and by the mayors of the north; the failure of the government to introduce legislation to protect the earth's ozone layer, as promised in the last throne speech; the failure of the Minister of the Environment to take a stand against the 720-acre garbage landfill on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton which is threatening the water of the North Saskatchewan River which serves all kinds of communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan; the failure of the government to address the issue of sustainable agriculture -- not a word. And the list could go on, but there will be other opportunities to talk about those, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to just now conclude by talking about one other failure of this government. And I read for the members opposite from a statement that was made in the last year's budget in a booklet called Challenges and Opportunities Saskatchewan, Protecting Our Environment. I quote:

In 1989-90, the Government will expand on its recycling activities by undertaking a "blue box" pilot project. (And) this project will provide collection boxes so that Saskatchewan residents can deposit products such as newspapers, cans and bottles (and) recycling.

Five pilot projects -- the minister, when he spoke to the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, reduced that to one or two. But a year later, there still isn't any initiative that has been shown. It's time that this government honoured its commitment to the environment by introducing and implementing a sensible waste management program in the province. Simple restatements of old promises which have not been kept aren't any good any more.

After all these long times of studies and comments, we need to get some conclusions that are drawn and some actions that are taken. This government has been in power for eight years; that's been a lot of time. Twelve months ago it promised to do something; it still hasn't done it. And it's not as if the need isn't there. The Department of the Environment officials have confirmed that upwards to 850,000 tonnes of waste are produced each year in Saskatchewan. At most, only 2 per cent is recycled in this province, far below the national average of 10 per cent.

Provincial governments in Ontario and British Columbia and Alberta are actively working to establish blue box recycling programs in their large urban centres, and maybe in rural Saskatchewan there has to be some variation of that. By year end, Ontario expects that more than two-thirds of single family urban dwellings in that

Dprovince will be involved in the curb side recycling program. The Alberta government is implementing a comprehensive recycling program in co-operation with communities and industry and within its own public service. In British Columbia, Victoria area residents diverted 1,188 tonnes of waste through their blue box program in the first two months of

operation.

In the little community of Chaplin in Saskatchewan, a school class is carrying out a collection system for bottles and cans and other things. But where is the government? This government sits on its hands, it sits frozen with inactivity, and it refuses to take any action. And so to assist them, I want to make some proposals here in my concluding remarks, and I want the minister to listen carefully because there are a number of immediate steps that the provincial government could be taking to catch up with other provinces and move forward in the entire waste management area.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, the government should establish a Saskatchewan recycling and waste reduction council serving as a co-ordinator bringing different groups together. Its membership would include municipalities and industry and environmental and community organizations, and it's mandate would be to provide leadership in developing recycling awareness, bring together communities, industry and concerned organizations, and assist in a wide variety of projects, including a province-wide curb side recycling program in urban centres and any modified rural operation that's necessary.

Secondly, the government should establish an achievable waste reduction target, say by the year 2000, and a plan to accomplish that goal.

Thirdly, the government should provide leadership by example in provincial government departments and agencies and facilities and institutions. Over a year ago I wrote to the former minister of Environment proposing that at least in the legislative area they could provide a paper recycling project. He wrote back to me -- I won't read the correspondence, I'll do that in estimates -- that he was looking at it and that there would be some action.

When that minister left, I wrote in December of 1989 to the new minister. And I said the same thing and he repeated the same thing, that the government is studying it. Well they've been studying it for a long time and it's time they did something about it.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, the government should develop a provincial government procurement and contract compliance policy which favours purchase of materials with recycled content.

And fifth, the government should provide research and promotion assistance for Saskatchewan non-profit organizations and businesses and municipalities to establish recycling projects in the province. If it even spent a small fraction of the amount of money on this that it spends at the Cargill operation, we could create many, many more jobs through recycling and environment protection industries in this province. And if we don't get on it very soon, it'll be done somewhere else, and we will once again only be supplying the raw product, which we have done for far too long in this province.

Taking these first steps, Mr. Speaker, would provide leadership and give Saskatchewan people the opportunity to participate directly in the four R's of sensible waste management: reduce, re-use, recycle, and recover. It also must be emphasized that a comprehensive recycling program means more

jobs for Saskatchewan people, more economic activity for Saskatchewan business.

Throughout the country recycling programs are proving to be effective, and often 70 per cent of households are recycling household waste when given access to a curb-side recycling program. Today more than 1 million Canadians are involved in some type of blue box recycling program. I regret to say that Saskatchewan is falling far behind other jurisdictions because the government has taken no positive or concrete action to protect our environment for future generations.

Saskatchewan people are ready. They're ready to become actively involved in protecting our environment. Municipalities are actively seeking solutions to waste disposal problems. All that is required is that this government provide some leadership role.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we're at a turning point in the human habitation of this earth. No one questions that the environment is a complex, delicately balanced system which is being bombarded by pollutants at a very increasing rate. If we don't act now to check the continued pollution of the earth and the destruction of our environment, we will eventually destroy the fitness of the planet as a place for human beings. And for this to happen, we need commitment and we need political will from government. We need a carefully thought out, comprehensive, sustainable development strategy which is not ignored or subverted whenever government, for its partisan political reasons, feels it should do so. Unfortunately, that is not what we have seen in Saskatchewan, and I hope that soon it can change, Mr. Speaker.

(2130)

The throne speech is an empty document. It shows that government opposite is a tired government. It shows that this government has run out of ideas. It is a throne speech prepared by a large cabinet, which is just collecting their pay and putting in time. There's no leadership, from the Premier down. There is such a lack of leadership that they're trying to cover up with some consensus committee of 100 people -- which will be hand-picked -- whose job it will be to try to protect this government.

The only consensus, Mr. Speaker -- as I close I want to say this -- the only consensus needed at this time is the consensus of an election. Let all of the people decide on the direction for Saskatchewan in the 1990s, not a hand-picked hundred. Let the whole population decide. Call an election so that the directions for the 1990s could be clearly set, and we could go on with building this province to the great province that we know it can be, rather than tearing it down, which has been the record of those members opposite since 1982, eight years ago when they were elected, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Petersen: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on the throne speech. I hope

everyone's enjoyed the first four days of the new session. We've had a very, very interesting four days. I really don't feel that we've had much of a holiday or much of a break between, because from the time we left back in 1989 until now I had expected the opposition to live up to some of their promises, some of their commitments to work with the government, be non-partisan, work together for the betterment of the people in Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I feel like we've only broken for a weekend and come back to the same rhetoric, the same drivel, the same philosophy, the same dogma that I heard in some of the longest most boring speeches that this House has ever had to endure in the previous session. It's starting all over again. That is their idea of recycling, Mr. Speaker, a perfect example of recycling. Old ideas, old philosophies . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Old speeches.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: -- Old speeches, as a matter of fact, one of my colleagues said. And we probably have to go back and check it out in the Hansard, but I imagine they're right -- and old ideas, old ideas.

The Leader of the Opposition, absolutely a man for the '60s, no question about it, but, Mr. Speaker, this is the '90s, and we see that local MLAs are calling on the government for projects to work with agriculture. They're calling for a balanced budget. That's the headline of the Prince Albert Daily Herald, March 19, "Local MLAs want a balanced budget." Well, Mr. Speaker, we've heard some talk about it in 1982; there was a balanced budget with a small surplus. And it's easy to juggle things around when you ask your Crown corporations like SaskPower and SaskTel to go out and go into debt -- massively into debt -- and then declared dividends to the Consolidated Fund so that you can appear to balance your budget. They balanced it on the backs of borrowed money through the Crown corporations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those local MLAs from Prince Albert want to go back to that type of a situation where they were cooking the books and seemingly having a balanced budget. As a matter of fact, talking about old ideas and recycling, one of them, the NDP MLA for Prince Albert, said, and I quote if I may, "Kowalsky said the government must find some concrete means of helping farmers, perhaps through the re-implementing the land bank." Well, Mr. Speaker, on March 19 the member for Prince Albert said those words, those very words, in 1990. It says so right here.

Mr. Speaker, the land bank was an experiment. I'll give them credit for trying a new idea. I'll give them credit for trying an idea to see if it would work. And there are possibly some benefits to helping intergenerational transfers of farms and businesses; but, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite couldn't help themselves. They had to stick their little fingers in the pudding and stir it around and dabble in it and say, you're going to get a farm and the other four guys, no. Sorry you can't get it because you don't vote the way we do, or we don't like you, or we decided this guy is going to get it.

Big government making decisions for people once again. And they want to go

back to that because they love big government. They love dabbling in people's lives. They love playing around in agriculture without really doing anything, Mr. Speaker. They love having government control.

Well, Mr. Speaker -- pardon me I have a bit of a cold -- one of the things that Saskatchewan has long enjoyed was a richness of its people, Mr. Speaker. We're a very rich province. We're not a poor province. We've got a richness of people, a richness of resources, and we're rich in spirit, Mr. Speaker. The spirit is strong and alive, Mr. Speaker. We do not have people who give up easily. We do not have people who quit. We do not have people who roll over and play dead, Mr. Speaker. We have people who try very, very hard in Saskatchewan.

Just take a look at our farmers. Just take a look at what they've gone up against. The opposition talks about a 1,000 farmers a year leaving the farms since the Tories took over. And you've heard that. It was quoted tonight; they speak of it often, in tough times. Well the truth is, Mr. Speaker, in what was considered boom times in this province, unprecedented world prices, unprecedented good weather conditions during the time of the '70s under the previous administration, the NDP, a thousand farmers a year left the farms. From 1971 to 1982 we lost 11,000 farmers.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in tough times we've lost a thousand farmers a year; in good times under the NDP we lost a thousand farmers a year. Mr. Speaker, I'd say that because it has been tough times, obviously our administration has done considerably better in trying to hold people there. If it's tough times and you're losing people, I can understand it. But to lose a thousand a year in good times is unconscionable. And land bank was their solution and the only solution.

In 1981 and '82, Mr. Speaker, '79-80, '81-82, I paid as high as 21 and 22 per cent interest on my farm on my loans. Nobody talked to me about how wonderful the government of the day was treating me. They told me, well I'm sorry, it's your own problem, I'm sorry. Interest rates are out of the provincial jurisdiction. I'm sorry, we can't do anything about it.

But don't worry, we're going to bring in a wonderful constitution that will save you. A wonderful constitution; we're going to cook it up in the back room, in the kitchen. We're going to have this constitution, and you'll be able to go broke in some kind of constitutional utopia that the former leader of the opposition, the then premier, Mr. Blakeney, thought would save us all. And a major, a major person in cooking that little recipe up in the kitchen was the now Leader of the Opposition. It was fairly interesting.

Mr. Speaker, in good times we lost a thousand farmers a year in this province -- in good times. Today the value of capital assets on farms has declined from 33 billion in 1982 to about 24, 25 billion today. We've had a 30 per cent reduction in our asset value, in our net worth. Farm debt has gone down slightly in the last three or four years, but it climbed to 6 billion by '86; it's down to about five and a half billion right now. But, Mr. Speaker, that has been done at some fairly high cost, some restructuring, some movement on the part of farmers, some movement on the

part of banks.

Last year, '89, farmers paid almost 500 million in interest, Mr. Speaker, much of it on loans that were caused by the high interest policies that were condoned by the members opposite '79, '80, and '81, because of consolidation of loans at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking at tough times -- true -- but they're tough times caused, not by this government, Mr. Speaker, they're tough times because of world situation, world grain prices, and weather conditions. It's no excuse, Mr. Speaker, but we've been doing the best that we can.

The opposition members tell us, you've done nothing for agriculture, you haven't consulted, you haven't talked with people, you haven't tried to help farmers. Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth is that we have consulted, we have worked with farm groups, we have worked with farmers. We talked about putting in programs in '84, '85, '86, starting to help farmers in response to requests from such groups as Sask Wheat Pool, the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), the National Farmers Union. We provided low interest money, \$25 an acre, 6 per cent. The pool had asked us to supply it at 7; we went 1 per cent better and went 6, and we did that, Mr. Speaker. We've responded, we've responded.

And members opposite say, well what's a billion dollars into agriculture; you didn't do anything for farmers. Well, Mr. Speaker, that program, in hindsight, worked reasonably well. We've had some tough years since then, but it helped a great many farmers. A great many more suffered the unfortunate experience of drought back to back, three, four, and five years in a row.

We've worked on changing the crop insurance mechanism to assist farmers, to give them a better opportunity to be able to meet their cash costs, to be able to meet their commitments through a crop insurance plan, Mr. Speaker.

We've travelled the length and breadth of Canada, the North American continent, and indeed into Europe and other countries, Asian countries, trying to sell products that are produced in Saskatchewan, trying to find new markets for our products. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not easy in a world out there, not easy out there in the world when you have got countries that join together like the European economic community has done and has put together one of the largest consortiums, if you would, ever on the face of this earth, and they are supplying their farmers with tax dollars from a huge population supporting them to the tune of 50 to 60 per cent of what I get for my product, Mr. Speaker. That's tough to compete against. And we call on the federal government to assist us in these times, and indeed they should.

But what does the opposition do? They try to play petty politics with it. They try to have silly little procedural games as to who's going to get a motion in before the other person in this Assembly on agriculture, Mr. Speaker, the basis of our existence in this province. They play petty partisan political games.

They get the press for one day. We got some press; they get some press and then two days, for two days after an emergency debate on agriculture not one question from members opposite during question period -- not one question, not one question. The associate minister would have been happy to take those questions. I'm quite certain he would have been able to answer them to the satisfaction of the people in the province. There would have been no problem. Not a word from their ag critic. Not a word from the leader about agriculture.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems we have is that members opposite only want to play petty partisan politics. It is not in their best interests to see this House operate in harmony. It is not in their best political interest to see this House operate as it should. They would much rather go out and have the rabble-rousers stir up the population. They would much rather demonstrate, walk up and down and scream and yell, than sit down in this Assembly and sit down with this government and work out some common sense solutions.

They are trying for the press. They are trying for the publicity because they are a party that is floundering out there for policy -- floundering, Mr. Speaker. They are trying desperately to convince people in Saskatchewan that they understand agriculture because agriculture is the mainstay of this province and they want to be the ones who are going to understand agriculture. Just as, Mr. Speaker, they are the ones who are now talking about understanding the environment, and the "echo-system" as the member says -- it's pronounced "ecosystem," but he says "echo-system"; it's up to him I guess -- but they are the people who are long on rhetoric and short on action. They condemn this government for instituting procedures to deal with programs and projects that are being built or being discussed that would help us diversify this province. They are the ones who are sitting there holding up job creation in this province. What for? They claim it's because they are the friends of the environment, but it's really for partisan political reasons, Mr. Speaker.

(2145)

Those members opposite should look at their record. They should take a look at famous quotes from history, famous quotes from history. The famous quote from the previous member from Kelvington-Wadena when he was minister of environment who coined the phrase, "What's a PCB?" He didn't even know what a PCB was, and he was the minister in charge of the environment, Mr. Speaker.

I think I've touched a nerve over there. I hear somebody chirping across the way. I wonder who it is? I think I've touched a nerve. Let's talk about the environment once more. When I've found a nerve I like to play with it a little bit over there because it shows they're alive anyhow. It shows they're maybe trying to come up with some policies.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about some concrete proposals. Let's talk about some concrete proposals. The only concrete proposals those members over there ever had was when they covered up a PCB spill with feet upon feet of cement. They covered it up, concrete, Mr. Speaker. That's what they call

a concrete proposal. We got a little PCB spill here; what are we going to do about it? Well, let's put some cement on top of it. Hey, now that's a concrete proposal. I think that's fantastic.

I wonder who the minister of the environment was at that time? Maybe we'll go back and check the records a little later on, when I conclude my comments later tomorrow.

Well, let's take a look at some other concrete proposals. Let's go up to, oh, I don't know, let's take a look at Cluff Lake. Uranium mining was allowed. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, uranium mining and processing was allowed under their administration. It . . . Well, some of my colleagues say it was encouraged. I understand there was a little difference of opinion over there on their ranks. One of their members would get up and say, you shouldn't have uranium production, you shouldn't have uranium processing. But again he's against using coal to create electricity, so you shouldn't have the lights on; you shouldn't burn anything. We should go back to a lot of things. So long as he's warm and clothed and fed it's fine to say you shouldn't do all these things.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the concrete proposals at Cluff Lake. I want to talk about the waste disposal systems that members of the opposition, the then ministers of Environment allowed, and perhaps even encouraged. Their solution to controlling or to handling waste material that the plant was unable to process at that time at Cluff Lake, was to build huge concrete tubs, concrete tubs. They must have had a buy on cement or something, Mr. Speaker. They put cement everywhere; they loved the stuff. Huge concrete tubs in which this waste material was stored, and there it is sitting out on the open on a pad. But you know, Mr. Speaker, concrete lasts a long time. But it does, like everything else, eventually break down. And, Mr. Speaker, those wastes started to seep out of those concrete tubs. And guess what? Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Under our administration we came along and said, well, I guess that doesn't look so good. We were forced to clean it up. We were forced to have the plant upgrade to be able to handle that type of product, Mr. Speaker. And the problem is no more.

But under their administration, the so called friends of the environment, as they are now, the self-styled friends of the environment, those lovers of the ecosystem, allowed all kinds of things to happen, Mr. Speaker, that were not at all environment friendly. As a matter of fact, it didn't even make sense.

The member opposite in his comments, just before I picked up the Speech from the Throne, talked about chemical usage in agriculture. Members today have spoke about having reduction in chemical usages. Well, Mr. Speaker, under the administration of the NDP from '71-82, chemical usage in this province quadrupled -- quadrupled, Mr. Speaker. Just think about it. That party over there today says we should be reducing the use of chemicals, we should be reducing it. Well what happened for their 11 years? A thousand farmers a year went off the farm, quadrupling of use of chemicals in agriculture, Mr. Speaker. It makes one wonder, you know, what happened to them on the road to Damascus or Regina or wherever it was or on the road to

Winnipeg or wherever their last NDP leadership convention was held.

Mr. Speaker, those chemicals are used carefully by farmers in this province, very carefully. But, Mr. Speaker, under their administration they allowed the sale and storage of those chemicals in places like the local corner grocery store. They allowed it, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine that; can you imagine that?

I remember as a young person seeing pails of carbide sitting alongside bags of flour in the corner store, and they allowed it; they allowed that. And today they say, oh my God, we've got to do something about this. And they allowed it. There was no legislation, no regulation. Where were their thoughts at, Mr. Speaker? What were they considering at that time?

They didn't want to stir up the populace, perhaps. They didn't want to create enemies; they didn't want to enforce regulations; they didn't want to protect people. They were scared they might lose a vote. Well they certainly have come up with some new ideas now. The friends of the environment are going to clean up the entire world and save the universe. I can see it all now, Mr. Speaker, I can see it all now.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've talked a little bit about agriculture, and I like to talk about agriculture because that's what most of the people in Saskatchewan depend on for a living in one way or another.

An Hon. Member: -- That's all you do is talk about it. How about doing something about it?

Mr. Petersen: -- And a member opposite says, that's all you do is talk about agriculture. Well let me tell you, my curly little chum, I can talk about agriculture because I am a farmer and I understand where it's at and my constituents are farmers. My constituents . . .

The Speaker: -- Why is the member from the Regina North West on his feet?

Mr. Solomon: -- Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member from Kelvington-Wadena was referring to one of the members on this side of the House as a curly-headed chum. And I would like the Speaker to review his comments and determine whether that is a term which we will be using in this House, because if that's the term and the precedent we're going to be setting I'm sure there are other names that members will be calling each other. Thank you.

Mr. Shillington: -- I wonder if in keeping with this if we could refer to the state of the growth of the hair on the member's head over there.

The Speaker: -- Well over the past three sessions I've heard members refer to each other in worse terms than that; however, if it does offend a member perhaps they shouldn't refer to them as curly little chums.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that very kindly, and indeed I too have heard members called worse things in this Chamber. But as the night wears on here, after listening to comments from the

members opposite one has to keep a sense of humour, and obviously when one has a profile like mine a sense of humour is essential.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get back to the substance of my speech if I may here for a moment, unless there are any other asides that members opposite would care to inject. I think, Mr. Speaker, that we've proved that both sides of the House late in the evening can have a sense of humour and, Mr. Speaker, I find that encouraging. That is the first indication that I have had that members opposite actually view this forum as a place for some debate, a certain amount of fellowship, and I would like to see that spirit of co-operation and a little bit of fellowship carried on.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Petersen: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about transportation for a while. Now I could talk about agriculture for days and days and days, but I want to talk about transportation since that's now under a portfolio that I handle.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan, as I said in my opening remarks, has always had a lot of spirit, we've always done a lot of innovative things. We've never been one to roll over and play dead just because it got a little tough out there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's our courage and our spirit that allows us to operate in less than optimum conditions in this province. It's those innovations, Mr. Speaker, that have allowed us to stay here in Saskatchewan, innovations, Mr. Speaker, like joint venturing projects in the province. The oil upgrader here in Regina, the Co-op upgrader -- joint ventured between the province and the Co-op refinery, Mr. Speaker. Other types of ventures in the province where we go to the private sector and joint venture projects like Saferco, the fertilizer processing plant. Those types of things, Mr. Speaker, are definitely signs of innovation in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another innovation that we've had in the recent past is setting up a short-line railroad in Saskatchewan, a short-line railroad. It's called Southern Rails Co-operative Ltd., and it's a producer-owned co-operative comprised of over 200 grain producers from around the Killdeer and the Perry areas in Saskatchewan. We set up the appropriate legislation to put it in place.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we not only have suffered low grain prices, drought, high interest rate, grasshoppers, and the NDP, we've also had rail line abandonment, Mr. Speaker -- rail line abandonment. And it is crucial to this province that we retain a network of rail to move our product out, because what we grow . . . all that we grow is exported in one form or another.

Now that particular rail line abandonment idea that happened a while back, is a cost-cutting measure by the railroad companies in this country, and it's allowed under federal statute. They can apply to have railroads or sections of them abandoned. And they can quote chapter and verse on why

they should do it -- the cost savings, efficiencies.

And I could go into rail line abandonment hearings in some detail, having fought 18 of them around the province, and I might add, having been successful at a couple of them. We have a spur line into Kelvington in my riding, and another success is this short-line railroad. The Killdeer sub, as it's called, was due to be abandoned. And the farmers said, you know, we're going to have to haul our grain 40, 50, 60 miles, and it's going to be pretty hard on us, and it's going to be hard on the provincial highway system, and it's going to be hard on the grid road system, and the farm access road system, and isn't there something we can do to keep our railroad or have access to it.

So we took a little bit of time to talk to some farmers and talk to some innovative people, and the idea of a road railer unit was born. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a converted Kenworth Truck or large highway tractor that's converted over to operate on rails as well as to operate on the roads. The idea is, if you have a short-line railroad you can't really afford to have a million-dollar locomotive sitting out there, Mr. Speaker, but you can afford to have a unit that can be moved under its own power from one short-line railroad to another short-line railroad. The problem is, oftentimes those two short-line railroads don't hook up VIA Rail, or on rail. You have to do it on our highway system. So you have to be able to have the rail driving wheels of this machine able to lift up and use road wheels to move from place to place.

I could talk about that for a long time as well, but the short and sweet and simple of it is, it allows those farmers in those areas to move eight to 10 box cars from where they load them to where the railroad, the CN or CP, presently has service, Mr. Speaker. Now those co-operatives, Mr. Speaker, are going to make money at this. Local farmers setting up their own company in the face of seeming impossible odds, with a little bit of help from the provincial government and a little bit of help from railroads who said, well, we'll sell you the rail lines; we don't want them, but if you guys can use them maybe we'll sell them to you -- so they did. Mr. Speaker, those farmers out there are hauling grain over these railroads today the same way they've done for quite some time, and are providing efficiencies of operation for themselves and for the people of Saskatchewan, and saving the taxpayers of Saskatchewan untold thousands of dollars because of less road wear and less road use. Mr. Speaker, it's getting a little bit late on in the evening and I would at this time ask to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.