

April 5/90

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Clerk Assistant: -- Mr. Gardner from the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the fourth report to the said committee which is as follows:

Since the committee's last report on May 30, 1989, your committee held 14 meetings during the third session of the 21st legislature. The committee completed consideration of the following reports of corporations: Agricultural Credit Corporation, 1987-88; Municipal Financing Corporation, 1988; New Careers Corporation, 1986-87; New Careers Corporation, 1987-88; Saskatchewan Development Fund, 1988; Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, 1987-88; Saskatchewan Minerals, 1988; Saskatchewan Transportation Company, 1987-88; Saskatchewan Water Corporation, 1988; Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, 1987-88; Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation, 1987-88; Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, 1988; Saskatchewan Government Printing Company, 1988.

Mr. Gardner: -- Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Regina North West:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to introduce some guests to you, and through you, this afternoon. I would like to introduce Danielle Woodward. She's the president of the student union in Regina. As far as I know, she's the first Indian person across Canada to be elected president of a student union at a university.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- I would also like to introduce Patsy Desjarlais, Malcolm Andrews, and Lyle Morriveau who are also part of the student council for the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. And I would like all guests . . . and before I start I would like to also welcome them in my own language, Mr. Speaker.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

I would now ask all the members to kindly accept them, please.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and to other members of the Assembly, His Excellency Peter Palangyo, the High Commissioner to Canada for Tanzania. His Excellency is on a familiarization tour of western Canada, and while in Saskatchewan he'll be meeting with the government, with university and private sector officials.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, has an annual exported amount of about \$1 million worth of red spring wheat to our friends in Tanzania, and I hope His Excellency will discover many other avenues for trade while he is on tour here in Saskatchewan.

I know our government is very anxious to develop a mutually beneficial trade project with him, and would you please join with me in welcoming His Excellency to the legislature.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Toth: -- Mr. Speaker, allow me to introduce to you, and through you to members of this Assembly, a dozen men and women from across this province who provide leadership across the province and are involved in ADD (Agriculture, Development and Diversification) boards.

I'd like just to mention the names of the individuals, who are here, who are in for a meeting and are attending question period this afternoon: David Acaster from North Battleford; Bob Carruthurs from Biggar; Mrs. Carol Carson from Melfort; Mrs. Margaret Cline from Allan; Raymond Cooper from Laporte; Osborne Craig from Carrot River; Barry Harris from North Portal; Dale Leflar from Bengough; David Nederhoff from Rouleau; Les Potter from Gull Lake; Murray Westby, Watrous; and John Burns, Wynyard. We welcome you, and I'd ask the members to join me in extending a welcome.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Saxinger: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, a group of students from Domremy -- 18 grade 7, 8 and 9. They are accompanied by Ronald Tessier and Charlotte Kuhn. They are seated in your gallery. They are here to learn something about the parliamentary procedure. I will meet with them at 1:30 for pictures and refreshments, and I would ask all the members to please help me welcome the students.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gerich: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome the High Commissioner to Saskatchewan. We lunched together at noon and we talked about some of the problems in Europe and Africa, and we had quite a discussion. I'm sure, too, that he's enjoying our pristine air here in Canada and our Saskatchewan hospitality.

I'm also sure that he's going to enjoy the entertaining and probably interesting question period that we have today. Thank you, sir.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome the guests that the member from Moosomin introduced. I have the pleasure of having two of my constituents, Mrs. Klein and Mr. Westby, who are very familiar with the agricultural problems and are very active in their respective communities in helping to develop and solve some of the problems that we have in agriculture. So I'd again like all members to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce four people to the Assembly here today who are a part of the town of Morse. They are the mayor, Doug Wilson, and councillors Joyce Adamson and Jack Wepler and Lorne Nicholson.

They are known in Morse as a curling town and they have won two provincial titles there. One was the girls high school title and the mixed title, and they had the honour of having Miss . . . the little girl that does the . . . her name is Patty Long, and she is the abilities council Tammy from the community of Morse. And I want you to join with me in welcoming them to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Charges Laid Against Indian Students

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, about a year ago your department laid 26 charges to a group of students protesting the federal government attack on the treaty Indian right to education. Similar charges were dropped in other provinces because Indians, like any other citizens, have the democratic right of protest. Why do you continue to persecute the students, and why don't you stand up and support these students and drop those charges?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- I'll phrase my response carefully because that may be the first time in the history of this legislature that a member of this Assembly has asked formally for the Minister of Justice to interfere and drop criminal charges. I do not intend to interfere with the operation, Mr. Speaker, of the justice system.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, another question. Every time in this

legislature we speak about issues pertaining to Indian people, this government always makes excuses to do absolutely nothing.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- Are you trying to tell me, Mr. Minister, that the right to free speech and assembly in this province is to be denied to people who support the right of Indian students to get a sound education? Is that what you're trying to tell me, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- What I am trying to make clear to the hon. member, that prosecutions will be handled by the public prosecutor's office in this government, as they always have. And they will be dealt with in that manner.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: -- Mr. Speaker, one more question. Mr. Minister, other provinces have stood by their students right across Canada. Why is it that you will not stand up in this province to support the rights of Indian students?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- My response, Mr. Speaker, has nothing to do with the rights of anyone. My response is that the Office of the Attorney General does not interfere with the prosecutions, Mr. Speaker. That is precisely what I have said and that's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The hon. member is saying from his seat that that's not true. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would challenge him to prove otherwise because we do not interfere with the prosecution. That is a principle, Mr. Speaker, that I have upheld in this House, that this government has upheld, Mr. Speaker. And they will make the decisions as to whether charges should be laid or not, Mr. Speaker, and how they should be proceeded with -- not the politicians. And that is proper in our system of government.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Assistance to STC Officials on Trial

Mr. Trew: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Transportation Company. Mr. Minister, on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio this morning it was reported that William Sheetz, lawyer for Darrell Lowry, stated that there are currently negotiations ongoing between STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) and the two Texas defendants about what STC may do to help them.

Mr. Minister, will you confirm that such negotiations are ongoing, tell us how long they've been under way, who is doing the negotiations, and what items are being negotiated?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, I could tell the hon. member and tell the public that there has been a request from both of the defendants in the trial that the member refers to for STC to look at ways in which they could help them. But I can tell the hon. member and tell the House today that there are no negotiations ongoing.

Mr. Trew: -- New question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the people of Saskatchewan are no longer inclined to take your word on anything surrounding STC. Your government's credibility is being put to the test here, sir, and as you demonstrated earlier this very week, your word to Saskatchewan people is not worth very much.

I have a quote from the Star-Phoenix of Monday, February 19 I'd like to read to you, sir, and it is your quote. And I quote:

I don't think it's Eagle or STC that's under investigation here, from anything I can find out. It's four individuals who decided to act in a personal way (McLeod said).

That being the case, Mr. Minister, what possible motive would STC have for negotiating with their lawyers to help them out with money or in any other way?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- I've just said, Mr. Speaker, that there have been requests from the two people; there are no negotiations. The member's other diatribe about whether or not my word is believed or isn't, and so on, I don't think is relevant to what the case in question is.

Mr. Mitchell: -- I'd like to ask the Premier a question flowing from this same CBC interview, asking him a question as the head of government. In this story, Mr. Sheetz is quoted as repeating his allegation that political considerations are behind the lack of charges laid in Canada.

The report says:

He says the provincial government is stalling on a decision about whether to charge Castle and Lowry in Canada. He thinks the fact that Saskatchewan is in an election year makes it tempting for government politicians here to continue stalling. And Sheetz himself said, if a politician doesn't have to make a hard choice, then it is much easier not to make that decision in an election year.

Mr. Premier, the question that flows from this is: how could any government believe that its political considerations are more important than the administration of justice? Surely you would agree that no government can compromise our legal system in such a manner.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate in no uncertain terms that the American lawyer making such allegations does not know what he's talking about, Mr. Speaker. And that type of publicity may work in the American system, but it's not proper in the Canadian system. And I can assure the hon. member and the people of this province that there is a police investigation, I understand, going on. It's going on freely and without being fettered in any way, shape, or form.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- I've a question, a new question for the minister responsible for the STC, and the question is this. He says that there were requests from the lawyers . . . or from the defendants in Texas to enter into discussions. And I'd like the minister to tell the House what the defendants or their lawyers requested of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- As I understand it, the requests from the two defendants were for holiday pay, which they believed were coming to them based on service in the past, to be paid out to them. I believe that's what the requests were.

Mr. Mitchell: -- A new question, this one I think to the Minister of Justice, although I'd prefer that the Premier answer it as the head of government. We all know in this House that Mr. Justice Brownridge has absolutely no authority under the legislation under which he was appointed to call for the Ernst and Young report to be kept secret. It is not part of his powers under The Public Inquiries Act and it should not supersede a commitment made by a minister of the Crown, since his inquiry is only quasi-judicial or semi-judicial.

Is it not true, Mr. Minister, that in fact the government found this request very easy to agree to despite the minister's commitment and despite your obligation in this matter, because as Mr. Sheetz said this morning, out of sight, out of mind.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Again, Mr. Speaker, what publicity the American lawyer and the games he wants to play are something that may work in the American system and may be practised in the American system, but that's obviously his call.

There's also kind of a principle of practice, I believe, that the louder one protests, the weaker the case. However, that applies in the American system.

I suggest to the hon. member that I understand that the minister responsible for STC received a request. On the one hand, the NDP ask that there be no interference. And then on the other hand, they want us to . . . don't want us to honour the request of the inquirer.

Now again, if the request is made, I believe it is proper, it is proper . . . you cannot have it both ways. You cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. The request came from the inquirer and the request is going to be honoured, I understand.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Study on STC Financial Affairs

Mr. Mitchell: -- A new question, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. You speak of practices, Mr. Minister. Surely it is an established practice in this province, and in all democracies, that when a minister makes a commitment to make a report public, he will in fact make the report public.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: -- Now when the judicial inquiry was established, Mr. Minister, by you, you said the criteria for the commission, the terms of reference was to investigate allegations made in Dallas as to misconduct surrounding STC, and that was the basis on which you framed the terms of reference, the allegations that were made in Texas.

Now we have more allegations from Dallas. This time of a more serious nature that your government is interfering with the pursuit of justice for solely political purposes. That's the allegation coming from the lawyer for one of the defendants. Since such allegations were the basis of the inquiry . . . the terms of reference for the inquiry in the first place, will you now agree to expand the terms of reference of the inquiry to investigate this specific question of whether or not any such political interference is occurring?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- I believe I already answered that, Mr. Speaker, that it may be in the American system of justice that lawyers and the politicians would interfere with the practice and do it for political reasons, that's not the case in Canada, I suggest to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker.

Now the hon. members shake their head over that. I have already indicated today, Mr. Speaker, that the police investigation is ongoing in the normal course. And, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that that lawyer in the United States by suggesting that our police forces and our criminal justice system can be manipulated like that, Mr. Speaker, is an insult not only to the police forces and our judicial system, but it's an insult to the criminal justice system of this country, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Holiday Pay Due to STC Officials

Mr. Anguish: -- My first question is very short and straightforward is to the minister in charge of STC. The minister acknowledged that there had

been discussions between STC and the two defendants in Dallas, Texas. You said that holiday pay had been requested. I would ask the minister now, Mr. Speaker: has that holiday pay been issued, and if so, in what amount was the holiday pay issued to those two individuals?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- I can say to the House that it has not been issued, and there's no decision made as to what amount is owing to them or if in fact it's owing to them. Those decisions are . . . we have sought legal advice as to how -- the board has when I say we -- the board of STC has sought legal advice as to how this deal should be dealt with.

Trial of STC Officials in Texas

Mr. Anguish: -- New question, Mr. Speaker. I would want to direct my question to the Premier. Although the Minister of Justice can question our motives, we want you to know, Mr. Premier, that we want two things. We want accountability from your government, and we want justice to be served in this case.

On the CBC radio program this morning, I quote from that program, Sheetz says another possibility for government stalling here is that potentially embarrassing material might emerge during the Texas bus trial.

I would ask you for your assurance here this afternoon, Mr. Premier, that will you give us your commitment that any cabinet ministers, government officials, STC officials or board members, or officials of the Progressive Conservative Party that are subpoenaed for defence or for prosecution will travel to Dallas, Texas to give testimony; and furthermore, any documents that are subpoenaed, whether they be cabinet documents or not, will those documents also be passed on to the trial in Dallas, Texas, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- I will give the assurance that the law will be obeyed.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Premier, we want justice to be served as well. That's why we ask your commitment as the highest authority in the government of the province of Saskatchewan that if subpoenas are served on individuals, regardless of whether they're cabinet ministers or officials within your government, or if documents are subpoenaed, that you give us your assurance here this afternoon, as the highest authority of the Executive Council, that those persons or documents will be sent to Dallas so that justice can be served in that Dallas court-house as well, Mr. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- As Minister of Justice and as Attorney General, Mr. Speaker, as has been the case under this government, the law will be obeyed. And I hope that the hon. member will also ensure that should

subpoenas be issued against members of the opposition, etc., that they will attend.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: -- The process for question period has usually been, Mr. Speaker, that we ask the questions. But in answer to the question of the Minister of Justice, if anyone's subpoenaed from this side of the House to appear in a Dallas court-house, we would be there.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. Question and answer between hon. members is not permitted during question period. The normal course of events is that the opposition asks, the government side answers. And I believe that in the best interests of question period we stick to that procedure.

Mr. Anguish: -- Question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker.

DMr. Premier, I think it's incumbent on you to clear this air of scandal that surrounds your government, to give us your personal assurance -- not the assurance of the Minister of Justice in him saying that justice will be served -

_ that you will obey the law. We want your commitment as the most honourable individual in this Assembly, as leader of the Executive Council, that you will provide every assistance requested by the Dallas court-house, by the prosecution, or by the defendants, so that fair trials and justice can be served in the United States of America on this scandal that surrounds your government.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party has in its blatant inability to understand or grasp the difficulties of agriculture and its obvious attempts to avoid dealing with the agricultural crisis and unwillingness to talk about it, Mr. Speaker, are trying to paint this in the most dramatic political terms.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the questions today had a political bent as opposed to any real concern about, one, justice, or two, the law, Mr. Speaker. The law will be obeyed, Mr. Speaker. This government has obeyed the law. And, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting, on the one hand they want charges dropped, and on the other hand they're concerned about the law.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: -- New question. And you, Mr. Minister, find it far too easy to charge Indian people in Saskatchewan, but not to co-operate with the justice system of your own officials.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: -- I would turn my final question to the Government House Leader, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you were ultimately in charge of STC at the time that this allegation of bribery and conspiracy to bribe was going on. We want to ask you as the minister in charge at that time, you as an

individual minister, if you are subpoenaed or you have documents that are to be subpoenaed to the Dallas trial that's going to take place starting on June 4, do you give us your assurance that you would make yourself available to the Dallas court-house, and that you would comply with any subpoena that was issued, either by the prosecution or the defence?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, I have now answered, I believe on three or four occasions today . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Thank you.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I would once more draw to the attention of the hon. members to allow the minister to continue.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, I have reiterated, I believe four times today, that the law will be obeyed by the government. I do also restate, Mr. Speaker, that today while farmers are hurting, losing their land, in serious difficulty, the NDP, Mr. Speaker, refuse to ask one question of agriculture today, and today they ask us to drop charges on the one hand and go after cabinet ministers on the other, Mr. Speaker. They don't care about justice or the law, they're only concerned about politics, like they were with the farmers the other day, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Lay-off Notices at Intercontinental Packers

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Trade. Mr. Minister, Intercontinental Packers in Saskatoon has announced that lay-off notices have been given to another 100-plus employees. These notices, Mr. Minister, as you know, have been due because of the slow-down in the market-place.

Mr. Minister, I am hoping that you have a better understanding or better grasp of the issue than the Premier had when we last asked him the question on this issue. And he stated that countervail duties and protectionist U.S. legislation has nothing to do with the free trade agreement.

Mr. Minister, my question to you is this. Will you repudiate today the provisions of the free trade agreement which allow the U.S. to continue to bring trade restricting actions, such as the hog countervail which is doing such damage, such serious damage to the hog industry in Saskatchewan today? Will you ask, or will you repudiate those countervail duties as they pertain to the free . . . (inaudible) . . .

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. member understands that red meat consumption in North America is down, and that affects our red meat industry in Canada as it affects the United States.

But it is impossible to imagine that in solution to a trade problem you would try to abolish a trade agreement and go to no trade at all to solve the problem. It's unimaginable that you would not want to have a trade agreement.

We have a trade agreement. It has a dispute settlement mechanism. That can be used to our advantage. Before the agreement we had no document that said we were entitled to trade with the United States.

And what the members opposite advocate is that we tear up that document and go to no trade at all. That's impossible.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Minister, I would request that you read the free trade agreement, because if you were supporting the stand of the Premier here today, you are not supporting the industries here in Saskatchewan as you said the free trade agreement would do. You said it would open up the markets, and it has not done that.

Mr. Minister, today, for example, the countervail is before the so-called dispute settling mechanism. It is before that. Mr. Minister, if it has nothing to do with the free trade agreement, then why should it be adjudicated through the free trade agreement process. Why should it be done?

Mr. Minister, if the dispute settlement mechanism finds against Saskatchewan and its producers and rules that the U.S. can continue to impose any trade laws it wishes, then will you today finally admit, will you finally admit that the agreement has done nothing to open up free trade borders to Canadian producers here in Saskatchewan, particularly?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: -- Mr. Speaker, the free trade agreement is opening up markets, maybe not as fast as we would like them to be opened, but it is opening markets. Countervail is a different matter entirely. Countervail refers not to the tariff but refers to the subsidies that might be paid and the dumping laws which Canada still maintains and which the United States still maintains.

Members opposite can't seem to understand. I mean, that's understandable that they can't understand. They don't understand markets. They don't understand trade. But they can't seem to understand that the trade agreement is an attempt to make things better, and they want to destroy that and make things worse. It makes no sense.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: -- Before orders of the day, if the hon. members have nothing to raise . . . Before orders of the day then, I would like to bring down my ruling as pertaining to yesterday's events.

Yesterday, before orders of the day, a point of order was raised by the member for Regina Elphinstone concerning a question put to the Premier by the member for Wilkie. In stating his point of order, the member for Regina Elphinstone claimed the question to be out of order on the grounds that the matter raised was not within the administrative competence of the government. The member also felt the question might be irregular on other grounds and asked me, and I quote:

. . . for a number of reasons, this question was not in order, and I'd like you to check the verbatim from today's question period and make a ruling . . .

I have had a chance to review the verbatim and I now rule on the whole matter, which quite frankly caused considerable disruption in question period.

Before making a point of the actual question asked by the member for Wilkie, I am going to deal with a misunderstanding that certain members have in connection to oral question period. This matter certainly contributed to the disruption that occurred yesterday and caused my intervention. The issue is the permissibility of government private members asking questions during oral question period. For all members, I'm going to reiterate the practice of this House. On July 30, 1987 a point of order was raised to make the claim that question period was not the appropriate forum for government members to ask questions. I ruled on August 6, 1987, that although the number of questions is always firmly weighted in the opposition's favour, government private members have the same right as opposition members to ask questions. This is, of course, supported by precedents of this House.

I quote what the Speaker ruled on December 9, 1975, in this regard:

I would agree that Government private members infrequently ask questions during the oral question period but under the practices of this Assembly, it is the right of any private Member to ask oral questions . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

It might be worthwhile for members to note that between the beginning of this legislature in 1986 and the beginning of the present session, there have been 3,658 questions asked in oral question period of which only eight have been put by government members. There is no call for members to get upset by an occasional question by government private members. I reiterate, not only does the member have the right to put his question but he also has the right to be heard without interference.

I now turn to the actual question asked by the member for Wilkie. It is

true, as the member for Regina Elphinstone pointed out, that questions must be within the administrative competence of the government. I quote Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, 6th edition, section 409, paragraph 6, p. 121:

A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government. The Minister to whom the question is directed is responsible to the House for his or her present Ministry and not for any decisions taken in a previous portfolio.

I also want to draw to the attention of the House and to the member for Regina Centre, the breadth of our own rule which does indeed deal with oral questions, which reads as follows:

Written questions may be placed on the Order Paper, or oral questions may be asked seeking information from Ministers of the Crown relating to public affairs, and to other Members relating to any bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly in which such Members may be concerned, but in putting any such question or in replying to the same, no argument or opinion shall be offered, nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain the same, and in answering any such question, the matter to which the same refers shall not be debated.

Our rule then, broadly provides for oral questions to ministers relating to public affairs.

The member for Wilkie asked the Premier in his capacity as Minister of Agriculture, to explain the government's position on production loans and on a moratorium on farm foreclosures, and I quote from Hansard of April 4, page 458:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier, and it relates to the government's position on the production loan and on the moratorium on farm foreclosures, Mr. Speaker.

It is my understanding that the National Farmers Union, supported by the Leader of the Opposition, have advocated an indefinite moratorium on farm foreclosures, and that members of the opposition have openly advocated writing off any outstanding money owned under the production loan program, Mr. Speaker.

Could the Premier please explain the implications of such a moratorium?

It is clear that the Premier has no opportunity in question period to answer questions in explanation of the policies of any non-governmental organization. However in this case, I find that while the NFU (National Farmers Union) position was referred to in the preamble, it was not the nub of the question. The question, as I could interpret from the verbatim, involved the government's own position on production loans and a foreclosure moratorium.

These issues, I should think, are within the administrative competence of

the government and also are clearly within the area of public affairs for which the minister is responsible. In fact, in previous question periods these issues have been discussed.

On March 20, 1990, the member for Quill Lakes in essence asked for the government's position on a moratorium in his call for a moratorium on legal claims against farmers. At that time it was generally agreed that the prospect of a moratorium was within the administrative competence of the government. As for production loans, they have been discussed many times in question period.

Therefore, having had a chance to review the record, I rule that the question of the member for Wilkie was in order.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE
(BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hepworth that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to rejoin the budget speech. And as I was saying yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when the clock ran out at 5 o'clock, I believe that this budget is very appropriate for the times in Saskatchewan. I believe this budget that begins with a belt tightening, that begins with efficiency measures within the government itself, including government cabinet ministers, including civil servants, including advertising and travel and those types of things, I believe that a budget that begins with -- that begins with -- in-house efficiency measures is what the public of Saskatchewan today is asking for.

I believe a budget that has been developed in mass consultation with the public of Saskatchewan is what the public of Saskatchewan want today. I believe that a budget today, Mr. Speaker, that concentrates on the priority areas of health, education, agriculture, and diversification is what the people are asking for in the province of Saskatchewan today.

I furthermore, Mr. Speaker, want to make the case to you today that another priority area is that which falls under my jurisdiction, that being the Department of Environment and Public Safety.

It's been my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, in the short few months since I was appointed to the Department of the Environment, to take a keen interest in an area that is gathering both regional, provincial, national, and international attention, and that is this great big thing called the

environment, Mr. Speaker. It is a massive area of subject.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are a great deal of areas that we could talk about today with respect to the environment. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to key in, I want to key in on some of the priority areas within the Department of the Environment and some of the initiatives that we will be undertaking this year.

Mr. Speaker, those people who paid attention to the budget address by the Minister of Finance will note that there were some 21 government departments or agencies that were either frozen or had their budgets reduced.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan have spoken loud and clear. Government must restrain spending. Government must be accountable to the people. But there is an area, Mr. Speaker, within the budget of Saskatchewan in this fiscal year that did receive an increase, and I make the case to you today, Mr. Speaker, an increase appropriately made, Mr. Speaker, an increase of some 2.9 per cent.

Some may say, well, that's not enough money. Some may say it's too much. Mr. Speaker, I feel, after having given this budget considerable attention over the last number of months, that an increase in this budget of some 2.9 per cent is appropriate for the times. We could spend more, Mr. Speaker, but 2.9 per cent is nothing to sneeze at.

I make the further case to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is something brand-new, brand-new, brought to you, Mr. Speaker, under this current administration -- a fund with respect to funding environmental initiatives that was never there before, a fund that was never heard of before, Mr. Speaker, never designed by anyone else, but a brand-new fund put in place by this current administration, Mr. Speaker, with respect to some key environmental initiatives.

And I speak to you, Mr. Speaker, of the Environmental Protection Fund. And I want to key in on the Environmental Protection Fund, Mr. Speaker, making note, making note that the expenditures with respect to the protection of our environment in this fiscal year as compared to what was spent last year out of the environmental fund are more than three times.

I say, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the regular budget in and for the province of Saskatchewan, we have an Environmental Protection Fund that will be keying in on certain projects, that will be spending in excess of \$3 million this year in some very important areas. And I make the case to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is real dollars going to work for the environment and proof positive of a sincere commitment to the environment for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, what are some of those areas? What are

some of those areas, Mr. Speaker? I'd like to touch on one of them. It's probably one of the most talked-about initiatives across this country and indeed across North America. People in cities and towns and villages are asking about recycling. Mr. Speaker, these people are asking what can we do as individuals? What can we do as a municipality for recycling? Why can't we have a blue box system here in Saskatchewan like there are in some other jurisdictions?

Well, Mr. Speaker, this was committed to last year in the budget address, last year in the throne speech. I believe that a wise, prudent, cautious government and a responsible government would have taken precisely the same action that we have, and that is, Mr. Speaker, to be extremely careful and cautious and not jump into a blue box system. I would quote to you examples all across the country of jurisdictions that have jumped into a blue box system, put the cart before the horse, and have experienced some great difficulties, Mr. Speaker.

One of those jurisdictions is the big city of Toronto. Toronto has said that, in retrospect, they may perhaps have moved too quickly. Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan want to do things that are protecting the environment, that have to do with recycling. But, Mr. Speaker, we want to do them right. We want to do them correctly. We want to do them appropriately. We want to use our taxpayers' dollars judiciously.

Mr. Speaker, this is the reason that we have taken a cautious approach with the blue box system and have announced earlier this year that there will be a pilot project, not a massive project in the province of Saskatchewan but a pilot project to test this blue box system and to learn the pros and the cons and the advantages and the disadvantages and work out the bugs, if you want to use a common phrase that's used in this province, Mr. Speaker, work out some of the bugs of this program.

I have a great deal of faith, Mr. Speaker, in the municipal leaders in Saskatchewan who will analyse this project, who will work with government, who will work with industry, who will help us develop a model, Mr. Speaker, that will be the model for the 1990s.

Now it may not come as quick as some may want, Mr. Speaker, but most fair-minded reasonable people say, yes, take a cautious approach with that blue box. It's a lot of money. It's a good program, but do it right. Don't repeat the mistakes. Don't repeat the mistakes of others, Mr. Speaker.

That particular project has been allocated some \$750,000 or thereabouts. I want to reiterate here again, Mr. Speaker, that it is a cautious approach. I want to reiterate that we must be careful and not make the mistakes of others, but I believe that Saskatchewan can have and will have a successful blue box pilot program.

Mr. Speaker, I look to that fund, and there is also about three-quarters of a billion dollars that has been put into the Saskatchewan Wetlands Conservation Corporation. Here again, Mr. Speaker, something brand-new for the province of Saskatchewan, something initiated by this government,

something that an awful lot of the wildlife people around the province, environmentalists, ecologists and others are saying, yes indeed, there is money that is wisely spent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the former minister of Parks and Renewable Resources for his efforts towards this initiative. I want to commend the current Minister of Parks and Renewable Resources who is most dedicated to this program, who works hand in hand, day in and day out, with such organizations as Ducks Unlimited, with such organizations as the Saskatchewan wildlife association, these types of groups, Mr. Speaker, that can provide absolutely tremendous advice to us in areas such as this.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk again about something else that the Environmental Protection Fund has allowed us to do. It has allowed us some \$350,000 that will be spent on the management of biomedical and hazardous wastes. Here is a big area, Mr. Speaker; one of them is a specialized area that has to do with biomedical wastes.

What do we do with these highly specialized, highly contagious, highly dangerous wastes that come out of our hospitals and out of our nursing homes and out of our other health care institutions? How do we manage these wastes, Mr. Speaker? We're all familiar here today, Mr. Speaker; there's no sense hiding the fact that this deadly disease they call AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is in Saskatchewan, not in mass numbers, but is in Saskatchewan. Other deadly, contagious diseases are in Saskatchewan and our hospital administrators and other health-care professionals are dealing on a day-to-day basis with the question: how do we handle these specialized, highly contagious, dangerous medical wastes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to finding answers to those questions, and therefore we have allocated sums of money towards a study on how best to manage biomedical wastes.

Same dollars, Mr. Speaker, will be allocated to the whole area of hazardous wastes. There's many unanswered questions out there, Mr. Speaker, and if you will excuse me, I don't have all of the answers today. But, Mr. Speaker, I have the commitment to put the right people in place, to consult correctly with the people of Saskatchewan, and I have confidence that we will come up with a correct plan for the province of Saskatchewan with respect to the management of hazardous wastes.

Some of those questions, Mr. Speaker: should we have a hazardous waste facility here in Saskatchewan similar to what they have in Alberta? Should that system be duplicated? Should we spend 35 to \$40 million on the same type of facility, or shall we, Mr. Speaker, regionalize and share that facility with the province of Alberta, as an example, and build a different type of a hazardous waste facility here in Saskatchewan?

I think those are very, very good questions, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the moneys allocated in this budget will go a long ways to answering many of those questions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk to you today as well about another program

that's coming out of the Environmental Protection Fund, and that is half a million dollars for the creation of the Saskatchewan Youth Environmental Corps. If there is a segment of society, if there was one segment that I had to pick out, Mr. Speaker, that was key, that was key to environmental issues in this province and in this country, that is the youth, Mr. Speaker, the young people in Saskatchewan, the future of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And those young people, Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for. They have more knowledge and more interest and more sincere desire to learn more about and do more about the environment, Mr. Speaker, I think, than any other segment, and I say in fact that they are leading society.

You could walk into the schools today, Mr. Speaker, and talk to some of the young people today. They are light-years ahead of many of the rest of us. They have plans, Mr. Speaker. They have ideas. They have creativity. They have imagination and they have dedication. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that by funding to the tune of one-half million dollars out of this Environmental Protection Fund, that we are committing dollars and investing dollars in a very, very good place that should not be open to question by -- I don't think even the opposition, even the career critics that sit across the way, Mr. Speaker, I would ask for their sincere, genuine comments on establishing an environmental youth corps. I will debate anyone any place if they would say having an environmental youth corps in the province of Saskatchewan is not a good idea.

What are some of the things these young people can do? Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is endless -- is absolutely endless, Mr. Speaker. There are so many things that must be done in the province of Saskatchewan -- things to do with reforestation, planting of trees, renewable resource technicians, Mr. Speaker. Cleaning up Saskatchewan. We have beautiful canoe routes, as an example, in northern Saskatchewan. I am led to believe, Mr. Speaker, that some of those canoe routes where they portage between routes have considerable mess there.

Mr. Speaker, young people want to help clean up Saskatchewan. Young people want to be responsible when it comes to the environment, and I have every confidence that our young people will be extremely excited to become part of the environmental youth corps.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now turn to another initiative within the department's budget, Mr. Speaker, and that is the creation of an enforcement unit within the Department of the Environment. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that our department is . . . it's not that old a department; it is not nearly as old as some of the established departments within government. I speak of such things as Health and perhaps Urban Affairs or rural affairs. Department of the Environment, to my memory, was established in, oh, 1971 or 1972 or thereabouts. And I do give credit to the opposition; when they were in government they did form the Department of the Environment, and they set up a good structure that was appropriate for the times.

Well, Mr. Speaker, times have changed. Times have changed, Mr. Speaker,

and today the environment is so high on the people's agenda, is so important, Mr. Speaker, that we are taking a whole look at the Department of the Environment and saying, well maybe it's time for a review of the organization there. Maybe it's time to repriorize some of the activities in the Department of the Environment.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've got some good people over there in the Department of the Environment. We have some top scientific people, administrative people, research people, policy people. We have good people, Mr. Speaker, but we must, on behalf of Saskatchewan taxpayers and on behalf of the environment, make certain that we are making the absolute best use of those people and put in their priorities in the right place.

One of those priorities, Mr. Speaker, is the creation of an enforcement unit within the Department of the Environment. You will know, over the past few years under the Progressive Conservative administration, that many laws, many rules, many regulations have been changed. We have, frankly, got much tougher and much more demanding with environmental law in the province of Saskatchewan.

I quote to you an example of some of the increase in potential fines for people who wilfully neglect the laws of the land when they come to the environment. And those laws, Mr. Speaker, today say that if you break the law, the potential or the outside limit may be as much as, as much as a million dollars in fines or three years in jail.

Now that's pretty tough talk, Mr. Speaker, but I believe that it is appropriate for today. It is appropriate for the environment, and I believe that when you've got those laws, they must be enforceable. They must be enforced. And we are setting up, within the Department of the Environment, an enforcement unit that will go a long ways to making sure that the laws of the land, as they pertain to the environment, are upheld within this province.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that other provinces have done similar. I say, Mr. Speaker, that we want to be wise about this as well, and learn from the lessons of other provinces -- learn what other provinces have over the past number of years in change in the organization of their department and making sure that their departments have their priorities in the right place.

I'd like to talk to you, as well, Mr. Speaker, about another area, another area that we will be making changes on. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the whole area of the environmental assessment process.

Mr. Speaker, The Environmental Assessment Act was passed, I believe, some . . . about 10 years ago. I think it was 1980 or thereabouts. It was a good Act. I give members opposite credit. It certainly was a good Act. It was appropriate for the times. It perhaps did not, did not look down the road to the future as well as it might have. But in fairness, I say there were many of us back 10 years ago that should have been paying more close attention to the environment, and today many shake their heads and say, why didn't we think of these things years ago?

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are examining that legislation, and I am committing today, Mr. Speaker, to a massive overhaul of the whole environmental assessment process. And, Mr. Speaker, I will commit to you today, I will commit to the opposition, I will commit to the people of Saskatchewan that there will be an excellent process in place. And, Mr. Speaker, there will be widespread consultation of a number of groups. A number of groups will be consulted on just how do we make the rules more clear, more fair, less open to discretion by one or two people?

(1500)

Well, Mr. Speaker, I feel that environmentalists, I feel that people such as the Saskatchewan Environmental Society, people like that -- and I only use that society as an example; there are many environmental groups out in Saskatchewan today, and good ones and good people and knowledgeable people and interested people -- I believe that people like that should be appointed to a commission to review this whole process. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we must have some of the best legal minds in the province set to work to designing a new assessment process. And, Mr. Speaker, of course we must have business and industry represented on a panel that will change this whole environmental assessment process.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's a pretty good mix when you once again say, let's have someone very knowledgeable about the environment, someone very knowledgeable about the law, and someone very knowledgeable about business and all the problems associated with developing business in an environmentally sustainable manner. And, Mr. Speaker, that to me is what it is all about, having a balance between the environment and the economy. The two are not mutually exclusive, Mr. Speaker. They are moulded together just as my left and right arm are today. Mr. Speaker, the environment and the economy must be viewed together in an environmentally sustainable developed respect.

I have confidence, Mr. Speaker, in these Saskatchewan men and women who we will be appointing to conduct widespread mass consultation on the whole issue of our environmental assessment process. And, Mr. Speaker, we will soon have a good, fair, and reasonable process in place -- one that is not so open to question, one that is not so open to discretion, one that does not have so many grey areas instead of black or white areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll use the example of the Rafferty dam as a good example. To me, Mr. Speaker, certainly there were some environmental considerations, some environmental considerations, but overshadowed greatly by the whole subject of process, the whole subject of rules and regulations and interpretations, subject to judges now interpreting one way or the other.

I don't believe that's fair to environmental people who are concerned about the environment, or fair to business. I believe that better systems can be put in place. Every jurisdiction across the entire country is wrestling with the whole subject of process, Mr. Speaker. And once again I have confidence and trust and faith in Saskatchewan people that we will have a

good system in place, and I hereby commit that to you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to talk about a concept, Mr. Speaker, that is not in the budget but one that I will be pursuing and am in the midst of pursuing, together with the round table on the environment and the economy, together with representatives from the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, and that is, Mr. Speaker, the concept of a Saskatchewan environmentally friendly community program.

That is, in short, a challenge to all Saskatchewan communities to become more environmentally conscious, to become . . . to do what you can in your own community to make your community more environmentally sound. And there are hundreds and thousands of ideas that individuals and municipalities and towns and villages, projects that these individuals and municipalities can undertake to make their home area, and in fact their house, more environmentally acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, people today in Saskatchewan are . . . there's so much knowledge out there, but they are hungry for it and starving for more information. How can we as individuals become involved? How can I as an individual make my own personal, sincere contribution to the environment?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to, I want to assist communities, and I want to assist individuals in brainstorming and developing ideas and think-tanks in ways in which individuals can contribute. There may be those, Mr. Speaker, who say that the entire responsibility, entire weight of the environment must be on government shoulders. I say no to that, Mr. Speaker.

You talk to Saskatchewan people, at least the ones that I've been talking to. They say yes, government, you must provide leadership; you must provide leadership when it comes to the environment, but I as an individual, I as an individual want to play my part.

And, Mr. Speaker, I and the opposition may disagree on this -- I hope not; I hope not -- I hope members opposite will stand in their place and say yes, we recognize that; and here are some suggestions, here are some real suggestions on how you as minister can help Saskatchewan people become more involved and make their own contributions to the environment.

And, Mr. Speaker, I feel that a program such as the Saskatchewan environmentally friendly community program will do just that, and I look forward to the day when I can announce that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to you about something else. I feel that as a leader in the environmental field that I would be remiss, that I would be mistaken, I would not be doing my job if I didn't, before asking the public to become more involved, if I didn't ensure that government, this government, was setting an example when it comes to the environment. And, Mr. Speaker, I commit to you today that you will see in the very near future some government initiatives. And I call that leading by example, Mr. Speaker.

I am talking about using more recycled paper within the Government of

Saskatchewan. I am talking, Mr. Speaker, about even perhaps a blue box system right here in this very Chamber. I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, in our automobiles, in our cars and trucks that are run by government, I am talking about perhaps we should start using some recycled oil. I am talking about such things as perhaps we can recycle our toner boats, or whatever they are, in photocopying machines.

Hundreds of examples, Mr. Speaker. And I commit to you today that this government will lead by example, and in the near future I will be making announcements with respect to just that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about another program that is in this budget. And I'm talking about the agricultural chemical collection program. That program will be launched and started on April 16, just a couple of Mondays from now.

Mr. Speaker, I know from first-hand experience, members from all across rural Saskatchewan on the government side of the House know that in many farmers' sheds and barns and granaries and different buildings there is unused, unneeded, and potentially dangerous pesticides or insecticides or herbicides or dangerous chemicals.

Mr. Speaker, farmers of Saskatchewan have said to me and said to the government: what do we do with all these pails of chemicals? We want to play our part as individuals to help clean up the environment. How can we do this, Mr. Government?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to you that this government has responded. This government has responded, I feel, very appropriately with the announcement of the agricultural chemical collection program, whereby the government will take the lead, travel all across Saskatchewan with a mobile unit, and on given days, given days, announce to the rural people that they can bring in their unused chemicals. And the government, the government, without cost nor charge to the individual, will take those chemicals and successfully collect them, inventory them, and dispose . . . store them, and ultimately dispose of them.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that there is true co-operation. There is true co-operation between end users, being the farmers, and the government of the day, co-operating with respect to cleaning up the environment. Mr. Speaker, I believe that that program will be extremely well received by people all across Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other things that this government will be doing with respect to the air and the water and the soil and the forests and the land and the resources that we have to ensure that we develop our economy, but we develop it in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner.

Mr. Speaker, it's not an easy task. This is probably the most difficult task that I have ever had personally, to manage this big thing called the environment, to ensure that Saskatchewan people and the Saskatchewan government and Saskatchewan institutions and industries play their part in the protecting of the environment. It's an enormous task, Mr. Speaker; it is not easy.

But I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, there are answers, there are solutions, and this government today is working towards many of them. This government has a plan for the future, Mr. Speaker. I believe that Consensus Saskatchewan can play a tremendous role in assisting us in finding some of those answers.

How do we develop industries? How do we develop more industries like Fripp Fibre Forms, I'll use as a good example -- right back home, next door to me, Tisdale, Saskatchewan. Here is an industry that takes our paper, our newspaper and other papers, and compresses that paper and takes it through a process and makes egg cartons out of it -- egg cartons and other products -- and successfully builds and markets those products across Canada and indeed into the United States, across North America.

If that ever was a sustainable type of an industry, it would as good example as I can think of, Mr. Speaker. Something that makes use of our paper and ultimately turns it into an end product that is reusable.

Mr. Speaker, we as a society must continue to reduce the amount of garbage. We must do that by recycling, by reducing, by recovery, by all sorts of different means, Mr. Speaker. It's my job and my commitment to work with Saskatchewan people to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, there are other programs that we'll be announcing over time, and it's my pleasure to work with the round table on the environment and the economy -- a group of men and women from across Saskatchewan, highly trained, highly educated, highly dedicated people who are all grappling with this thing we call the environment to advise government on a conservation strategy. For the long-run good of this province, we must have a good conservation strategy that deals with land and water and trees and forests and the air, and all of these types of issues. That round table is working hard, Mr. Speaker, to come up with answers.

That round table is also working on education projects. How can we better educate our young people and our society in these changing times to be more environmentally conscious? That round table will have answers for this government, it will have answers on a provincial basis, and I thank them for all their work.

Mr. Speaker, that round table is also looking at many demonstration projects across Saskatchewan and holding them up as good examples of environmentally sound, sound projects. And we've got a number of them, Mr. Speaker, that we look at day in and day out. And we in Saskatchewan are concerned about the environment, and we have the projects to prove that.

Mr. Speaker, there is technology that is changing every day, technology

from all around the world that can help us better manage that environment. And, Mr. Speaker, that is why I've also committed within this budget to preparing a catalogue or doing a study and getting all of these different technologies that may apply here in Saskatchewan into focus, into a listing, so people in Saskatchewan can come and say, yes, I can make use of that technology in my home town. You will see more and more of that, Mr. Speaker, where we learn from the technologies all around the world how they can be applied here in the province of Saskatchewan.

There are other things, Mr. Speaker, that I could talk about. I could talk, as well, about the announcement within this budget of an annual state of the environment report, something I'm personally very excited about, Mr. Speaker -- having a report available to all the people in Saskatchewan just telling us what is the state of our economy.

I am here to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in relative terms, vis-a-vis the rest of the world, compared to many other jurisdictions we in Saskatchewan have an environment that we can all walk any place in the world with our head held high and say: I am from Saskatchewan; that is a land of clean air and clear water and good soil and a pristine environment. And I invite you, wherever you may be at all across this planet, to come home to Saskatchewan and have a look at a fine, fine example of a good environment here in the province of Saskatchewan. We could walk any place with that, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not telling you that we don't have problems here in Saskatchewan. I'm not here to say that there aren't some industries that are unnecessarily polluting our rivers and discharging what should not be discharged into the environment, but I'm saying overall, we've got a pretty darn good environment, Mr. Speaker. And it's my commitment to you today to protect and preserve that environment so that the future generations can walk just as tall and as proud and hold their head just as high as we do today.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- And, Mr. Speaker, by having an annual report, an objective report, that people can look at and say, yes, this year we're doing a little better here and a little worse there, I think that's an important step, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite, I hope, would agree with that.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a few years ago such indices as gross national product and gross domestic product and those types of things were not well understood by the masses of people -- CPI, consumer price index, the rates of inflation. But today they're household words.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that by issuing a state of the environment report, by helping to educate the people in Saskatchewan more about just how our environment is doing, that in years to come people will be quoting environmental indices, just like the consumer price index, that will tell you how good the air is here, how good the water is, and all those types of things. And I believe that report is a very good first step.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Speaker, I would like to also say that there will be some legislation this session coming forth with respect to such things as the ozone layer. And Mr. Speaker, I do want to commend members opposite for their, at least, for their intent in bringing forth a Bill that is very similar to ours. There are some fundamental differences, but I think the main point, the main point that I make is the intent to play a part in a non-partisan way of protecting the environment, of protecting with respect the ozone layer, is a good one, Mr. Speaker, and I hope we can keep it on that level.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to laying both of the Bills before this Assembly, having a very good debate, and perhaps some formal or informal meetings with members opposite to examine the pros and the cons of each approach -- somewhat different, similar in intent, but somewhat different -- and coming up with an unified position, a consensus if you like, Mr. Speaker, on how we can best protect the ozone layer and, Mr. Speaker, that legislation will pass this session in this legislature, and I have no question about that.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- I think, Mr. Speaker, I shall leave it at that for today. I know other members want to get in and speak, but I just once again commit to you that protection of our environment is no simple matter. It's complex. It's important. It requires dedication and sincerity, a lot of hard work.

It is a changing world, Mr. Speaker, and I pledge to you, and I pledge to the people of Saskatchewan, that I will work with all the fervour that I can command to do my part in playing a leading role in protecting and preserving the wonderful environment that we in Saskatchewan have today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was very nicely said.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks today to this budget speech, I'm going to be moving a motion, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone. And it will read this way:

That all the words after the word "that" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

this Assembly regrets that the provincial budget has shown a total lack of vision and direction and an abdication of leadership on the part of the provincial government in dealing with the immediate crisis in the

agricultural economy, in promoting community-based economic development, in controlling the enormous accumulated deficit, in protecting Saskatchewan families and seniors, and in providing economic opportunities and jobs for Saskatchewan people.

That is our amendment to the motion, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- I will move it at the conclusion of my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, the government said in its throne speech that the world has declared economic war on Saskatchewan. Those are strong words, Mr. Speaker, and I can't help but realize that for eight long years the PC government opposite are the ones who have declared war on the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- And this budget, Mr. Speaker, continues that economic warfare. The Minister of Finance says we are at a crossroads and that it is a time of hope but also a time of distress. And I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, Order. I have to ask the hon. members to allow the member from Saskatoon Centre to present her remarks to the Legislative Assembly without undue interference.

Ms. Smart: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was saying that the Minister of Finance, in his budget address, had said that we are at a crossroads and that it is a time of hope but it is also a time of distress. And I have no doubt that there is hope in the cold hearts of this Tory government that they and their big business buddies will have another year and maybe even another term in office to rape and pillage the people of Saskatchewan for their own greedy ends.

Mr. Speaker, this is a corrupt government. It's a government of scoundrels and it's a government that, with this budget, has fired another round of ammunition at the people of Saskatchewan.

It is a time of economic warfare, and it is indeed a time of distress for the people of Saskatchewan. And if you want to find Consensus Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, you will find it on this issue across the province.

This budget debate is a serious matter. We are talking about the hard-earned tax dollars that belong to the people of this province. It is their money which has been taken from them in trust and that it will be spent wisely, Mr. Speaker. And instead this government opposite robs the people for their own political and their financial gains.

Mr. Speaker, I've been going around this province speaking in smaller communities and I've been speaking in constituencies in Saskatoon. And I

know that the people's money is precious to them. They work hard for it. But to the government opposite this money is to be squandered as if it was paper monopoly money, Mr. Speaker. They value it as much as they valued the potash mines which they called holes in the ground, Mr. Speaker, as if they had no value. And the working people of this province, Mr. Speaker, contribute a great deal of money to this provincial treasury, and it is that money that we're discussing in this budget speech.

Low income families with two children, with an income of \$25,000, pay the second highest personal income tax in Canada, Mr. Speaker. So they don't have \$25,000 to spend on housing and clothing and food. Their tax is taken out of that money before they see it. And middle income families with a \$40,000 income pay the highest personal income tax in Canada.

And I have to ask, when I see the actions of this government opposite, if they have any idea what this means to the people of Saskatchewan. And I say no, they do not. If they understood the heavy burden that tax increases put on our people, they would be screaming in protest against this budget. And they would be screaming in protest also against the PC federal government's proposed goods and services tax -- a tax which is being rammed through right this minute in the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker, as I speak here today. And what have they done about this tax? They've done nothing, absolutely nothing. And I'll have more to say about this in a minute.

They say nothing about the goods and services tax, and

they don't value the people's money because to this government our tax dollars can be mismanaged. They think they can get away with more and more robbery, inflicting more and more pain on the working people of this province.

The deficit, as many of my colleagues have pointed out, is appalling. And this is the Tory government's ninth deficit budget, straight nine years of deficits. And in 1990-91 they're forecasting a deficit of \$363 million.

And that, Mr. Speaker, makes a cumulative PC budget deficit, brings it to \$4.36 billion, or \$4,360 of debt for every man, woman, and child in this province. And that, Mr. Speaker, is economic war on the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- This budget brings our annual interest payments on this deficit to \$493 million of the taxpayers money, of the money out of the pockets of the working people of Saskatchewan; taken from the people to pay the banks and the other lending institutions -- \$493 million.

And that means, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan are paying more than \$1.35 million per day just for the interest charges. And that comes to \$56,000 every hour, Mr. Speaker, every hour. And I say that \$56,000 could go a long way towards helping those many working families who earn \$25,000 a year and are paying the second highest personal income tax in Canada.

They pay that tax to this PC government opposite for the benefit of all the people in this province, for highways, for health care, for education and social programs, and this PC government throws their money away on interest charges. And that, Mr. Speaker, is economic warfare on the people of Saskatchewan in this province.

Mr. Speaker, compare that \$56,000 per hour to the \$740,000 in this budget which has been designated to help feed the hungry children in this province. My colleagues have pointed out that this \$740,000 is not even evident in the budget estimates. Apparently it's buried somewhere in the Department of Social Services; we can't even find where it is.

And I ask if the 64,000 children in this province estimated to be living in poverty, will be able to find it. Or is this government playing another shell game -- now you see it, now you don't; 64,000 children in poverty and \$740,000 to help them. That works out, Mr. Speaker, to 3 cents per child per day, \$1 per child per month, \$12 per hungry child per year, Mr. Speaker.

Contrast that with the \$56,000 per hour of interest charges on our deficit, and you see that this is an immoral and an obscene government and an obscene budget and is brought forward by a PC government which has betrayed the good people of Saskatchewan, and has plundered the provincial treasury to their own ends.

The government's commitment to Cargill, the largest private grain company in the world with total sales last year of more than \$3 billion, the government's commitment is 500 times bigger than its commitment to hungry children -- 500 times bigger. That's economic warfare on the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget contains a combined interest of \$56 million in personal income tax and sales tax revenue, and that's taxes borne by individuals. It contains a combined increase of \$2 million in corporate income tax and corporate capital tax revenue, and that's taxes borne by the corporations. Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, \$56 million from the working people of Saskatchewan and \$2 million from the corporations.

Thirty-four per cent of the total revenues in this budget come from the working people and the seniors in this province, and 6 per cent of the total revenues come from the corporations. And that, Mr. Speaker, is economic warfare on the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- Mr. Speaker, there's even more bad financial decisions in this budget. There's a revenue item of \$310 million from our Crown corporations, which is a very substantial increase over the \$200 million in last year's budget.

And it's obvious that this PC government is bleeding the Crown corporations by selling off assets and drawing down retained earnings. And this leaves

even less financial resources for the corporations which were built, and I'm emphasizing the word "built," by the people of Saskatchewan through our public enterprise, and our co-operative spirit.

If you want to value enterprise in this province, you value that public enterprise because it's by working together that the people of Saskatchewan, by pooling their resources, have built up the institutions and the programs that we had in this province before the PC government started ripping it apart, before they declared economic warfare on the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this budget indicates that the PC government plans to borrow \$1.9 billion, including borrowing for Crown corporations. And this again is a very significant increase over last year's estimates of total borrowing, which was \$1.1 billion. So that means that at the end of 1990-91, the total debt of the province will be \$13.3 billion.

(1530)

Mr. Speaker, when you compare that with the average income of the working people in Saskatchewan, it's mind-boggling. It's mind-boggling. And the people of Saskatchewan are shuddering when they hear these figures, and they realize the burden that this government is putting on their backs.

The people of Saskatchewan have told me, as I've been talking with them around the province, that they can't bear this kind of economic burden. And they can't bear any more of this PC government's financial mismanagement and corrupt government.

The people of Saskatchewan have indeed had enough. In fact, they've told me they've had more than enough. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that this government should call an election and let the people show them their consensus. Enough is enough.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- And it is indeed time for New Democrats, in co-operation with the voters of Saskatchewan, to show this government what they think by throwing them out of office. This government is a disaster and it doesn't deserve the opportunity to do more damage than it already has.

Everywhere people are telling me, and telling my colleagues, that this Tory government has got to go. No one can trust what they say and everyone suspects what they do, Mr. Speaker. This PC government talks out of both sides of its mouth and continues to try to bamboozle the people of Saskatchewan.

And I feel that they don't really want to govern this province; they just want to play war games. Mr. Speaker, they want to play these war games and they also want to play tiddly-winks.

And I call it tiddly-winks because I couldn't believe my eyes when I read an article from The Saskatchewan Valley News reporting on a Tory roast beef

dinner in the town of Warman in the constituency of Rosthern. This is a report of remarks made by the Premier of this province, the Premier who has tried to tell us that the whole world is creating economic warfare on the people of Saskatchewan. When he's talking to his Tory friends in the constituency of Rosthern at a roast beef dinner, this Premier who's been all huffing and puffing angry with the farmers of Saskatchewan, when they tried to tell him how much they were hurting, and how serious their debt problems are, and the one who said in his throne speech that the whole world has declared economic warfare on Saskatchewan, as I've said already. What did the Premier say to his Tory friends at the roast beef dinner? He said, "the problem here is tiddly-winks." And that's a quote, March 1 from The Saskatchewan Valley News. "The problems are tiddly-winks." And I couldn't believe that when I read it, Mr. Speaker.

The budget says that under the leadership of the Premier, this government will work with the people of Saskatchewan to enhance our Saskatchewan way of life, stabilize our communities, build our economy and manage our resources.

That's what the government says in its budget speech, and behind our backs the Premier is calling our problems tiddly-winks. And the Minister of Finance is laughing at this, Mr. Speaker. Tiddly-winks is a simple, child's game. Tiddly-winks is a child's game, Mr. Speaker. And I suggest that the Premier should call an election, so that he and the government members opposite can go off and play tiddly-winks full time and leave the governing of this province to our leader and our New Democratic caucus. Mr. Speaker, I assure you that we do not see the province's problems as tiddly-winks.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to an important area of the budget which hasn't yet been dealt with in detail and which is most deserving of attention. And that is how this and other budgets supported by PC governments have been treating our senior citizens. PC governments in both Regina and Ottawa continue to give lip-service to seniors and then bring forward budgetary measures which hurt them very badly.

Since the early days of this PC government, when property tax rebates were cancelled, and the early days of the Tory government in Ottawa when attempts were made to de-index pensions, these two governments have demonstrated time and time again that they have no understanding of the situation for seniors, any more than they understand what it's like for a family living on \$25,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, many, many seniors are struggling to get by on fixed incomes in a world where costs are rising and rising rapidly. Heat, water, electricity, housing and numerous other essentials are becoming more and more expensive. And I believe that the government members opposite don't really care about this at all. They haven't demonstrated any concern about the seniors having to bear these extra costs. In fact I have seen more and more the Tory government moving in the direction of charging seniors for these services, and of looking for entrepreneurial ways to take more money, more of the disposable income from the seniors.

And for the seniors then the task of trying to survive is not eased by Tory governments. They have become part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Mr. Speaker, the federal government started things rolling last year with its claw-back provisions for pensions, claw-backs which the Finance minister, Michael Wilson, said would not be collected and which the minister for revenue says is going to be collected. So the seniors don't know where they're at with the Tory government in Ottawa. But they know that they're going to end up paying a 3 per cent tax which is not charged to corporations or to wealthy citizens.

And right now, Mr. Speaker, the federal PC government, as I've said, is following up that tax to the seniors with the goods and services tax. And the impact of that tax on seniors has been well documented, but I want to spend a little time talking about that.

In the budget speech the Minister of Finance said about the goods and services tax, this. He said the goods and services tax is unacceptable. That's what he said -- unacceptable. A little squeak from the Minister of Finance, while a tax is going through that's going to devastate this province. It's going to devastate the people of Saskatchewan, particularly people on low and fixed incomes, particularly seniors. And this government opposite, the minister responsible for seniors has said nothing about the goods and services tax. And the Minister of Finance has said very little. Oh he says he's gone out to the axe the tax meetings and he's said, oh it's not a very good tax. The Premier has said it's too complicated to administer, but he's not particularly opposed to the tax itself. This tax is another gouge on the people of Saskatchewan. It's another tax that doesn't respect the struggles that people have, to make ends meet on low and fixed incomes.

It's a horribly regressive and unfair tax. And if the members of the Conservative government opposite were opposed to this tax, they would be saying a lot more and doing a lot more to encourage the opposition of this province, so that the federal government can hear loud and clear that we don't want that tax.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that for . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, that for 18 months, while the white paper was going forward and up for discussion, this government opposite was not saying anything to oppose the goods and services tax. And in an open letter from the Hon. Bill McKnight to the provincial Finance minister, he said this on the position of the provincial government regarding the goods and services tax:

May I also remind you that we engaged in extensive discussions with all 10 provinces for 18 months after the release of the white paper. In fact these discussions made an important contribution to our own work on the design of the goods and services tax.

An Hon. Member: -- You helped design it.

Ms. Smart: -- Yes, you helped to design the goods and services tax. And

you let out a little squeak in the budget address that says the goods and services tax is unacceptable. It's way more than unacceptable. It's totally devastating to the province. And neither the federal government nor . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Hitting a little nerve over there, a little nerve.

Ms. Smart: -- Little nerve. Neither the federal government nor the provincial government have released any comprehensive analysis showing the overall impact of the goods and services tax on Saskatchewan. They haven't done any homework on the effect of this tax.

They remind me of people who just want to say that they hope things are going to get better, while everything is going down the drain. And they have the responsibility and they have the resources to do good economic analysis, which would show the effect of this tax on Saskatchewan. If they were really opposed to the goods and services tax, you'd think they'd want to document the negative impacts of this tax for the public and for the federal government.

And so the question is, what are they hiding? What are they trying to protect? We've done studies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the goods and services tax that it shows that it will impose a heavy burden on the province. And that will include \$234 million per year in extra taxes going to Ottawa -- \$31 million per year in extra provincial sales tax.

Because the sales tax will come in on top of the federal tax, and so they're really . . . on those goods that have the provincial sales tax, we're facing a fourteen and a half per cent increase. Three hundred and fifty-four million dollars per year in added cost to consumers would be caused by a 3 per cent increase in inflation, and many independent studies have said that inflation can go up as high as 3 per cent.

Now that, Mr. Speaker, is an extra \$6.19 million out of the pockets of Saskatchewan people, or one million, seven hundred and . . . thousand dollars a day. That's a lot of money from people who earn \$25,000 a year -- the second highest level of personal income tax in Canada, the group that makes that money.

It may be hard for the people opposite, who tend to represent a wealthier class of people, to imagine that there are people in this province living on that low a gross income. But there are many people living on that amount of money. And many of those people are being hurt by the goods and services tax, and by the other ways in which this government is mismanaging their precious money.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've spoken a bit more about the goods and services tax. I also want to get back to talking some more about seniors generally, and this budget and how it affects them. I pointed out that seniors are trying to get by on fixed incomes in a world which is growing more and more expensive. And the government opposite is continuing to attack our seniors with the budget of last week.

For example, while the budget for the Seniors' Secretariat increased by 2.3 per cent, that is lower than the rate of inflation and it must be judged as a cut of 2 per cent. But that's not the whole story, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because when you look at the budget, you see that these increases go to a cabinet minister for salary, and payments to departmental staff.

And that the money allocated for the heritage grant program, which is a program recognized as a right of our senior citizens on lower incomes, and the money allocated for services to seniors for the various programs that the seniors themselves have wanted to see in this province, those two budgets, the heritage grant and the services to seniors, remain unchanged in the face of inflation reaching 5 per cent. And the amount of money budgeted for payments to seniors under the Saskatchewan income plan has increased only slightly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps I have to remind you that the Saskatchewan income plan is the program devised to help the seniors who are living on the very basic old age security and guaranteed income supplement from the federal government.

(1545)

We in Saskatchewan have put in place the Saskatchewan income plan and it has been increased only slightly for seniors, who are facing extremely high costs of essential services which I've mentioned already: heat, light, water, housing
_ - all going up -- clothing, food, and seniors struggling on fixed incomes without the money to pay for these increases.

And when the goods and services tax comes in, people will be charging the seniors goods and services tax on all sorts of services-- for home repairs, for home maintenance, for postage stamps, for funeral services, for restaurant meals, for anything that might be of any benefit in giving seniors a better quality of life. The goods and services tax is going to be sticking them in their pocket-books, and this government has been stabbing them in the back.

What the government increases in the secretariat, Seniors' Secretariat, translates to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is just more money for bureaucracy, but not for services to people and to the seniors. And that's a pattern that has been in place with this government and it continues to be in place with this government, particularly when dealing with seniors and people on low incomes. Plenty of money for the bureaucracy, all the cabinet ministers that you have opposite, all the associate ministers you have opposite, all the legislative secretaries you have opposite, and one back bench MLA. And the seniors in this province are hurting badly, and the working people are hurting badly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Health there was an increase of 9.5 per cent for home care services. But that's not very impressive to the people who are concerned about home care and to the seniors who need it. Last year there was a 13.5 per cent increase in home care; this year it's 9.5 per cent.

And home care has had to cut back on the services it offers to seniors. It's only still between 2 and 3 per cent of the total health care budget, while all the research shows that if you would increase the home care and give the seniors quality of care in their homes, you wouldn't have to be building so many nursing homes and putting so many people in institutions. You could have better services for the seniors in their homes, and you could help them with their snow removal and with their cleaning and with the other tasks that they need, their home repairs, and give them the quality of life and the health care that they deserve.

But no. This is an area where the PC government opposite sees the opportunity for business entrepreneurs to get involved and, to provide those services to seniors at a higher charge because they'll have to make a profit, and they will also have to charge the goods and services tax. So there'll be many seniors who won't be able to afford it.

Dr. Robert Murray, who's head of the government's own commission on the health care directions, said that the commission is disappointed that more money was not put into home care. We were saying that when we were government that we wanted to step up home care. Now the government, the Tory government's own director of the health care commission is saying home care should be increased. The seniors are saying it all across this province. So they will be very disappointed to learn that it's still such a small percentage of the budget.

And lots of seniors are talking to me about the very rich environment that's being created in the hospitals in terms of the construction work, in terms of the drapes and the rugs and the furniture, but there's no staff in the hospitals to help them with their situation, Mr. Speaker. And I was appalled the other day, when I was visiting a family, to hear what they experienced in a hospital in Saskatoon when their father was hospitalized with a stroke.

This man was in his 70's, very fine chap who knew still what was going on around him, and he was told by the nurses that if he had to go to the wash-room he would have to wet himself and they would change him later because they didn't have time to do it. Those are appalling conditions in the hospitals, Mr. Speaker, and there should be more staff to take care of the seniors in their old age when they have illnesses that hospitalize them. They should not be treated like that.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- In a way that's more economic warfare, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's social warfare. The Conservative government has really made life miserable for a great many people.

And the seniors, like everyone else, will also be paying the new taxes created by this so-called no-tax budget. Those who drive will have to pay in the area of 70 to \$100 a year in the gas tax which is now not rebated. And since most of them live in their own homes, they're also going to be facing increased property taxes. Provincial government has transferred the tax burden to local governments by freezing the revenue-sharing pool that's

available to the municipalities, and by providing an inadequate grant for the schools. And to make up for these cuts, the local governments will have no choice but to increase property taxes or cut the services which benefit seniors and working people.

Taking your example from the Tory government in Ottawa which passed on the cost to the province, you've passed them on to the municipalities. And they will have to pass them on to the backs of the people whose interests I want to represent in this legislature, and whose concerns I have listened to in great detail, and many times since we've met here in this legislature last year.

It's really unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that seniors who live in the cities can probably expect an end to subsidized transit because they've cut the provincial grants to municipal transit authorities, and that will mean that they will have to probably end their subsidized program.

I wonder if any of the members opposite have ever tried to get around in a city without a car. I wonder how many of them use the public bus. I use the public bus quite often in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, and I actually had someone comment to me the other day that they were surprised to see that an MLA would be riding on the public bus. Well I ride the public bus and I value that transportation.

And I ride the provincial public bus too, between Saskatoon and Regina. I ride it quite often. That's a good service. That's a good service too, and it's service that we should preserve and we should value. It's a service where many people who use it are obviously people on low incomes.

I think you should try riding the public transit and see if you don't find people on it who haven't any time to . . . who haven't any opportunity to drive their own cars or to own their own cars.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've said many times in this legislature that it's the seniors who have built up this province, who have spent their lives paying for the schools, the highways, and the parks. And now when they should be enjoying the fruits of their labours, the government tells them they must reach into their limited incomes and start paying for them all over again.

The budget for the highways has been cut, Mr. Speaker. And it's interesting to me when I'm riding the bus, I'm meeting seniors who are telling me that they no longer drive the highway from Saskatoon to Regina because they keep thinking there's something wrong with their car, that they've got a flat tire or something. They pull over to the side; they look at their car; nothing is wrong with the car. It's the highways that are falling apart in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- And that's economic warfare in Saskatchewan.

Many people have commented on the fact that the Conservative government's deficit is a tax on our children, but I think it's equally important that

we remember that its current policies are a tax on our seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order. I'd ask members on both sides of the House to allow the member for Saskatoon Centre to make her comments.

Ms. Smart: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the seniors are concerned about what's been happening in the province. And I had a letter from the Premier the other day regarding this ConSask that he's developing. He's writing to request my advice on which individuals I think would be suitable candidates to serve on Consensus Saskatchewan. He's wanting me to recommend someone who would make up a membership of serious-minded individuals, respected in their local communities.

Well, Mr. Premier, you want my advice? I've certainly given you some in this speech here, some of the issues that have been raised and some of the concerns people have. I suggest that you get out there and oppose that goods and services tax as strongly as we can do it in this . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- There's a campaign on now, Mr. Premier, and government members opposite -- but it's a campaign by the Canadian Labour Congress and the pro-Canada network. And you who want consensus in this province will throw up your hands and say, oh, you can't have anything to do with the Canadian Labour Congress because that's labour, right? That's what you'll do.

You won't join this campaign that's on right now, this campaign for fair taxes. They're collecting ballots all around the province. And you could do a lot to help stop this goods and services tax if you wanted to go with the consensus of Saskatchewan. Because the consensus of Saskatchewan is that this is a rotten tax and that this is a rotten budget on the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Smart: -- If the Premier requests my advice, I would like to take the opportunity to read to him and to the government members opposite just one letter that I received when I sent out a news-letter asking for people to let me know what their concerns were. This was a news-letter to my constituents. And this is one person speaking from Saskatoon Centre constituency, who said this. She's a senior.

Dear Anne: I used to be so proud of my province. Having lived through the 1930s and the war, I was so happy with the progress we made. It seemed to me we were so sensible in the way we chose our leaders, people who really cared and did their very best to make our lives happier and more secure. And because we trusted them, we got so we trusted and cared more about ourselves and our neighbours.

I never thought I would sit and let some of our people be homeless and hungry, that we would pass our people by when they were hurting, that we would tolerate food banks and school lunches and people sleeping in Loraas

bins. But here we are, back to dog-eat-dog like the 1930s.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is economic warfare in the province of Saskatchewan -- dog-eat-dog like the 1930s.

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

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Will the member state his point of order.

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Mr. Speaker, as the minister for seniors I would like a copy of that letter tabled so I can phone the . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order, order.

The member does not have to table the letter.

Ms. Smart: -- Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the minister responsible for seniors hasn't heard from seniors yet, believe me, I will go out and invite them to let him know exactly what they think about what this government's been doing with this province. And you call an election, and they can tell you what they think about what you've been doing in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said at the beginning of my speech that at the end of it I would be moving:

That this Assembly regrets that the provincial budget has shown a total lack of vision and direction and an abdication of leadership on the part of the provincial government in dealing with the immediate crisis in the agricultural economy, in promoting community-based economic development, in controlling the enormous accumulated deficit, in protecting Saskatchewan families and seniors and in providing economic opportunities and jobs for Saskatchewan people.

I'm pleased to move this amendment, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a pleasure for me to have this opportunity to enter into the debate in reply to the budget address of March 29, 1990.

First, I want to take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate the Minister of Finance for his budget, the first Saskatchewan budget for the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government's budget truly reflects the ideas, the comments and the suggestions of Saskatchewan people. The Minister of Finance took a great deal of time, great deal of care to travel across

Saskatchewan and listen to the people. The budget clearly reflects the powerful nature of building this province through a consensus. The people of Saskatchewan were integral partners in the development of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, the budget was achieved through consensus with the people, a consensus through common sense. It was achieved through priority setting, priorities which were determined by the people themselves. A consensus of common sense, Mr. Speaker, and that was delivered here on budget night by the Minister of Finance.

The budget reflects as well the continuing commitment of this government to work with the people of Saskatchewan through a partnership, a partnership built on a shared vision for this province, a partnership built on shared beliefs and shared ideals to protect and to build. Mr. Speaker, the budget reflects a responsibility that governments have, governments everywhere have.

Saskatchewan is a province that is a government for the people elected by the people, Mr. Speaker. Government must foster productivity, and the people told us that. The government should not stifle productivity. The government must help provide opportunity, not smother it, Mr. Speaker. The government must work with the people, not over them, and must stand with the people, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the consensus.

Mr. Speaker, that is what this budget is all about. It's about protecting people from circumstances beyond their control. It's about protecting people against high interest rates. It's about diversifying their communities. It's about building, and it's about opportunity for youth, opportunity for rural people, and opportunity for those in urban environments.

This budget clearly responds to the needs of Saskatchewan people. It reflects what can be achieved through the strength and the character of Saskatchewan people and their willingness and desire to work together with co-operatives, private sector, farmers, small businesses, people in universities and academic worlds, people of all walks of life and all demographic backgrounds. Mr. Speaker, this budget is about people.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, this budget is about the people. It's about the strength of this province which is the strength of the young people. And I believe that, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, Saskatchewan currently does face some difficulties, but with deep courage and common sense, the people, the Saskatchewan people stand together to lift this province above turbulent waters. It is our duty as their servants to labour on their behalf, to listen to their concerns, and to implement true public policy, policy that is reflected of the public wishes.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has done just that. He's asked them about their courage and determination and co-operation, and they said that

these are the values which the parents and the grandparents of the people of this province brought to Saskatchewan. And it's upon those values which they toiled so greatly to build a home of freedom here for you and for me and for our children.

Mr. Speaker, all four of my grandparents were immigrants. They came here in search of freedom and opportunity. They came here because of the opportunity to build a home and a life for their family. They came here to work and to be part of building this province through co-operation with their neighbours and with their friends and with other Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, they had a vision for this province, and if they were here today I know what they would say. They would tell you that with their everlasting faith in God, the opportunities of the future are in this land of Saskatchewan. They recognize the richness of this province, but they also recognize that even though the opportunities are here to be captured, those opportunities do not come without challenge.

Mr. Speaker, if Saskatchewan is to realize the opportunities of the future and if Saskatchewan is to realize the opportunities of this blessed land, then we must accept that our lives and the lives of our children will change and continue to change in dramatic ways, and that change will bring forth untold challenge but indeed opportunity.

This budget is about opportunity. The future will hold a place for our children. And the pace of change, which will be unprecedented in the future, will be managed by the people of Saskatchewan because they are not afraid of change, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that will present us, this change, with new and demanding challenges. We must be prepared to manage that change, and we are. Today, as I speak, change is occurring around the world. We are living at a time when the history is being compressed. Change that once took centuries is now accomplished within days, weeks, and indeed months. Modern communications have rendered geographical distance virtually irrelevant. Ideas and information can be moved across boundaries in the flash of a second. Opportunities are occurring at an increasing pace.

Mr. Speaker, with the innovative ideas and measures contained within the provincial budget, Saskatchewan is going to be ready to capture those opportunities. People have said they do not want any tax increases, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they've said they do not want tax increases, and the people of Saskatchewan have said they want increased spending on high priorities such as health and such as education.

Mr. Speaker, the budget for health care in the province of Saskatchewan has increased almost 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Now any way you describe that, that's a commitment. The Minister of Finance, with a very, very large budget, has said that he will provide almost a 10 per cent increase in health care. That health

care budget now totals \$1.5 billion in the province of Saskatchewan.

The province of Saskatchewan now spends over \$172,000 per hour on health care for the people of this province. And that is for seniors, that is for children, that's rehabilitation, that's base hospitals, that is for new facilities, new technology, rural people as well as urban, Mr. Speaker.

The province of Saskatchewan now spends \$4.1 million per day on health care. We now spend \$1,500 per person in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and that is over twice as much that was being spent when we took office in 1982.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- I just share with you, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the people have said to us: please make health care a significant priority. We have made it a priority, Mr. Speaker, in this budget, and we've increased spending almost 10 per cent. And now we have over doubled the spending in health care since 1982.

Mr. Speaker, any way you look at it, that is a commitment. That's priority setting through consensus with the people.

At the public conducted meetings by the Minister of Finance, more and more people spoke about education than any other issue. People know that in the face of change, education is the key to our children's future and the future of our communities and for the province. Mr. Speaker, that is why I'm very pleased to see that the Minister of Finance has a 5.6 per cent increase in education in this budget.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- The provincial budget for education now totals \$888 million, Mr. Speaker. That represents almost one-fifth of our total spending for 1990-91. It is more than the combined revenues from corporate taxes, fuel taxes, and resource royalties. It represents an expenditure of over \$2,600 for every elementary and secondary school student and \$8,500 for every university student in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that is commitment. The people of Saskatchewan said make health a commitment -- a 10 per cent increase; make education a commitment -- a 5.6 per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, you see a commitment in both those categories.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Agriculture, I am very pleased as well with the very strong commitment this government has made to farm families in the province in this budget. You and I knew that Saskatchewan farm families would rather have fair access to markets, at reasonable prices, than they would any government subsidies. They want a fair price, a price for their grain that is determined not by the size of a nation's treasury but by the quality of the product that they produce.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan farmers want a chance to compete fairly. And we produce excellent products, Mr. Speaker, some of the finest quality meat, oil seed, and grain products that you would find any place in the world.

Obviously, given the current global subsidy wars in agriculture, that opportunity for fair competition in agriculture is not going to happen today or tomorrow. It will need our attention; it will need our money; it will need our commitment. Mr. Speaker, that's why we must continue to stand with farmers and their families and their communities, today more than ever.

In response to this situation, our government announced the Saskatchewan spring seeding program, Mr. Speaker, to help farmers put in the crop, which offers \$525 million in seed operating loans at ten and three-quarters per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- That's farmers, and farm leaders have responded positively to the \$525 million Saskatchewan seeding program by saying that it is a good initiative, Mr. Speaker.

I personally have met with farm groups on many occasions. They've endorsed the resolution of this House that said we should have \$500 million from the federal government. They've endorsed the fact that we're prepared to help put a spring seeding program in. The resolution of this House, that has the support of the opposition and members on this side of the House, have said that we should have a spring seeding program, Mr. Speaker, and that the federal government should be there to help us with the price and with the exchange rate and interest rates.

Mr. Speaker, as well, to the \$525 million program, I'm happy to point out and happy to recognize the fact that the Minister of Finance is going to spend \$380 million in cash for farmers this year.

The Canadian crop drought assistance program will be \$18 million. The agriculture credit corporation interest subsidies, and this is particularly because of high interest rates, is another \$52 million in cash. Tripartite stabilization premiums, \$9 million; feed grain assistance program, costing the treasury \$10 million; counselling and assistance for farmers, another \$14 million; and Mr. Speaker, livestock investment and facilities tax credits, 12 million; individual irrigation assistance, 1 million; farm purchase program interest rebates, \$10 million; Crop insurance provincial costs alone, Mr. Speaker, this year, \$43 million; and tax exemptions for farm fuel, \$110 million in cash for farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- The ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) production loan program extension, because we put a billion dollars out there already, Mr. Speaker, is \$82 million, and the livestock cash advance at zero per cent interest rates for farmers will cost \$19

million for a total of \$380 million cash, Mr. Speaker, as well as the \$525 million dollars in low interest loans.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- I'm also a very strong supporter, as is the Minister of Finance, of diversifying Saskatchewan, along with working with farmers in rural communities. Farmers have told us and rural community leaders have told us to help diversify and develop our local economy.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at communities, they want to diversify. But they've said to us, along with farmers, they want to be able to build with their own money, with the backing of the province of Saskatchewan. In this budget you will see community development bonds. And people are increasingly advising me and the ministers that they are very, very interested in, and want to explore the possibilities of building their communities with their money, with community development bonds backed by the province. Not borrowing money, Mr. Speaker, but using their money, backed by the province, to diversify process and manufacturing.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that if any idea has caught on in the province of Saskatchewan, it is after years and years and literally decades, that we can't live with wheat alone. From time to time people have recognized that the price may go down, crops mightn't be as good, because of agricultural production and particularly the weather. We need to diversify and broaden our horizons. For years and years and years people has asked the government to help facilitate diversification. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to see in this budget, that kind of facilitating example and leadership with Community Development Bonds.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Our government, in partnership with the private sector and co-operatives, has been working very, very hard to increase the level of processing and manufacturing, to add value to our products here at home.

Let me just give you some examples, Mr. Speaker. We have an inventory of \$6 billion in significant projects in progress that are planned, and in progress now over the next five years. Six billion dollars in diversification projects from small towns and villages.

And, Mr. Speaker, we were just at the indEX '90 program, and we have 20,000 people are going to go through the show that's in Regina as I speak right now, in the next three days. Twenty thousand people in processing, manufacturing, and looking at diversification in the province of Saskatchewan.

These small projects and large projects include small-business ventures. It includes uranium, gold-mining development, construction of ammonia, ethynol, and meat processing plants, the development of Saskatchewan . . . and I point out, Mr. Speaker, Canada's second heavy oil upgrader, because

the first one was built here with the co-op sector right in the city of Regina. Local government processing plants, capital programs, new university and hospital facilities, as well as brand-new recreation facilities. Mr. Speaker, \$6 billion in diversification projects, and that's the tip of the iceberg across the province of Saskatchewan that can be financed with Community Development Bonds. In addition, we have telecommunication networks, power, and irrigation projects on top.

Mr. Speaker, we are leaders in agriculture, natural resources, and knowledge-based industries such as communications and biotechnology, plus our drive towards diversification is a major part of our growing economic strength.

Mr. Speaker, protection for families, protection for their homes -- and I'm very happy to point out that the Minister of Finance has locked in the ten and three-quarters for families here -- diversification, and new opportunities. That's what Saskatchewan people are telling us about. They want to see us protect the farm, help farmers in difficult times; they want to see us protect the home, diversify the communities and have health and education as priorities.

Mr. Speaker, let me say in closing, as the Minister of Finance went across the province of Saskatchewan, those five priorities were very, very key. On top of that, they said, Mr. Minister of Finance, don't raise the taxes. Mr. Speaker, he pulled it off. We have got protection of the family farm, protection of the home, diversifying communities, and in fact, health and education expenditures that will lead any jurisdiction in the country. That's what Saskatchewan's budget is about in 1990-91.

I therefore, Mr. Speaker, will strongly be supporting the budget.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to become involved in the debate on the budget speech and the amendment that was put forward by the member from Idylwyld in Saskatoon. And in my speech that I'm going to be delivering here, I want to refer to both the amendment and the budget, and to do it simultaneously, or in conjunction with one another.

But I want to say the amendment that was moved, I think is very appropriate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it deals with the budget in terms of the lack of vision and leadership that is being provided by the government at the present time. I want to say that in the budget itself . . . and I only want to spend a few moments on the actual technical part of the budget because I want to spend a fair bit of time on agriculture, some time on privatization, and some on what has been called Consensus Saskatchewan.

The Premier has just referred to the fact that his budget didn't increase the taxes for the people of the province, and I want to say nothing could be further from the truth. But that shouldn't surprise us given the kind of words he was uttering yesterday about the programs of other political parties and farm organizations here in the province of Saskatchewan.

If you turn to page 28 of the budget, you'll find that on the column of provincial income tax, people in Saskatchewan pay the highest level of provincial tax anywhere in Canada. So it's true -- that wasn't increased this budget. But why does it have to be, when it's the highest in Canada already, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

I want to say that if you then turn to some other economic indicators in this budget, the budget document that the minister tabled in the House, turn, for example, to housing starts in the province of Saskatchewan, which are a true indicator of economic development. It's not my word or the Premier's word; it's the document, the facts that count.

What you find is housing starts in 1989 were 1,900 or the lowest level in many, many years. In fact, the lowest level since the last time we had a right wing government in this province, back in the late 1960s.

There's a few other shocking examples or numbers in this budget. I want to indicate that on page 51, where the debt of the province is indicated. That is, Mr. Speaker, the amount of money that we would have if we sold off all the assets in the province.

Now, when we left office in 1982, that number would have been in excess of \$1 billion. If you had sold off all the assets of the province, there would have been in the bank over \$1 billion.

Well I want to say today that the Premier who just spoke has taken this province, not to a balance sheet of 2 billion or 3 billion, but to a negative position, and these are their numbers of \$3.4 billion owing if we sold every asset we own -- the power company, the potash corporation -- every asset we own. If we sold it all, we would owe the banks and trust companies \$3.4 billion.

And the Minister of Finance has the audacity to stand in this House and say that he's turned it around, that he has somehow turned around the economy of the province. I say, even more shocking, Mr. Speaker, is if you turn to page 56 in the budget document and look at the total debt of the province -- That is all of the debt owed by the Consolidated Fund and the Crown corporations -- that number now stands at \$13.2 billion -- can you imagine that? -- \$13.2 billion owed by the people of the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to look back to what the estimate was last year, \$12 billion. That means the minister is running up the deficit not, as he has indicated, some \$400 million but has going up this year alone \$1.2 billion. Now can you image that? At a time when they're selling off the assets of the province, selling off the potash corporation, they're saying in the Consolidated Fund they're running up the deficit in the area of \$400 million. That would mean they must be running up the debt in the Crown corporations sector \$800 million this year.

Now I say that's shocking. At a time when this government says that it's working its way out of debt, that they drive up the deficit of the province \$1.2 billion in one year. Now this is the government that indicated when

we were in government that we were hiding the debt in the Crown corporations. Can you imagine that? And yet this year, while they're selling off major parts of the economy in terms of the Crown corporations, the debt in the Crown corporations sector and the Consolidated Fund is going up by \$1.2 billion.

Well I say this budget is a farce. It shows a total lack of vision and lack of leadership, and I think that what is called for here is an election to turn the province of Saskatchewan around.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well you may ask, Mr. Speaker, why is this happening? Why is the deficit in the province standing at \$13 billion? Why is the debt in this province growing faster than any other province in Canada, faster per capita than any other province in Canada, when in 1982 we had no debt? On the balance sheet that Bob Andrew signed when he became the minister of Finance, it showed a surplus of \$139 million, Mr. Speaker, a surplus. And since that time we have had nine successive deficit budgets.

Now does anyone know what the total interest on that debt has been since these people have taken over? Is it 500 million or a billion? I say that the interest paid on debt in the eight years these people have been in power is \$2 billion. If you add up the interest that has been paid by the people of the province, it's \$2 billion.

I say that's shocking, disgusting. And can you imagine what could be done today in Saskatchewan in terms of economic development if that \$2 billion had stayed here in the province rather than going to the lending institutions that the member from Weyburn is getting to know so well in New York and in London and in Germany. I say that the way this province is being run is, in my words, a sham, and it has put the province in shambles economically. And I say this government is not fit to manage the affairs of this province.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot about consensus. And the Premier in his words just a few moments ago talked about consensus. And he talks about getting a hundred people together to come to visit him in the legislature, or in Regina, and that he is going to appoint them.

Now that makes me wonder about the process, Mr. Speaker, because it's not very many years ago the process was is that the government in power or the opposition party would have a membership. And they would get together once a year and plan the proposed legislation or the policy that that party would implement.

Or you would use your back-benchers. You would go to the member from Arm River and ask him what the issues were in rural Saskatchewan. Or you would go to your legislative secretaries, the higher-paid group of elected people in the government, and ask them for their opinion. Or cabinet ministers or the thousands of people that work and are paid for by this government.

Many people are asking why the Premier is doing an end run on the Conservative Party. Why isn't the policy that is proposed by the Conservative Party the basis of the legislation that comes through this legislature?

Well I think I know, and I think I know why a few months before the election the Premier does not want to deal with the policy of the Conservative Party.

I have a headline here from the Star-Phoenix, dated December 22, 1987, about policy that the Premier is trying to hide. The headline is, "Health premiums favoured by Tories." This is the real agenda of the Conservative Party. And I want to quote from this article that says:

A motion to reintroduce health care premiums, which were eliminated about 15 years ago, was passed at the Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative Party convention last month, it was announced on Monday.

Well I say, Mr. Speaker, that these are the reasons that Consensus Saskatchewan is being set up -- to do an end run on the policies of the Conservative Party. I want to say to you that another clipping coming out of Saskatoon that talks about medicare premiums and a motion being passed by the Tories from Moose Jaw, the two ridings in Moose Jaw, and we remember that. Well I say that Consensus Saskatchewan, if it were to work, could have worked yesterday and the days leading up to the Premier losing his temper with the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well I want to say to the member from Rosthern that what really happened is a group of farmers decided they were going to come to the legislature to visit their elected officials. And in a democracy, at least I hope it's still an opportunity for people to come and lobby elected officials; this is what they do. They brought their families; the galleries were full. They had their teen-age sons and daughters. They came in half-ton trucks and cars to visit their Premier because, Mr. Speaker, they had seen ads on TV and they had seen the Premier tell everyone that he in fact had a permit book that he was a farmer. He said, come on and see us.

Now I would not have been surprised if the farmers would have come here angry. If they had brought picket signs, that wouldn't have surprised me. But they didn't. They came here quietly to meet with the elected officials of this province. And they got together in small groups, and I met with a small group of six in a crowded office and we talked about the issues facing farmers.

And these people were concerned, not only about themselves but about their neighbours and their community, and they had ideas of how the problem could be solved. And they said what is needed obviously is some restructuring of the debt, the \$6 billion in debt. They talked about a moratorium on foreclosures until the debt issue was dealt with. And they talked about

the fact that the Premier of this province, the Minister of Agriculture, had a great deal to do with foreclosures because he's the minister responsible for the ag credit corporation here in Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: -- Let's not get into that or we'll have to . . .

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well we'll get into it all right. The member from Rosthern will know full well that his dirty tricks in the last session . . . that his dirty tricks in the last session simply don't work.

(1630)

So they come here to meet this Premier, to meet this Premier who is supposed to understand the needs of farmers. Even more than that, even more than that, the Premier had said to the farmers that he understood foreclosures -- that even he had lost land.

And in the Edmonton Journal, I want to quote:

Even the Conservative Premier Grant Devine, a grain farmer with a Ph.D. in agricultural economics, has lost three quarter sections (64 hectare) parcel of land because of his debt problem.

He's told the world about his problem. So the farmers thought this man would understand them when they came to the legislature. They said, look, Mr. Premier, we want to meet with you because you will understand what it's like to be up against the wall.

So they meet and they lay out their strategy. And what does the Premier do? Does he join hands with the farmers like he mentioned in his throne speech he would do with Weyerhaeuser and Cargill? What does he do? He blows a fuse; he gets mad; he attacks the farmers. He says that they're not doing what is in the best interest of farmers.

Well the farmers talked to us after that big blow-up, Mr. Member from Rosthern. He talked to us. The farmers said this about the Premier, that they had come here quietly to deal with the problem of farm debt and farm foreclosure. They sat down with the members of the legislature. But do you know what they said, Mr. Speaker? They said the Premier had insulted them and attacked them.

And one of them took me aside, a farmer from Wadena. He was about 74 years old, and he told me the story of how their farm, in the last eight years, has got into financial trouble. He had six quarters of land. He had a son who had returned from Calgary, had worked in the oil patch but had wanted to farm. They had taken out a loan to buy three quarters of land to bring the size of their farm up to nine or 10 quarters.

But they didn't have enough income to meet the debt, and they have now lost that three quarters of land. But the three quarters of land that they lost wasn't enough to cover their debt. And they're now still making payments on the six quarters of land that had been free of debt before this government came to power.

And this individual who was 74 years old told me that he and his wife are taking \$150 a month out of their pension to help make payments on the farm to save it.

Now these are the kind of stories that the farmers were telling us. They didn't expect the Premier to attack them. They expected him to at least listen -- even if he couldn't help, at least to have the decency to listen.

Well I want to say to you that many of the farmers when they left met a different Premier than they knew about before they had come to Regina.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- They now realize that the farmer from Albert Street who says that he lost three quarters of land, if he lost that land, he didn't lose it because he couldn't make the payments. That's one thing. He didn't lose it because he was up against the wall like the 74-year-old farmer and his son and daughter-in-law. He lost it, if he did, out of convenience, because he didn't want to make the payments. It's not that he couldn't afford to.

No one can tell me that the Premier, making \$100,000 a year . . . that means almost a million dollars as Premier since he took over eight years ago. If you tried to tell me that a farmer, given an extra million dollars from the government in pay, couldn't make payments on his farm, the farmers no longer believe you people. They simply don't believe it.

And I want to say to you that one farmer mentioned to me on his way out, he said, I'll believe Grant Devine has a problem with farm debt when I see the bulldozers closing in the swimming pool in his backyard in his Albert Street home. That's what they said.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- I bring to the hon. member's attention that hon. member's names are not to be used, except from direct quotes of newspapers, books, that sort of an article.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say as well that the farmers, when they came to meet with the Premier, had expected to get a good reception. And I think they deserve that, as any members of the public do when they come to meet with elected officials, whether it's the Leader of the Opposition or the Deputy Premier.

This is another thing the farmers were saying as they went to the office of the Deputy Premier and they wanted to get a meeting set up. But the staff of the Deputy Premier said the Deputy Premier was going to be in the House -- too busy. And they went back to her office and they then were told that there was going to be a vote coming up in the House.

Now I don't know of any vote that was coming up in the House yesterday, because during the budget debate it's very, very clear that the vote on the

budget debate will come at 9:30 tonight.

Well I'm not sure about the information sources, but if it came to believing the government or the farmers, I'll tell you I'll believe the farmers every time.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Now, Mr. Speaker, what made the Premier blow up? Was it that the farmers were attacking him, or did they have picket signs parading outside? None of that. The time that he blew up was when he was handed an invitation to a reception to review what had happened here in the Assembly or here in the building yesterday.

And what was the problem with that? Well the problem was is that the auditorium at the SGEU building had been rented for this small reception. The Premier looked at the invitation, saw SGEU, and blew his stack. Now why did he do that? Why would a man, a Premier of his stature, blow his top when he read an invitation that had SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) written on it. All I can say, it's lucky they didn't rent the Catholic church basement over at Sacred Heart. He would be attacking the Catholic priest there. I say the man has really lost it on the issue of unions and working people and farmers.

It's not even that he's opposed to the SGEU, because my information is that he attended a meeting there himself two weeks ago. So it can't be the building. He was there. He didn't catch anything. Why is he so upset when the farmers invited him to come to a meeting at a place where he had attended a meeting two weeks ago? What is it?

An Hon. Member: -- The optics.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well it may be the optics, but I think it's more than that. I think what the Premier is doing, clearly, is worrying about working people in the city and farmers holding hands to work out the problems of Saskatchewan. That's the issue.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- It's got little or nothing to do with union people, working people, farmers, the place of the meeting. What the Premier is seeing is the possibility of the people of Saskatchewan -- business, labour, organized and unorganized, farmers, professional people -- getting together to solve the economic problems of Saskatchewan. That's what he's worried about.

Now why is that? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we all know, and the people of Saskatchewan know, that the way that this government has operated is by divide and rule, by dividing the people of Saskatchewan -- working people against farmers; native against non-native; welfare recipients against non-welfare recipients; seniors against non-seniors; those would collect from the government in one program against those who don't.

That's why the Premier wants to set up Consensus Saskatchewan which is tightly controlled by the government. They want to have Consensus Saskatchewan because then they hold the meeting, they control the agenda, and they produce the press release that will come out after the meetings. That's what Consensus Saskatchewan is all about. It's called control -- control of people.

Now all of this posturing in the House by the members opposite about ripping down the walls of East Germany and ripping down the walls of communism flies in the face of what they are doing in terms of democracy here in the province of Saskatchewan. They're building walls around various groups of people, building walls around the very people who it will take to take us out of the \$13 billion in debt and get us back on track. That's what's happening.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, none of us are opposed to the ripping down of walls that control people, whether it's in Chile where radical right-wing governments have established themselves by attacking and overthrowing governments that were legitimately elected . . . I'll never forget the day back in September of 1973 when the Pinochet government was set up by attacking, bombing the offices of the then governor, Salvador Allende.

A right-wing government was set up by attacking and killing the elected officials of that country. And the same thing . . . I'm not saying that right-wingers, extreme right-wingers are any worse than the communists who were doing the same thing or accused of doing the same thing in East Germany. What I'm saying is that whether it's in South Africa or the Philippines or Chile or East Germany, what we don't want to establish in Saskatchewan is governments that will tie the hands of people, that will build walls around people and attack them when they come to visit their elected officials. That, Mr. Speaker, should not be allowed and should not happen in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the agricultural program that was dealt with by the Premier in a very inadequate way yesterday. Members will remember a few weeks ago when we passed a motion unanimously here in the Assembly. The motion was passed. There were six main points. And we got the Premier of the day, the Minister of Agriculture, to go to Ottawa to negotiate the deal based on the motion that we had passed.

There were six main points, and I just want to go through this and see how we made out, having the Premier of the province go to Ottawa to negotiate a deal for us.

First we had called for an immediate announcement of an injection of 900 million to Saskatchewan farm families: 500 million to be paid out prior to seeding, and the balance of 400 million paid in late fall. Well how did we

make out on that one? Well what the Premier announced a few days ago was that the federal government would not pay 900 million, but 200 million, about 200 million to Saskatchewan, but only if the province matched it. So, Mr. Speaker, on that one we may have some money coming, but then again we may not, and we'll have to wait and see.

Then we talked about and voted in favour of establishment of a billion dollar contingency fund to counteract the disastrous effect of the grain prices caused by international grain subsidy war. Well there was no mention of that when he came back. On that one, the Premier would have to get a failing mark.

Then he was going to bring all possible pressures and resources to bear on the United States and Europe to achieve an early resolution of the international price war. No mention of that coming out of the Ottawa meeting.

And he was going to apply its constitutional authority over banks and lending institutions to achieve a lasting solution to the current national farm debt crisis. That's basically what the farmers were here to talk about yesterday, to find out how he had made out on that. Well maybe that's why he was so angry, because he failed on that one as well.

The fifth was to instruct the Farm Credit Corporation to rewrite mortgage values at realistic land prices, to be accompanied by a reasonable repayment schedule. Nothing there. Failed again.

And the sixth point -- make a greater commitment to the federal resources . . . to the current review and the implementation of a long-term stability program in agriculture. And there again, I think it's fair to say that the Premier failed as well.

So I say to you, what are the farmers of the province supposed to expect? We come here. We pass motions. The farmers try to meet with the Premier and all we get is a temper tantrum from the Premier, the member from Estevan.

Well I say to you that the thousands of farmers we're losing at the present time, Mr. Speaker, should come as no surprise given the fact that the Premier of this province, before he became an elected member, talked many times about how Saskatchewan should be run in terms of agriculture.

He talked about high through-put elevators. He talked about innovative ideas in terms of new grain handling systems. He talked about the inefficiency of farmers. He talked about getting rid of the Crow rate so that a much more streamlined grain handling system could come into place. And so why would anyone be expected that a Premier who talked about changing Saskatchewan, and he's still changing it today, because he talked about it, why would anyone be surprised that the Premier would be changing the look of rural Saskatchewan.

And I want to quote from the much quoted article Marketing Boards: Economic or Social Policy?. And here it says, and there's a picture of Dr. D.G. Devine, professor of agricultural economics, University of Saskatchewan, Business Review 1977. Now this is old but it has a great deal of relevance to the present because it is a prediction that is coming true. And it's not happening by accident, it's happening by design. Well I'll tell you .

. . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. Now we have a debate going on back and forth across the floor. I'm not sure that that's the proper procedure. I'd like to bring it to the attention of the members and ask them to proceed with the debate and refrain from interrupting.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- I want to quote from this article that seems to upset the member for Weyburn, the Minister of Finance, a great deal because he doesn't want to hear what his Premier has said in the past. And I wish the member would stay and listen to it because I think it would be very, very revealing.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The hon. member also knows that he's not to refer to the presence or absence of members. If an hon. member leaves, it's not his prerogative to bring that to the attention of the House.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Yes, I want to apologize for referring to the fact that the minister was leaving.

But I want to quote from this article in which the now Premier is quoted as saying:

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

Now in 1977, the Premier then thought that 80 per cent of the farmers were non-productive. That's when things were booming. That's when people were returning to Saskatchewan instead of the 55 or 60,000 who have left in the last five years. That's at a time when things were booming. The Premier then thought 80 per cent of the farmers were inefficient and should leave the land.

Well I say to you that a Premier who believes that, it's no surprise that in 1990 we find ourselves with a major crisis in agriculture that is not being dealt with by the government of the day. They simply don't believe in it.

I want to say that our party has a clear idea of what should be done with the farm crisis. We've announced it on February 26 and again a few days ago in Ottawa at a press conference, and it's clear what we believe should happen.

First of all, we've been calling for a \$500 million payment before spring

seeding. Secondly, we called for a moratorium on Saskatchewan farm foreclosures until at least July 1, 1990 -- not five years as the Premier and the Deputy Premier were talking about yesterday, but until July 1, 1990.

And why July 1? Because by that day we say that the federal and provincial governments should set a deadline of July 1, 1990 by which time to develop a national consensus with farm groups and financial institutions on a plan to restructure the farm debt. That would mean that farmers who owe a great deal of money would have their debt reviewed.

And let's use the example, if a farmer had a loan outstanding on a quarter of land at \$60,000, if the land was valued at \$30,000, why would you repossess that land, take it away from the farmer, put it on the market, and sell it to a much larger farmer for \$30,000? Who gains? What's the point? Doesn't make any sense.

So why not have a restructuring of debt that would restructure the debt and leave the land in the hand of the farmer who's been picking the rocks, cultivating and seeding it. But that's not what these people are doing.

Ag credit corporation, the Premier's own agency, is driving thousands of farmers off the land. If he believed in it, if he believed in it he'd have a chat with himself and call off his lawyers and quit foreclosing on farmers. That's what he would do. He'd sit right down and lean over to himself and say, Grant, don't do it any more. Don't foreclose.

The Speaker: -- Order. I'm just going to once more bring to the hon. member's attention not to use the names of other hon. members in his debate.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- The next point that we believe, Mr. Speaker, that should be taken into consideration and brought to fruition is that the federal and provincial governments set a deadline of July 1, 1990 to develop a national farm income stabilization program which would guarantee production and price shortfalls on delivery.

Now what could that mean? Well during the federal election we indicated that a federal government should set up a program that would guarantee, that would guarantee the price on the first 8,000 bushels of production for every farmer in Saskatchewan at the U.S. target price. Now at the present time that would be about \$6 a bushel -- \$6 a bushel for 8,000 bushels. That would be guaranteed.

Now the member from Weyburn, who usually deals in deficits, probably doesn't understand that this would put farmers into a position of being in the black. But it would be a guaranteed income in terms of the amount of grain and the price.

And if the minister would like to come to my office, we could sit down and I could lay this out in more detail, and maybe he could take it to his cabinet and we could have some consensus on what is needed.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- The final point, Mr. Speaker, that I would argue we should look at is introducing a land transfer program that would intergenerationally transfer the land from one generation to the other. Now the member from Weyburn yells, land bank, from his seat. I can tell you one thing, that most farmers in Saskatchewan today, given the option of what they're dealing with by that minister of foreclosures, would much rather have a land transfer system than what they are doing, of foreclosing and driving farmers off the land.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that very clearly . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the final point is a land transfer program. It could take many ways of handling this. Discussions have gone on with the co-operative movement, the federated co-op, the credit union system, the Sask Wheat Pool are very interested in intergenerational transfer. And the member from Morse will know that because he has met with them to talk about this kind of a program that would transfer land from one generation to another.

So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that there are solutions to the problem, there are solutions to the problem. But what is lacking here is the leadership, the leadership and the strength of will to commit a government to do these kind of things that would bring the farmers out of the plight they're in.

But what I can say that yesterday we saw here in the legislature one of the worst displays, yesterday and the day before, of a Premier attacking the farmers of the province. I never thought I would see the day.

But what we do know now is that the Premier does not understand what it's like to be up against the wall, to be a farmer losing his land, even though he tries to play that card at every turn; that he doesn't understand what it's like to be driven off his land. Because we now know the Premier is the Premier who lives on Albert Street in one of the biggest houses in Regina, with a swimming pool, and the \$100,000 a year job.

That's what the farmers are saying, that's what they're saying. They drove by his house after they left here to have a look at it. And I say again, the line used that stuck in my mind was the farmer who said that they will believe Grant Devine has a problem with income when they see . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. Now this is several times now that I've brought . . . order! I'd ask the Minister of Justice to come to order . . . or the Minister of Finance, and the member from Regina Centre. I would like to once more, after several times now, draw to the attention of the hon. member that he's not to use other members' names, and I would like to

ask him to apologize on this occasion.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. When I get talking about agriculture, I often forget to use the minister's title, and I intend to do that for the rest of this speech. I really will try to do that.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I'm also going to ask you for an apology.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- I do apologize.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I want to spend just a few moments before 5 o'clock talking about the people of Elphinstone, if I can have the attention of the Deputy Premier. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that in the constituency of Elphinstone, the biggest issue, the biggest issue in my constituency, is not bankruptcy; the biggest issue in Elphinstone is food on the table.

I want to say to you, in my constituency, which is in the inner city of Regina, downtown bordered by the two railway tracks on the north and south and by Albert Street on the east, that the biggest issue is food. And the members opposite yell and holler from their seat because they don't want to hear about it. But I say the people of Elphinstone, and of Regina, they are worried and concerned about food.

Mr. Speaker, I was at one of the schools in Regina Elphinstone the other day, and they were telling me . . . the teachers were telling me that the biggest single issue is not the size of classes, is not the lack of text books or library books, but the biggest problem teachers have in the schools of the inner city of Regina is children coming to school hungry. It's the biggest single issue.

Now I am pleased, in a way, that the government is trying to come to grips with this -- trying to come to grips with this. I want to say that the \$740,000 that has been allocated to feed the hungry children, although it is a start, is a pittance.

Now did they announce that they would reinstate the program that helped subsidize food for northern Saskatchewan, that they took away back in 1982? Did they do that? They still keep in place the subsidy on booze for northern Saskatchewan but they take away the subsidy for northern children for milk and bread, for northern Saskatchewan.

Now if you were to take that money that used to be there and take it off of what they're providing, you then end up with about \$300,000 extra over what had been there in 1982. But let's leave that as it is.

What does this money mean? If you don't allow any for administration, nothing for administration of the program, and just buy food for children, you're talking about \$12 a year per child, or about a buck a month. Now I say, Mr. Speaker, these children will have to save up for two months to buy a sandwich -- at least two months to buy a sandwich. Now that is not a program. That is simply not a program to feed the hungry children.

And I know the minister of families is trying, and I know it may not be his fault. He may not have the sway in cabinet to get hot food programs in the schools.

But I say to the Minister of Finance that he should be ashamed to promote a program that will give one sandwich every two months to the hungry children, and call it a program. That simply isn't adequate.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to turn for a few moments to the issue of privatization, one of the great, exciting themes of this government in the last budget. Now isn't it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that not once in the document this year is that word mentioned. Not once.

Now you remember, Mr. Speaker, how many times it was mentioned during the last session, how the government was going to solve all the economic problems simply by bringing in privatization. And it was mentioned hundreds of times by the members in the government benches -- hundreds of times. Public participation or privatization. They started using public participation, then they changed to privatization, and now they've changed to nothing. They've backed off.

But have they really? I have here a document called "1990 International Privatization Congress." And who's in this little magazine? Well, first of all, the invitation comes from the Premier of the province.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The hon. member is using the document as an exhibit. He may use it to quote from but not as an exhibit.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well I want to quote from this document, and I want to read the invitation from the Premier of the province. It starts out, Premier of Saskatchewan:

As Premier of Saskatchewan I am pleased to invite you to the 1990 International Privatization Congress in Saskatoon.

And it goes on to say:

I invite you to come to Saskatchewan to continue the dialogue on the merits of privatization, and to share your nation's experience in that area. See you in 1990.

Now I want to say that in this . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. It being 5 p.m., the House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.