

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Martens: -- I give notice that I shall on Friday ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO): (1) is the Titan Building in Saskatoon currently under consideration for sale by SEDCO; (2) how many proposals or offers have been brought forward to the government regarding this building; (3) has SEDCO received any proposals from any companies from the United States from a corporation entitled Home Depot; (4) what are SEDCO's intentions with the Titan Building; and (5) what are the details of any proposals received to date?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and all members of the House, representatives of the University of Saskatchewan's Students' Union -- Shauna Curry, the incoming president; Tiffany Paulsen, internal vice-president; Dean Hall, administrative vice-president; and Bruce Pon, academic vice-president.

I'd like to welcome these representatives of student government to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon and would ask all members to help me welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of Education in welcoming the USSU (University of Saskatchewan Students' Union) executive here today, and in particular I would like to comment that Tiffany Paulsen is here today; she's a constituent of mine in Saskatoon Wildwood. I had the opportunity to meet with these four dynamic people just before question period, and we had a bit of discussion about what happens after student union politics. And I expect that some of them will likely go on to a career in provincial or federal politics. So I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's just such a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature a very special group of grade 4 and 5 students seated in the west gallery. They are from Pilot Butte School, a school where I taught for 15 years, I think.

They are accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Loretta Dick, a colleague and good friend, and their bus driver, Ruth Betteridge. It's just such a pleasure to

have them here and I'm really looking forward to meeting with them later.

So please join me in welcoming them today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Rosthern who, as you know, is at home dealing with the problems associated with a fire on his farm, it's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce a group of students, grade 8 students seated in the east gallery from the Venture Heights School in Martensville, Saskatchewan. Their teachers are Deborah Rodger and Terry Stanviloff.

I'd ask all members to welcome these students here this afternoon, and I'll be meeting with them after question period for a brief visit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and all the members of the Assembly a good friend of mine, Norm Haryung, in the east gallery.

Norman is from Rabbit Lake and he has managed the Meeting Lake Regional Park for the past 30 years. This is the longest period of time that anyone has held the position of secretary manager in any regional park in Saskatchewan. Meeting Lake Regional Park has developed into one of the finest parks of its type in Saskatchewan, and it is through no small effort of Norman that that has become a reality. I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming him here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Health, I'd like to welcome 50 Grade 10 students from LeBoldus High School. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Paul Dawson and Miss Jolene Othnek.

As well, I'd like to make special mention that Katherine Horsman is also accompanying these students. She is a recent immigrant to Regina, having come from Saskatoon. She's a well-known ringette player.

I look forward to meeting with these young people after question period. So I'd like everyone to help me welcome them to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roy: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, Mr. Jamie Winkel, a constituent of mine. He's seated in the west gallery.

Jamie comes from Middle Lake, Saskatchewan. He's here today visiting Regina and the legislature; he's on

personal business. Jamie has just finished his college and has gotten his diploma from college, and certainly he's looking with enthusiasm and optimism to a future career here in Saskatchewan, and to contribute to the provincial economy.

So I welcome Jamie here today and I wish him the best of luck in the future. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, given some of my former and current work in the church and the role of trying to keep marriages whole, I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, a very special guest in your gallery, that being Mrs. Myrna Rolfes, your wife.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: -- All I can say to the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, try and get my attention again.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Prince Albert YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night in Prince Albert, the YWCA hosted its annual Women of Distinction awards. The awards, which are divided into four categories, honour the work of women within the Prince Albert area.

This year's honorees are as follows. Margaret Morgan, recognized for her work in community enhancement; Joyce Ellison, noted for her efforts in health, sport, and fitness; Marge Nainaar, recognized for her commitment in arts and culture; and Debra Taylor, honoured for her role in the business and professional achievement.

In addition to these outstanding women, Rachel Simpson, a grade 12 student, will receive the Dr. Roberta Bondar scholarship for her achievements and involvement.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members of the legislature, I would like to congratulate and commend each of these women for their outstanding accomplishments. We would also like to recognize the countless other women in our communities who are worthy of such awards and are not always officially recognized.

I would also like to congratulate and commend the board of the YWCA in Prince Albert for sponsoring this event which is important to our community, and for highlighting it this year by inviting the internationally renowned woman artist, Buffy St. Marie, to be the keynote speaker at this event, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Karate Association Tournament

Mr. Knezacek: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I

would like to inform the House about the Saskatchewan Karate Association's spring tournament which took place in Esterhazy recently. The events, which lasted all day, were both exciting and fast paced. The tournament also offered a wide variety of competition in categories based on age, sex, and experience level.

There were many sponsors willing to help out with the tournament, including Saskatchewan Lotteries, Sask Sport, the town of Esterhazy, International Minerals and Chemical Corporation, and the Esterhazy High School. I also want to recognize the Esterhazy Karate Club, the host club, for the tournament. The countless volunteers must not go unnoticed for their endless hours of work in order to put this tournament together and making it a success.

Karate traces its origins back to ancient times when Buddhist monks applied their techniques of mental discipline to their need for physical exercise and protection from enemies. Today karate is a sport, a leisure activity, an exercise, a style of fighting, a philosophy, and a way of life to many.

In the words of Gichin Funakoshi, known as the founder of modern karate, the ultimate aim of the art of karate lies in the perfection of the character of its participants.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the people responsible for the success of the 1994 Saskatchewan Karate Association's spring tournament. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

St. Angela's Choir to Austria

Mr. Draper: -- Mr. Speaker, sir, thank you. Today I'm elated to reveal to the Assembly that four young ladies from my constituency are off to Austria to take part in a music festival. Mary Lewans, Carmen Lewans, Nadine Sabourin, and Sarah Powrie, who are all students at St. Angela's Academy at Prelate, but who live in Assiniboia, will perform in Vienna with the other members of their school choir.

The Fireside Choir, as the choir is called, from the academy, were extended an invitation to represent Canada at the 23rd International Youth and Music Festival. They were chosen from numerous entries across Canada, based on tapes and music. The choir consists of 15 singers and an accompanist, and is under the direction of choir director Marianne Janoski.

St. Angela's Academy is a residential girls' school and consists of a school body of 90 girls in grades 10 to 12, mostly from western Canada, and is operated by the Ursuline Sisters, whose motto is, learning from life.

And on behalf of the Assembly and my constituency of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, I would like to wish the Fireside Choir the best of luck at the International Youth and Music Festival in Vienna, and I know that

they'll have a tremendous amount of fun in that beautiful city. Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Quill Lakes Designated a Western Hemispheric Short Bird Reserve Network

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Speaker, on Friday, May 27 the Quill Lakes will be designated as a western hemispheric short bird reserve network, an international reserve. The Quill Lakes are one of the continent's most important inland water bodies for migratory birds.

Acceptance of an international reserve site is based on biological criteria such as bird use. The only other side in Canada to qualify for a similar status thus far, is the Bay of Fundy in Atlantic Canada.

The recognition of Quill Lakes is one indication of just how important Saskatchewan wetlands are to the environment of our province, of Canada, and North America; indeed the western hemisphere.

In addition to its positive environmental benefits, the designation will benefit the economy by boosting wildlife-based tourism in the Quill Lakes area and in the province.

Our regional tourism association is developing a viewing tower, a broad walk, an interpretive signage for walking tours of the area. And this area will be officially opened on the same day as the reserve dedication.

On behalf of the residents of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the agencies that cooperated in so designating the Quill Lakes: Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation, Environment Canada, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, and Wetlands of Americas. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Police Services Victim Assistance Unit

Mr. Cline: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity to update the House on the successes of what is I think a very important program which began just over a year ago. That is the Saskatoon Police Service victim assistance unit.

Since its inception on May 3, 1993 this service has helped over 8,100 victims of crime. The program, as members know, is intended to help crime victims cope with what are really very traumatic experiences.

Workers at the police service first contact a victim to determine their needs and describe services that are available to them now. This is followed by regular contact with the victim, and depending upon the needs of the victim, implementation of services such as referrals to other agencies, home security checks, and provision of court and police information.

The Saskatoon police are assisted by 34 dedicated volunteers. And without these workers who are volunteering their work, the program would not be successful. They are truly the backbone of the victim assistance program.

The program is jointly funded by the Saskatchewan Department of Justice victim services program, through the victims' fund, and the Saskatoon Police Service.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share this good news with the House. I think it's positive work for victims of crime in our society. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to Saskatoon Blades

Ms. Lorje: -- Today I want to congratulate the Saskatoon Blades for a great season. Fans from Saskatoon as well as all over Saskatchewan appreciate the Blades' terrific season and valiant effort in the Western Hockey League final. Unfortunately, the Blades fell victim to the Kamloops Blazers last night, 8 to 1.

The Saskatoon team, however, should be praised for their gritty determination. The Blades were down three games to one when they mounted a serious comeback. They forced a seventh and deciding game but fell short of their goal. This cannot be blamed on lack of effort or conviction, for the Blades, like Saskatonians always do, put out 110 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the accomplishments and the efforts of the 1993-94 Saskatoon Blades and wish them great successes next year.

As an aside, a radio station in Kamloops issued a challenge. When the Blades lost, so did I. I now have to display the Kamloops Blazers' banner in my office for a week. What an indignity for a Saskatchewan politician!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Labour Legislation

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a few short weeks ago the Minister of Labour chastised the business community, calling them ruthless and greedy. And you challenged them to show you how your Bills were going to hurt their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, our office continues to receive letters and faxes from the business and employer community regarding the negative impact of the provincial government's ill-advised labour legislation.

Today we did a survey of hundreds of letters we have received. Many of those letters were very, very specific about what would happen to their businesses if you proceed with your legislation. At least 20 said that they would move their businesses out of the province; 19 said they would not be investing further in Saskatchewan; 15 said that they would not be hiring any more people; 9 said that they would lay off staff; 3 said that they wouldn't be able to hire part-time staff; and 3 said that they would go out of business.

My question to the Minister of Labour: Mr. Minister, there is your proof. It's just a small sample, but will you heed these warnings, Mr. Minister, or are you waiting for these examples to become the reality before you act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've got many of the same letters. I may say we've also got letters from people supporting the legislation. I've got a good deal of comment from both sides of this issue.

Much of the concern which I have seen expressed is based on a misunderstanding of how the legislation is going to operate, and I know members opposite have not done anything at all to fan the flames of that misunderstanding. I know you've done your level best to explain this properly.

But notwithstanding the best efforts of the opposition to ensure that everybody understands it, there is a good deal of misunderstanding about this. And I invite members opposite to begin to explain this in a fair fashion. Once understood, I believe most businesses agree this legislation, far from posing any threat to them, is a positive step in restructuring the province.

So I think, once this is understood, most agree that this is an important chink in the economic restructuring in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: -- Well, Minister, you're right. We have had letters on the other side of the issue. I think I've had a total of three, all from the union heads.

Mr. Minister, I understand that you don't have very much respect for the views of the business community, and that is painfully evident in your recent comments and painfully evident in your desire to push these Bills through the House. But you cannot argue that your Bills will not hurt business and jobs in Saskatchewan. That is simply not the case as evidenced by the letters that you and I have both been receiving, particularly the ones that I've presented to you today.

Let me read from one letter from Nykolaishen Farm Equipment of Kamsack, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

If you pass these Bills, it will prove to farmers

and all people who do business in rural Saskatchewan that you do not care about rural Saskatchewan. If you pass these Bills, I also guarantee that you will have forced me to close my doors and cease to do business in Saskatchewan.

End of quote.

Mr. Minister, at what point do you begin to believe what you have heard? Is one business enough or will it take hundreds before you will act?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Well I simply repeat the comment which I have made previously, that I have received many of these same letters. We have responded to virtually all of them. And we have pointed out that the legislation, once understood, is an important part of the economic restructuring in the province and poses no threat. Far from posing any threat economically to the province, it's an essential part of the economic restructuring.

I remember members last year predicting all sorts of calamities if we actually went ahead with The Workers' Compensation Board amendments and The Occupational Health and Safety. What do I hear members saying this year about Workers' Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker, because their dire predictions proved to be just that, nonsense.

I predict that in a year's time members opposite will have some reason, you will find some basis, to try to divide people up, to try to produce divisions within society. But I'll venture to say, it won't be these two Bills, because by next year you'll find out, as we have said, that these Bills are not going to do any damage and indeed are a positive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: -- Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I should correct the minister. We have in fact brought up The Workers' Compensation Act and the things that it's doing and the extra costs and where it's going. And if you'd pay some attention in this House once in a while, you'd have heard that and you wouldn't have to make these kind of silly statements.

Mr. Minister, the proof that you have asked for is before you. It is in the letters and the faxes that both you and I have been receiving. The business community has been speaking out. And instead of listening and acting on their concerns, you hurl insults at them and at me. And quite frankly, Mr. Minister, they tell what they want you to hear by the fact that they send follow-up letters saying that they do understand what's going on and they don't agree.

Mr. Minister, before you go home tonight, may I suggest to you that you go through your mail once more, that you take a few hours because it's going to take you that long. I believe that it would be worth it and worthwhile for your government if you take the

time to study through what's being said in those letters.

You will make a small commitment today, if you might, Mr. Minister, and do that -- read those letters. And will you read through those faxes that you've received from the business community and the employers community and report to this House tomorrow what you've found. Will you do that, Mr. Minister? Read the letters and report to us what exactly you find when you study the issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Well I want to assure the member opposite I have read the letters. I've responded to all of the letters which have come in up to a few days ago.

I say to members opposite, we'll have an opportunity . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . if the member feels this strongly about it, we'll have the opportunity to take this up in estimates a little later on. So perhaps the dialogue between us could await a more appropriate time.

And perhaps at this point in time it would suffice to say that we've read those letters. I acknowledge there are expressions of concern in those letters. I do believe that that concern is partially fanned by people such as yourself in whose interest it is to try to divide management and labour.

That may be in your interests. We believe it is in the province's interest to have management and labour working in a more cooperative fashion. And that's what we're attempting to do.

And as difficult as this is at times, it's at least gratifying because I think we are succeeding in that. I think we are succeeding in inducing a more harmonious relationship between management and labour, notwithstanding the valiant, energetic efforts of the member from Maple Creek.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Company Relocation to Saskatchewan

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation).

Mr. Minister, yesterday you issued a news release about a company called KingAgro Canada. The news release said that SEDCO and a company called Groupe Limagrain were going to buy KingAgro and relocate part of its operations to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, this morning we learned that this deal is yet to be finalized and that your premature announcement may have actually jeopardized the deal. Mr. Minister, why are you in such a hurry to blow your own horn? Why did you make this announcement of a finalized agreement before the

deal has even been closed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will know that the investment that we are making in the company is as a result of a cabinet decision. Therefore there is what is called an order in council that became public yesterday. And far from expanding on or making a huge issue of this arrangement, in fact what we did is issue to the media a brief outline of the proposed deal.

And I just say, on one hand they say we're not giving enough information about the activities of government, in particular SEDCO. Then when we issue a short, brief press release, they say we're saying too much. But what I can tell you, that in the best operation of government it's important that when monies are invested on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, that we make it public.

This is a far cry from the Saskatchewan Development Corporation that was doing economic development on your behalf, spending tens of millions of public money and only coming to light that that money was even being spent, by accident.

I say to you, sir, that the way we operate government, open and available to the public, is as it should be.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Minister, our office spoke with Limagrain's project manager in Saskatoon. He told us he was very surprised that your government chose to make this announcement prematurely and without consulting either his company or the current parent company, Mr. Minister. In fact he felt that your government's early announcement may in fact harm the deal, and that your actions have created a really bad situation for all of the parties involved -- a situation that may in fact jeopardize the entire deal.

Mr. Minister, didn't you learn anything from the Piper deal? Why do you insist on jeopardizing projects by making announcements before the deals are even finalized?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I say again to the members opposite that the fact is, is that our government, when it makes a decision to spend taxpayers' money, makes it public -- which we did yesterday -- because it's required that order-in-council decisions of cabinet are made public. It was made public yesterday.

If you're telling us that we should make these decisions behind the closed doors of cabinet and they should never be made public, which is how you did business, that simply is not the way we operate, nor will we operate that way. Because in the name of open and accountable government, which is well-based on auditor's reports and recommendation, we will make

public when we spend taxpayers' money.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Minister, here's a little tip. First close the deal and then make the announcement. Doing it the other way around doesn't work. It didn't work with Piper.

Mr. Minister, that's clearly a problem in this case. The entire legislative session is nearly completed and you haven't even begun to begin to provide people with work; opportunities for work development in this province. You haven't even begun, and so in desperation you decided that you were going to do this deal just before the House closed.

And for what reason, Mr. Minister? To try and make your government look good? So you spend \$6 million of taxpayers' money prematurely. Is that what you did with Piper? Is this deal going to be exactly the same as you did with Piper? That's the question we're asking you to identify and address here today. Is this deal completed or is it not? According to the people involved, it's not.

So you made a premature announcement today, or yesterday, saying that you had spent money that was not legitimately made and the deal wasn't closed. Will you confirm that you didn't close the deal already, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I'll go through this slowly, because in order to get to the member, I think I have to go over this very slowly. The issue here is, is that \$6 million was needed to commit to the deal in order for the final arrangements to be made. A decision was made by cabinet a week ago that that commitment would be made, that \$6 million would be available for the deal. That has to be made public in order to meet the commitments of our government. The announcement was made because the release came from the OC (order in council) that was released to the press and the public yesterday.

Now look, there could have been a press conference. There could have been a ministerial statement in the House. None of that was done in order to keep the deal -- as it should be -- moving along towards completion.

But one thing I will do for you, sir, is the day we make the agreement in Saskatoon, which will be very shortly, I want to invite you personally to the announcement and I want you to be there to shake hands with the new company as they bring 15 employees to the city of Saskatoon, which you are desperately trying to stop in order for your own political agenda.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Office Closure

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the minister in charge of SaskPower. The SaskPower district office in the town of Ponteix will close its doors for good on Friday.

Town officials were disappointed to learn of the closure of this government agency, not through correspondence from SaskPower officials, but rather through a newspaper ad in the local paper. And I'd like to send a copy to you of that ad.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, is this an indication of the kind of significance you place on this matter?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- I'd like to thank the hon. member for his question. Some of the information he does . . . and puts out in prefacing his question is inaccurate, and I want to point that out to him.

The situation in Ponteix is one that was decided with the employees, with the union, and with management of SaskPower. The member would well know that I reviewed the situation of the Ponteix office, as I did with other offices throughout the province, and the decision has finally been made as the member has outlined, that the Ponteix office will in fact be closing in regard to the function it now performs.

Where the member is inaccurate is that the community knew full well, beyond the ad that was placed in the paper. The ad is to inform customers who are used to dealing with the customer services section of that office, of the other methods of dealing with the payment and the concerns that they might have about their accounts and their services. But I do want to confirm what the member has said, is that yes, the Ponteix office will be closing in regard to the function it now performs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The officials in those communities didn't know their office was going to be closed. In fact, Mr. Minister, I raised this issue with you on March 23, and at that time you wouldn't give me any answers to it.

Many communities depend on the services provided by this SaskPower district office in Ponteix. They include Glentworth and Ferland, Mankota, Aneroid, Hazenmore, Kincaid, Meyronne, Glenbain, Vanguard, Neville, Pambrun, Val Marie, Cadillac.

Mr. Minister, will you tell me today what criteria you have established to ensure that they will continue an adequate level of service?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- We're making sure, Mr. Speaker, that an adequate level of service is provided and that's why it's taking a long time, a long consultation period, with employees of SaskPower, with the two unions involved, CEP (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union) and IBW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers), with the management, and with members of the community.

As the member points out when he asked me questions back in March, I stated to him at that time that I would review the situation in regards to the Ponteix office as well as other offices within the province. The member knows full well that positions in terms of the field staff are not being lost. In fact the one position, the IBW position, as I understand it, is being moved to the community of Shaunavon.

So I don't know whether or not the member thinks that the service is going to go down by more people coming into his own constituency in Shaunavon and away from the Ponteix office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An adequate level of service in the eyes of the Health minister was to hang a telephone on the side of their hospital. And now an adequate level of service for SaskPower is to hang a telephone booth on the side of their SaskPower office.

Mr. Minister, you state an adequate level of service is very important to you. Yet response times for SaskPower crews could be as much as two to three hours to some of these communities. In an emergency this is crucial. People in these rural communities are continually asked to pay more for SaskPower, SaskEnergy, all their other forms of service and utilities, yet they appear to be receiving less and less service for their money.

Mr. Minister, can your government not see past the bottom line in such cases? And are you going to stand there and suggest that this is really an adequate level of service?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- Yes, I believe that I can quite safely defend an adequate level of service from the corporation, the Crown corporation, SaskPower. And when the member is talking about a three hour time to provide emergency service, he is totally, totally out of line with that. I think that he's trying to inflame the situation to get sympathy and public support for his political party that he crossed the floor to join.

The member knows better than to put out misinformation to the public in regard to a three-hour service time and that's just not accurate. If the member wants exact details on how the function will perform, I'd be more than happy to communicate that to him so he can tell the people of Ponteix to rest assured that they will have as high a level of service as any utility in Canada can provide its customers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Compensation for Hepatitis C Victims

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Health or her designate. Mr. Minister, the Krever blood inquiry is going to be holding hearings in Regina on May 24. Is the Department of Health going

to be making any sort of representation to these hearings on behalf of Saskatchewan people who have contracted HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or the hepatitis C viruses through the blood supply? And if so, what will the nature of your submission be?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, since the Krever inquiry began its work, it's been clearly the position of this government and of the Department of Health that we will cooperate and will be cooperative with the commission in their work in every possible way, and that will include during their visit to our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, since we raised the hepatitis issue in the legislature, this problem and Vicki Lissel's case have started to receive national attention. Still she feels that action from your department has been extremely slow.

Mr. Minister, what actions have you taken since we brought that matter to your attention? Are you working on a compensation package for Saskatchewan residents who have contracted hepatitis C through the blood supply. And what arrangements have you made to have the drugs required to treat this disease covered under the prescription drug plan?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, since the issue was raised here in the legislature by members opposite, with the visit of the individual involved, as the members will know, on that very day the Minister of Health met with the individual involved. They had, I think, a good discussion. The minister indicated, and it's being followed up, that discussions would be commenced with officials in the Department of Health, and we would be in consultation, as we regularly are, with Health officials across Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, good discussion isn't enough on this very, very serious issue. Vicki Lissel and other people are not going to be around that much longer. They need some action from your government right now.

The University of Calgary liver specialist, Samuel Lee, says that the hepatitis C is more common and will end up killing more people than AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) will, Mr. Minister. Doug Kennedy of the Federal Bureau of Biologics says that anyone who has had a transfusion before 1990 or has ever used an injection drug might be at risk of having hepatitis C and should contact their doctor.

Mr. Minister, what are you doing to get this kind of information out to the people of Saskatchewan? Is your department making any effort, any effort at all to inform the people in Saskatchewan who are in this situation to contact their doctor as soon as possible?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, the member I think

well knows and would admit that many issues regarding health care are not political issues. And we're not here to try, I hope, to score any political points around any very serious health care issue.

And no one will disagree, Mr. Speaker, that the condition of hepatitis is a very significant health care risk and a health care problem. And we are treating it in just that fashion. As the member indicates and as the doctor has indicated, it is wise advice for those who have had transfusions to check with their physicians and their own family doctors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, what we are simply asking of you is do your job. Vicki Lissel is in a very, very difficult situation and other people like her are in that same situation across this province. And we are asking you to do something to help those people. They don't have a great deal of time to sit around and wait while you decide on some course of action; they need help and they need help right now, Mr. Minister.

Will you commit to the legislature this afternoon, and to her and the other people in that same situation to do something about their situation and the costs that are associated with their situation rather than just sitting around and waiting for the results of another study?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Mr. Speaker, what I think is not helpful is a lot of noise made in the Legislative Assembly to try and gain attention to the individual politician rather than to try and seriously deal with the problem.

Mr. Speaker, this is a situation of a very serious medical condition. As with the condition of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and hemophiliacs, these issues are not dealt with simply overnight in a haphazard manner. We are working closely in the department, we are working with other Canadian departments of Health around this issue, Mr. Speaker. Things are being done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Office Closure

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, Ponteix was used for the dispatch of all of the after-hours services provided in the south-west part of Saskatchewan. Where will this dispatch be now designated out of? And will you provide this Assembly with that information at least?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: -- Yes, I will provide the Assembly with that information. In fact I'm surprised that the member doesn't have the information. I believe in fact you likely do because you wouldn't have asked the question if you'd not had the answer to it.

The situation with the Ponteix office, Mr. Speaker, the shared amount of extra workload with that office no longer being open, will be out of Swift Current, Shaunavon, and Gravelbourg.

I do want to point out to the member though as well, Mr. Speaker, is that in some cases where through reorganization the physical office no longer remains, there are some cases where the employees have chosen to live within those communities. And if the employee chooses to live within those communities, that provides exactly the same level of service for emergency responses that you had before.

And I assure the member that it is utmost on the minds of management of SaskPower to provide good quality service as expeditiously as possible to the customers throughout Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cline: -- With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Cline: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have 38 grade 8 students from DunDonald School in my riding in Saskatoon. And they're accompanied by their teachers, Diane Selby and Derek Barss; and chaperons Lisa Gurski, Audrey Sabiston, and I believe others, but I don't have their names, but I do welcome them as well.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I recently was at DunDonald School and enjoyed a very nice afternoon visiting with the grade 4 and 5 students and the teachers and having a tour of the school with the principal. And I'm very happy that I'm going to have the opportunity today to return the hospitality that I enjoyed from DunDonald because I'll be meeting with the students for drinks and Dixie cups. And we'll be having our picture taken and I know . . . no Dixie cups for the other members, Mr. Speaker, just the students.

But I know all members will want to join with me in wishing the students a very enjoyable visit to the legislature and to Regina. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 64 -- An Act to amend The Credit Union Act, 1985

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Credit Union Amendment Act, 1994. The proposed amendments provide for adoption of the concept of regional directors for credit unions. They also provide for a number of housekeeping changes which correct statutory references and allow for service of documents by certified mail or by priority courier.

Presently, credit unions in Saskatchewan have the option of electing regional directors according to a procedure that is cumbersome. Director nominations are sought at the branch level and the names are then put forward for consideration at the annual meeting of the credit union. The process does not guarantee that regional or branch representatives will be elected at the annual meeting.

(1415)

With these amendments, Mr. Speaker, credit unions will have the option of adopting by-laws that provide for regional directors to be elected, elected at the annual meeting of the members. Directors elected on a regional or branch basis will continue to represent the interest of all credit union members. The housekeeping changes correct outdated statutory references in The Credit Union Act, 1985 and provide for two additional methods of serving documents -- by certified mail or by priority courier.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the primary purpose of these amendments is to provide for regional or branch representation on the board of a credit union following the adoption of by-laws to that effect.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Credit Union Act, 1985.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand from the minister's comments that this Bill is certainly not the one that a number of people have been anticipating or thinking may come to this House during this session. That would certainly drastically change the services that credit unions would be offering. And we're pleased to hear that the government is giving reconsideration to that and at least taking some time for the consultation process that's needed.

However I gather from the minister's comments that what the Bill does is allows credit unions a greater flexibility in the election of board members. And I understand from the comments that this flexibility has been asked for by credit unions as they find themselves in a situation where amalgamations are taking place, and the feeling that a larger community may end up with total representation on the boards and some of the smaller communities may be left out. And they're asking for the ability to have some control over that.

As well, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, the other areas

regarding courier service and fax service, Mr. Speaker, we really don't have a major problem with the Bill before the Assembly, but we'd like to have a few more . . . or a little more time to at least review the Bill in a little more detail before we proceed to even Committee of the Whole. And therefore at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 66 -- An Act respecting the Superannuation of Teachers and Disability Benefits for Teachers

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to outline the purpose and the key provisions of this Bill. This Act deals with the teachers' superannuation plan administered by the Teachers' Superannuation Commission. This is the plan sometimes known as the old formula plan, to distinguish it from the newer pension plan administered by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

Members will note that this is not an amending Bill but rather a completely new Act. And I'd like to explain the reasons for this. The teachers' superannuation plan is subject to negotiation through provincial teacher bargaining.

Over the years, as new terms and conditions of the plan were negotiated, the Act became increasingly complex and difficult to interpret. Inconsistencies in terminology crept in and the relationship between the different provisions became unclear.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Teachers' Superannuation Commission, and our government all agree that the time has now come to eliminate these problems by placing the existing statute . . . by replacing the existing statute with a brand-new one, which will be described as more user-friendly.

The new Act has been drafted in full consultation with the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) and its legal counsel, as well as the commission. All parties are satisfied that the new statute is complete and accurate and they fully support this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this year provided a good opportunity to prepare the new Act, because amendments were needed, in any event, for two reasons. One, to incorporate provisions negotiated as part of the 1992-94 provincial collective agreement; and two, to incorporate changes needed to keep the plan in compliance with the federal Income Tax Act and regulations.

I would like to briefly outline the main provisions included in each of these categories. One of the key elements deals with the funding of the superannuation plan, which has been an increasing concern of teachers in recent years. The new legislation clarifies the government's funding obligations and it defines more clearly those monies which must remain in the pension plan and those which can be withdrawn.

As well, the legislation provides that in the future all annual earnings of this fund will be credited to teachers' accounts and will stay in the fund to be used to pay teacher pensions.

These provisions address an issue which has been the subject of legal action by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and they helped to establish a long-term plan for ensuring the future security of teacher pensions.

Other notable provisions negotiated in the collective agreement, and now included in the Act, are as follows. Female teachers who were forced to resign to have children in the years before maternity leave became mandatory will now be able to purchase up to one year of each absence as pensionable service. The actuarial penalty on the pensions of teachers who retire at age 55, with 20 years of service, is reduced, and an active teacher will now be able to withdraw monies from the fund and transfer them to the locked-in RRSP (registered retirement savings plan). And finally, provisions are added to provide for the division of pension benefits in cases of matrimonial breakdown.

Mr. Speaker, in order to remain registered with the federal authorities, the superannuation plan will comply with the federal Income Tax Act and regulations. As a result of recent changes in this federal legislation, some changes have become necessary to our own Act. These changes were agreed to by the parties to the provincial collective agreement as part of the negotiations and are reflected in this new Act.

The key changes are as follows: (1) the cost of living increases in pensions are now prorated for teachers who have superannuated within the previous 12 months; and (2) the disability benefit provisions are now restructured to be separate from the pension plan itself, rather than being integrated as in the past. This restructuring is needed in order to maintain the existing disability benefits. (3) Superannuation allowances will be capped at Revenue Canada maximums, and teachers will contribute only on that portion of their salary up to the maximums; and (4) a maximum of 35 years of service will continue to be used in calculating pensions, but teachers will no longer make contributions after 35 years; and (5) a variety of other technical amendments with no significant financial or policy implications are also included under the compliance category.

Mr. Speaker, let me briefly summarize. This new Act accomplishes three objectives. It incorporates the provisions of the 1992-94 provincial collective bargaining agreement; it implements the changes needed to keep the plan in compliance with federal legislation; and it replaces a very complex and difficult piece of legislation with one which can be interpreted accurately and consistently.

For these reasons the Bill is both legally required and highly appropriate. It has the support of the Teachers'

Federation and the Teachers' Superannuation Commission.

I am therefore pleased to move, Mr. Speaker, that An Act respecting the Superannuation of Teachers and Disability Benefits for Teachers be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments before we adjourn the debate this afternoon. But I'd like to begin by acknowledging the fact that the government is finally . . . or this NDP (New Democratic Party) government finally acknowledges its responsibility.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, we are all quite well aware of what took place prior to 1981 and the fact that at the time of the 1982 election the government talked about a surplus they had sitting on the operational side of the budget. But they forgot to, and as the auditor brought out recently, they continually neglected to inform the public of the unfunded pension liabilities that were sitting at the hands of the Saskatchewan taxpayers and some \$5 million that were sitting in unfunded pension liabilities back in 1982.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, the teachers, when the new government -- the Conservative government -- was elected in 1982, took the government to task over original policies that forced the government in 1981 to change the whole pension program because they realized they were in a difficult position of trying to bring the old plan and make it solvent.

And the governments from '82 to '89 made a commitment to not only take the pension funds and the matching contribution by the province and put it where it belonged into investment opportunities in the pension fund to guarantee the solvency of that program.

But the government of the '80s also indicated and made a commitment to put an additional sum over and above to try and alleviate the shortfall that was created. Because the government prior to 1981 used those funds for general revenue rather than putting their commitment into the fund and allowing that fund to grow for the benefit of the individuals who were involved in that pension plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the uproar and the controversy that arose in 1989 when the Conservative government for one year did not put in the additional funds, and how the teachers reacted. I think the Minister of Education has been hearing from the teachers' organizations and the STF over the last couple of years about the fact that they still haven't . . . this government didn't make a commitment.

They indicated when they were in opposition it's time we acted on the plan. They also said, Mr. Speaker, that if they were elected they would guarantee the pension plan. And the fact that the minister has brought forward this piece of legislation today, Mr. Speaker,

indicates that they finally heard, finally listened, and finally put in place a piece of legislation that is going to guarantee the plan that I think at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, unless they decide to change the legislation, or retroactively change it, will force them to indeed take the matching funds they contribute to any plan -- and in this case, the teachers' plan -- and make sure that it is committed to the plan, that it is put aside for future use of the individuals who are out there, the educators across this province who are contributing to a plan, a plan they understand will be providing them some benefits and guaranteeing benefits in the future.

No doubt, Mr. Speaker, the formula plan, as a few individuals in this room are covered under, is a plan that most teachers would like to revert back to as there is a better guarantee than there is under the present system where the plan will pay you at the end of the day based on what has accumulated and built over itself through the years. And certainly the ability of a plan to build under the present system is going to be based on the ability of the administrators to invest that plan wisely. So, Mr. Speaker, I commend the minister for having taken the initiative to bring this piece of legislation forward.

However, Mr. Speaker, I think we should at least take a little more time to dissect the legislation, to take a little closer view of it and make sure it meets the requirements that have been brought forward by the STF not only to the government but to our caucus as well. And therefore at this time I'll move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 67 -- An Act to amend The Crown Corporations Act, 1993

Hon. Mr. Penner: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to comment on the provisions of the Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 1994. At the end of these comments I will move second reading of this legislation.

As members of the Assembly will recall during the last session a new Crown Corporations Act was passed. This Act clarified reporting and accountability on our Crown corporations sector. It established conflict of interest guidelines for officers and directors of Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, section 6 of the Crown Corporations Act gave the Crown Investments Corporation a range of powers. These powers were deemed by this Assembly to be necessary so that the Crown Investments Corporation could properly manage the commercial assets owned by Saskatchewan taxpayers.

(1430)

One of these powers was outlined in section 6(1)(u) and section 6(1)(x) of the Act. Subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Crown Investments Corporation was given the power to

provide loans, loan guarantees, or other financial assistance. At the time of the drafting of this legislation, it was felt that this provision would be sufficient to provide the Crown Investments Corporation with the authority that it needed to conduct its business.

However, Mr. Speaker, as the Crown Investments Corporation has worked to renegotiate and improve various business deals entered into by the previous administration, it has become apparent that a clarification of this power might be needed in some negotiations. As a result, the government is proposing that section 6(1)(u) and 6(1)(x) be amended to allow the Crown Investments Corporation to provide indemnities as well as loans and loan guarantees.

Mr. Speaker, an indemnity functions in a manner similar to a loan guarantee. A person or entity providing the indemnity commits to make good on the losses that might be suffered by another person or entity as a result of participating in a business deal or transaction. As such, Mr. Speaker, this is a technical amendment of The Crown Corporations Act, that it clarifies the nature and extent of the powers of The Crown Corporations Act.

I would like to make a few other points about this amendment. First, what is outlined in this provision is an enabling power. It more clearly gives the Crown Investments Corporation the authority to enter into a particular type of business arrangement. That is all that it does.

Second, I want to stress that in the event this power is ever used, there will be full public disclosure. This is ensured in two ways. The Crown Investments Corporation's power to provide an indemnity is contingent upon the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This ensures that there will be an order in council that by law must be made public.

The Crown Corporations Committee has recently passed a resolution requiring that it be notified within 90 days of any significant transaction that materially alters the liabilities faced by the taxpayers. Entering into an indemnity agreement would certainly meet the definition of a significant transaction passed by the Crown Corporations Committee. As a result, this committee of the legislature would be required to be notified of any such agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the members of the legislature will be wondering what caused the government to come forward with this amendment at this particular time. As the members of the Assembly will know, the Crown Investments Corporation is engaged in renegotiating the financial arrangements of several megaproject investments entered into by the previous administration.

Mr. Speaker, some of these negotiations are extremely complex and detailed. Some, such as the financial restructuring of NewGrade, have been under way for more than two years. At this point, our technical and legal advisers indicate that this amendment would be

of assistance in pursuing one possible path towards settling this particular set of negotiations. Beyond this, I cannot be more specific at this time or stage of the negotiations.

I want to stress, however, that this is merely an enabling power. When and if this power is ever used by the Crown Investments Corporation, there will be full public disclosure.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 1994.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that the minister has acknowledged some of the proposals that have been put forward by the Crown Corporations Committee and the fact that CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) has already . . . is acting on them, and through this piece of legislation, is even taking note of the recommendations, especially public disclosure regarding major transactions that would take place.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, is that the government continues to view the investments made, investment opportunities made by the former government as something that would seem to be a millstone around their neck rather than an investment that in the long run would be good for the province of Saskatchewan.

I think at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we will find a number of these projects that the government is working on right now and seeking ways of renegotiating terms will . . . and even the government will acknowledge that they have certainly become major beneficial corporate citizens providing not only a job base in this province but certainly additional tax revenue which will be beneficial and I'm certain the Minister of Finance will appreciate.

And I realize that the legislation before us is just expanding somewhat the role of CIC and giving it an ability to go beyond just providing loans or loan guarantees but now giving it the ability to enter into indemnities.

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't really see anything wrong with this. I think at any time when you've got a major investor or major Crown in your province responsible for the interests of all the public utilities, it's certainly appropriate to at least give them some tools to work with. And the fact of whether or not they're using the tools wisely will certainly be made evident when they make their public disclosures and we in the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan have the opportunity to review the disclosures and debate them, whether through the Assembly, whether through Crown Corporations.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this point I would allow for a further review of the Bill before we proceed any further. And therefore I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that Bill No. 3 -- An Act to Create, Encourage and Facilitate Business Opportunities in Saskatchewan through the Establishment of the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation be now read a second time.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise today to speak on this issue because it is an important issue in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the members on this side of the House regard this legislation very much as a mixed bag. And of course as usual, we appreciate the government's need to reduce expenditures in all areas, including those that make it through its economic development agencies.

Also, we would like to take the opportunity to applaud the government for its move towards greater accountability in the Crown sector. The proposal to make the annual allocation for an economic development corporation to the Consolidated Fund is a good one. And I will be the first to admit that it should have happened long ago.

Were that all that was in this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, I can safely say that we would have no problems whatsoever with this. However, the Bill undertakes many more serious changes that at best are ill-conceived and at worst, are deceptive.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are some things that are being hidden within this Bill. Probably the single most offensive aspect of the Bill is the fact that it essentially preserves an existing Crown corporation but simply changes its name -- sort of like the leopard trying to change his spots by washing itself in a little bleach.

We have all seen this kind of tactic by the government before when it moved to abolish the Agriculture Development Fund, the ADF fund, only to revive it in another guise within the department. This was simply, Mr. Speaker, one of the government's moves to eliminate anything that had to do with the Tories, or anything that had to do with the government prior to 1991 election -- just change the name of it, hide it some place else; we'll carry on with the program, but we can't have it associated with a Tory initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the minister himself gave the explicit reason for this change when he said in this House on February 28, and I quote:

Because of the magnitude of (the) . . . losses and . . . the perception of a political interference in the corporation in the last 10 years, SEDCO's

image has deteriorated to the point where the corporation cannot recover its credibility.

And later in the same speech, and I quote again:

I would also like to say that the decision to create a decidedly different economic development corporation is also appreciated and supported by the vast majority of people and business people in the province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the minister's own words, this is nothing but a sham and a shell game that he is perpetrating on the people of Saskatchewan. He's saying that the only reason the changes are being done is because of the perceptions that are involved with SEDCO -- not the essence of SEDCO, but simply being changed because of the perceptions within SEDCO.

Mr. Speaker, the government still wishes to carry on lending as it has in the past through SEDCO, it just doesn't want to suffer the same scrutiny and criticism that SEDCO had in the past. This, Mr. Speaker, is political propaganda and spin doctoring.

I am reminded of the history of the provincial police force in Quebec. When they were called the Quebec Provincial Police, they developed a reputation for being a cruel and ruthless police force. So what did the government of Quebec do? They gave them a new name, the Sûreté du Québec. Did that fix the problem with the Quebec police actions? Of course not. It was still the same members operating under the same rules. All they had was a new name, Mr. Speaker, and the names in themselves do not do anything . . . a change of name, Mr. Speaker, does not do anything except maybe score a few cheap political points. If you can confuse people as to what the department is actually doing, what the corporation is actually doing, then perhaps people will think it's a whole new corporation rather than the same people doing the same job simply with a different name.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has gone to great lengths to show how this is more than just a name change. They have led us to believe that a whole new set of loan criteria and operating procedures will be put into place at SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation); or perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it should be . . . it would be better known as son of SEDCO.

They've said that it will restrict itself to loans assisting manufacturing and processing, export oriented and import replacement markets, and attracting new businesses. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's quite a broad range of areas that they can deal with. And I really wonder how many businesses and how many previous applications to SEDCO would not fall within those criteria -- within manufacturing and processing, within export oriented or import replacement markets, or attracting new businesses. Well, Mr. Speaker, any time you include attracting new businesses, you make it fairly broad.

They have identified one area though, Mr. Speaker,

the retail sector that does not fall within their criteria. But even here, Mr. Speaker, the shell game continues. Look at the weasel words the minister used in his introductory speech, and I quote:

Proponents in this sector will have to have a strong community backing for their projects before the new corporation will consider participating.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at small town rural Saskatchewan and somebody proposes setting up a new business, opening up a new tire shop, or a grocery store, or any form of retail business within the communities, you are going to get strong backing. You're going to get very strong backing from everyone in the community; particularly, Mr. Speaker, if that community does not already have one of those types of businesses.

Now I'm sure if you open up a grocery store and there's a grocery store already there, the first grocery store is not going to be real keen on the competition. But if a small community doesn't have a grocery store and somebody comes in and says I'd like to open up a new business here, they're going to have strong community backing to go to son of SEDCO to get a loan. Because every small community views a new business as part of their viability, Mr. Speaker.

And one has to wonder just what community the minister intends to listen to if he's going to narrow that field down. Maybe he means the community of people who pay to go to NDP political luncheons. Maybe he means the community of NDP partisans or patronage appointments.

This one little phrase, Mr. Speaker, gives him a very broad scope for interpretation. New businesses with strong community backing. The shell game does not end there, Mr. Speaker. The minister is trying to suggest to business and other groups that have been critical of SEDCO that this will mean the end of so-called government boondoggles in the economic development sector.

And as the minister well knows, however, that SEDCO in the past has been the springboard for a number of worthwhile economic development programs that have had a remarkable success but which in all fairness would perhaps have been more suitably handled by the Department of Economic Development or some other agency.

Mr. Speaker, I'm thinking specifically of programs like the young entrepreneurs program. Through it, many young people were able to create their own jobs. Mr. Speaker, in my own community of Alida we have a young couple who took part in this program, who took advantage of the young entrepreneurs program to set up a grocery store and operate a grocery store in our community.

And the community has benefited all the way around, Mr. Speaker. We have a new young couple in town who are very enthusiastic in running their business. It

allowed the people that were there before to retire and the new couple that we received brought with them two children, Mr. Speaker. That was two new children for our small community school that was very welcome because that represented more than a 2 per cent increase in our school population, those two children. That was very important.

(1445)

And if the members don't think that that kind of an increase in the school population in a small rural school isn't important, they should go out and talk to the people who live in rural Saskatchewan who are deathly afraid that their small school is going to close. When you can bring in two new children at any time that's very important.

Also the young couple that moved into town, Mr. Speaker, are very active in the community. They're both active in the theatre group, they're very active in their church, they're very active in all of the aspects of community life. And the ability to bring those kind of people into a small community through a young entrepreneur's program is very, very important, Mr. Speaker.

Another success story was the small-business loans association program that gave small, local, and interest groups the ability to make and administer small loans for its members to set up new businesses. And this was a program, I think, that applied very well, Mr. Speaker, to northern Saskatchewan where an organization, a small, local organization or interest group, could get a pool of money through SEDCO and then turn around and loan out very small amounts to their membership. And this membership would then repay the loan to the local interest group. And that program worked out very well also, Mr. Speaker.

The participating loans program that made loans to businesses in return for a share of its profits -- another very successful program. And one has to wonder how much the equity-holding program the minister has proposed for SOCO, or son of SEDCO, will differ from these programs, Mr. Speaker. Just how radically different will they be, or will they simply be the same programs with a new set of clothes on them?

Mr. Speaker, these were all very worthwhile programs, but I'll concede that they could very well have been done through another agency. Likewise, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite like to go on at length about megaprojects undertaken by SEDCO. Well has the Crown Investments Corporation not funded megaprojects in the past, and will it not continue to do so? The **Partnership for Renewal** program certainly suggests that it will, Mr. Speaker.

We have another example that came up today. We talked earlier about Piper Aircraft company in this legislature. And that failed deal, would that not have been a megaproject? Where would the government have gotten the money for that? What department would have supplied that money? It could be done through Economic Development, or it could have

been done through SEDCO, but the government would have found the money some place.

So while they may change the names, Mr. Speaker, of the lending agency, the job is still being done, and will still continue to be done under son of SEDCO, as it was under SEDCO.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister is trying to suggest to the public that programs and projects will never, ever happen again simply because he has changed the name of one Crown, he is perhaps not being quite forthright. It is easy to pin the blame on SEDCO for both this government's and the last government's economic development strategies, but it really comes down to what shell are you going to hide the pea under. You may change the name, Mr. Speaker, you may change the shell over top of it, but the pea still remains the same.

The government has not tried to reassure concerned members of the public and business community that it will avoid doing things like SEDCO did in the past. In fact, the minister in his speech reassured us that he would continue to do the same things. All they have decided to do is to stir the pot a little and put some programs into SOCO or son of SEDCO, some into CIC (Crown investments Corporation), and some into the minister's own department.

Mr. Speaker, this is not change; this is not improvement; this is not reform; this is simply trying to hide what is actually happening within the government and nothing more. So again, Mr. Speaker, we support the government's move on accountability on this Bill, but we wish it did not carry such a thick coat of duplicity.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to adjourn this debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 61

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that Bill No. 61 -- An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act be now read a second time.

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess I was standing as you were looking the other direction there for a second.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, demonstrates the government's hypocrisy on the subject of offloading. The arguments against federal offloading, i.e., that there are only one taxpayer and that it bumps financial problems from one level of government that is less able to deal with them, are just as valid if not more so in dealing with municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

The worst part of offloading is not only that it passes the financial buck, it also passes the buck in regards to

public accountability. The government can make false promises of not increasing taxes and stick the municipalities and blame them when the taxes rise. This is particularly dangerous and offensive, given that municipalities are the most accessible and grass roots level of government in the province of Saskatchewan and therefore the most vulnerable to the outrage of taxpayers, because they're right at hand to the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. You can get at the councillors very easy; most of them are your neighbours, in most cases.

Also municipal services, roads, buses, police, etc., all are public services that the people encounter the most and depend on the most. Inevitable deterioration of these services that will come as a result of this Bill will hit the average citizen the hardest and serve as the most visible and poignant examples of how the government has lost control and lost its concerns for the needs of its citizens.

Mr. Speaker, nothing will bring on a taxpayer revolt as quickly as people seeing their roads deteriorating. You only have to think back to the kind of outcry there was when the member for Rosetown-Elrose talked about ripping up the highways, Mr. Speaker, and turning them into gravel roads, for the kind of outrage that there was at that time, Mr. Speaker.

Their street lights are not coming on, their public buildings falling apart, their libraries closing, their personal safety threatened by poor police service, and so on -- that will bring outrage to the people of Saskatchewan. It is here at the grass roots infrastructure level that we, as legislators, have the greatest duty to give citizens solid, unwavering quality of public service.

Hundreds of dollars spent on Roughrider tickets for government entertainment, thousands of dollars spent on health care and golf club membership for Crown corporation heads, and hundreds of thousands spent on government hacks, millions of dollars spent on high-priced policy consultants, tens of millions spent on top-of-the-line computers for government departments -- none of this will contribute a single thing to the public's confidence in the government and the political process.

The first pothole a citizen runs over tells him he's getting bad government, Mr. Speaker. And all this, and the provincial government still expects the municipalities to pick up the tab for much of their health care spending.

The minister, in her second reading speech, spoke of the challenges that would face municipalities as the result of this Bill. It is appalling to see the government launch this attack on the vulnerable and dependent level of government, and they try and dress it up in fine language.

Is a crisis a challenge? Is a catastrophe a challenge? Yes, I suppose they are. And the member from Melfort, I recall, prior to being elected as a member, she used to stand up on the highest building in Melfort and cry

that there wasn't enough help for the city of Melfort. And now, when she's in government, she sings a different tune, Mr. Speaker. And somehow or another, the people of Saskatchewan are just supposed to excuse her for what she did as a mayor and somehow now accept what she's saying to the people of Saskatchewan. And I don't think they will, Mr. Speaker, because they realize the hypocrisy that they see displayed on a regular basis from this minister.

No resident or institution in this province is trying to evade their duties regarding the provincial deficit. However, as Alderman John Lipp said on behalf of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) in regards to this Bill, again this year property taxpayers are being asked to pay for a large part of the provincial government's deficit reduction. Urban governments are carrying more than their fair share of the provincial deficit.

While no one in this House denies the need for deficit reduction, this must be done rationally, compassionately, and fairly. None of these standards apply to this Bill we have before us today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of concerns that we have about this piece of legislation and we will asking questions of the minister when we get to the committee stage and we would see no reason why it couldn't proceed to that stage.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 62

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that Bill No. 62 -- An Act to amend The Assessment Management Agency Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments before my colleague, the member from Kindersley, picks it up.

Regarding Bill No. 62, the Act to amend The Assessment Management Agency, Mr. Speaker, we've seen already through Bill 61 the government has reduced its commitment to SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) by taking funds from the municipal revenue-sharing pools.

In this Bill, Mr. Speaker, we see the government again reducing SAMA's funding by 46 per cent, taking it down from 7.5 to \$4 million. And they have indicated that they will continue to reduce their contributions to SAMA in the coming years, reducing them to nil by 1996-97.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what we find, as the government reduces its funding, it throws municipal budgets into confusion since they do not know exactly what their new assessment from SAMA will be.

Mr. Speaker, according to SAMA figures, urban municipalities can expect to see their SAMA requisitions increase by 250 per cent this year. This is obviously more than their share of the deficit burden. And it's something, Mr. Speaker, that if it's not picked up at both the senior levels of government, when municipal governments look at funding their share of any program, who do they go to? They go directly to the taxpayer. And, Mr. Speaker, what that means is whether it's through property taxes or in whatever form, the taxpayer at the end of the day still foots the bill.

So if the province is shifting one area of responsibility back onto the local municipal governments, that responsibility the taxpayer still pays for, and whether it's from the left pocket or from the right pocket, it still comes out of their pocket.

This Bill achieves some positive things by making the agency more responsible to municipalities and allowing municipalities to opt out of SAMA, while still maintaining some level of consistency with SAMA policies. And no doubt there are RMs (rural municipalities) and rural, urban governments across our province that have had a number of concerns with the way SAMA has operated for the years. And this Bill certainly will give them an ability to have greater input and involvement on the SAMA board and in SAMA policies.

However even the second point, opting out of SAMA, serves only to undermine the efficiencies and benefits of SAMA to determine, to the detriment of the taxpayers. Mr. Speaker, the impact of this Bill and Bill 61 is a decrease in municipal revenues of \$6.6 million, according to SAMA estimates. And as I indicated earlier, that becomes another burden that they must review when they are reviewing their budgets. And they must assess whether or not they discontinue other programs that are currently in existence, or they go to the ratepayer and assess a higher level of assessment on the property taxes in order to recover the costs that will be associated with the offloading or having to pick up a greater share of the costs of running the SAMA board.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, we have received letters protesting this change from numerous communities across the province, including the RMs of Elcapo, the RM of Blaine Lake, the RM of Moose Creek, the RM of Clinworth, the RM of Benson, the RM of Winslow, the RM of Antler, and SUMA and SARM, and numerous organizations and numerous urban governments within SUMA and SARM organizations.

The minister, Mr. Speaker, bases this change on the false argument that municipalities are the main beneficiaries of SAMA and therefore should pay more for it. Given the government's continued dependence on municipal revenue for hospitals and schools, they clearly benefit as much, if not more than the municipalities themselves.

Having operated on a . . . or having served on a local hospital board, Mr. Speaker, I know what the process is involved when you sit on a hospital board and you requisition funds and you go to your municipality seeking an increase in the mill rate for hospitals; how the municipalities treat that when they're trying to balance their budgets of providing the road services and the other services, road maintenance, to their RMs (rural municipality) and then to find health and education are eating up the greater portion of the tax dollar.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there isn't a ratepayer across this province who doesn't at times . . . where every fall once the notices come out and they go to pay their property taxes, Mr. Speaker, generally the recipient of their anger at the increase in property taxes tends to be the administrator of the local RM or the local town who is responsible to collect the taxes. And yet the greatest user of those property taxes in most cases tends to be hospitals and hospital boards and educational boards. And so, Mr. Speaker, this becomes another added expense that is added on to the property taxes of ratepayers across this province.

As well, if the main beneficiary argument were extended, the provincial government is clearly the main beneficiary of the health tax which is a provincial responsibility, and therefore municipalities should not be responsible for collecting it.

Again none of these protests we've received over this Bill suggest that municipalities shouldn't pay their fair share of the deficit. They say only that municipalities have already paid more than their share and deserve relief from this constant provincial tax grab.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's certainly other comments to be made regarding this piece of legislation. I'm going to give other members an opportunity to speak on this Bill before we allow the Bill to move into committee. Thank you.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is in many ways even more offensive than the previous Bill, Bill No. 61. Through the reductions this year and the reduction plan for the next three years, the government has shown its intention to totally abandon its participation in an important area of public administration.

The government bases its argument for these changes on the premiss that municipalities are the main beneficiaries of SAMA, that it is an assessment in an area that is within their jurisdiction and therefore they should pay for it. At the same time, however, they expect municipalities to pay for health care which is within the province's jurisdiction.

If they were going to use this argument they can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. During debate on Bill 61, we mentioned the potential of a tax revolt brought on by the government's actions. With the response we have gotten on this Bill, it is clear that in many ways this revolt is already under way.

Municipalities from across the province are threatening to withhold support from SAMA. Bernard Kirwan from SARM is predicting the collapse of SAMA as a result of this legislation. Evelyn Filson, spokesperson for SAMA, says she doesn't know how her agency is going to make up this drastic cut.

How does the minister respond to these legitimate concerns? Does she consult, does she compromise, does she negotiate further with the municipalities to find an acceptable middle ground? No, Mr. Speaker. All she does is threaten the municipalities about the consequences of breaking the law. As has been said so often in this House, there is law and then there is justice.

Over and over we have gotten the same messages from the municipalities. The council of the RM of Elcapo states:

The value of SAMA cannot be overstated and its value is as great or greater to the province as it is to the municipalities. This type of action will only increase the discontentment with SAMA's requisition amounts.

And James Burak, the administrator for the RM of Blaine Lake, says:

We oppose this downloading by the provincial government to this degree. It is too great an impact on rural municipalities who are trying to maintain current mill rates for farmers who are facing economic difficulties.

An Hon. Member: -- What are they doing in Alberta?

Mr. Boyd: -- And one of the members says, what are they doing in Alberta? And I remind her that she is a representative in Saskatchewan, not in Alberta. And what goes on in Alberta is absolutely of no concern to me and shouldn't be to you either.

You should spend a whole lot more time thinking about Saskatchewan and the well-being of Saskatchewan people, and a whole lot less time worrying about what Mr. Klein and the Conservatives are doing out there. You are the government, I remind you, in Saskatchewan, not Mr. Klein.

Naida Dillman, the administrator for the RM of Clinworth, says:

By decreasing provincial funding to SAMA, your government will force municipalities to pick up too large a portion of the cost, thereby transferring this again to the taxpayer.

John Eberl, the administrator for the RM of Antler, wrote to the Premier, saying:

Our message for you is that the property tax base cannot bear the brunt of either reductions in revenue or increases in expenses. The property taxpayer's dollar is stretched to the limit.

Laureen Keating from the RM of Benson says:

With an increase in the requisition of these proportions, council would be forced to decide whether an agency such as SAMA is essential for assessment purposes.

All these voices of legitimate concern have fallen on deaf ears with this government, Mr. Speaker. Even the positive aspects of this Bill, the ones that allow for greater accountability of SAMA to the municipalities, have met with opposition. SUMA and SARM have expressed the concern over the structure of this SAMA convention proposed by this Bill; they see it as a needless duplication of their own conventions and an attempt by the government to draw attention away from the assessment issues at SUMA and SARM conventions.

Furthermore they have complained that the complicated system whereby SAMA convention resolutions must be debated and passed by each council will make the convention useless. Why bother spending money sending a delegate to a SAMA convention if the resolutions are just going to be mailed back for the councils to debate? All of these are critical issues that we urge the government to consider.

The administrative reforms proposed by this Bill are flawed and desperately need to be reworked. The financial aspects are simply heartless and irrational. On the whole, this is bad legislation and we urge this Assembly and the government to change their mind on this and go back and redraft it. And we urge the minister to go back to the table with the municipalities and bring back new legislation that is in the interests of all of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we see . . . a number of letters from municipalities came in to us from all over the province. We see editorials in the paper and articles in the various newspapers across Saskatchewan suggesting that the government is headed in the wrong direction on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

We have a number of concerns about this piece of legislation. We're hopeful we can convince the government to change its mind. We will be asking questions of the minister with respect to this piece of legislation in committee stage, at which time we believe we hopefully will be able to convince the government to change its policies in regard to SAMA funding, Mr. Speaker, and the other provisions within this Bill.

So at this time we'll allow this Bill to move forward to the committee stage and we'll address those concerns with the minister at that point.

Hon. Ms. Carson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to respond to all the political hyperbole that you just heard from the members opposite. A lot of it is inaccurate and a lot of it is political rhetoric. So I think it's probably not a good

use of time at this point to debate some of those issues. But I do want to correct some inaccuracies, deliberate or otherwise, that they have put on the record.

First of all, this Bill clearly states that the provincial government will contribute \$4 million annually to the core service functions of SAMA. That doesn't talk about withdrawing it in 1997. It doesn't talk about reducing it. It talks about a continued contribution of \$4 million for core service function, which is the most important function of SAMA. And we can describe those functions as we go through the Bill, but I wanted to make it absolutely clear that we are not withdrawing total support from funding the SAMA agency.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that property taxpayers' dollars are stretched to the limit. But it is interesting to note that there are many municipalities across Saskatchewan that are actually reducing their mill rate this year, and part of the reason they're reducing their mill rate is because of the reduction of the old union hospital requisition and the change from that to the 2 mill health levy that the government undertook last year. So a lot of municipalities are actually finding it easier this year than particularly in the 1980s to cope with some of the pressures on the property tax, and those are measures directly related to undertakings of the provincial government in the last couple of years.

So while we acknowledge that property taxpayers are indeed being stretched, municipal governments are undertaking to look at their budgets and review their programs. And in a number of instances municipal governments are actually reducing their mill rate this year.

I want to also correct some impression that the provincial government, particularly in Saskatchewan, is in some way not providing adequate support to the assessment base and the importance of that assessment base to the economy and to the municipal governments. When you look at jurisdictions across Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan still, with the \$4 million that we contribute today and in the future, is providing more support for assessment services than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

If you look to Manitoba or you look to Ontario or B.C. (British Columbia) or Alberta, there the municipalities pick up the major cost of assessment services. And with this Bill we're still paying between 45 and 46 per cent of the assessment cost, and I think that's reasonable and fair. So we haven't withdrawn support in any way from assessment services, and we recognize our responsibility in that area.

Another issue that the opposition member spoke of, and I want to correct it, and I will be tabling a letter of support for this Bill from the local government federation. The local government federation is a combination of SUMA, SARM, and SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association). And at their last meeting they endorsed, with some recommendations for amendments that we will be

bringing in as House amendments, but with some minor changes they endorsed the thrust and the intent of this Bill.

And so I think it is quite misleading for members opposite to speak about SUMA not endorsing this Bill, or SARM. We have actually resolutions from both associations that speak quite favourably about this Bill and the thrust and intent of this Bill.

So with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to close debate, second reading debate on a Bill to amend The Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency Act.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

(1515)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 54 -- An Act to amend The Trade Union Act

The Chair: -- At this time, I would invite the minister to introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Yes, I think this is the first time we've been here. On my left is the deputy minister, Merran Proctor; behind me is Graeme Mitchell; and indeed Jeff Parr is on my right.

At this time I'm going to table consolidated versions of the amended Bill 54 and the consolidated version . . . I guess I won't because there isn't a page around. Would you be kind enough to . . . (inaudible) . . . and a consolidated version of the Bill itself. So I table those for the benefit of members who may want to use those consolidated versions to see how the whole thing will read.

Clause 1

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, as you've said, this is our first crack at The Trade Union Act where we can have an interchanging dialogue and perhaps some questions and answers, although often we find ourselves together not really answering questions or asking them, but simply trading political insults.

Today I think we should try to be more constructive because we've worked our way into this process, and I want to welcome your officials. I see that they are all diligently prepared to assist you in the difficult task that we have ahead of us.

And a difficult task it probably will be, Minister, because, of course, while this is the sleeper of all of the labour-type and labour-related legislation that you've brought in in the past two years, it certainly is the one that will most affect our province and philosophical direction that we will go, and the potential to great harm to our province in terms of destroying our tax base and the business base and the job creation

potential of our province.

We led you into this process the other day by offering you the opportunity to give us the amendments that you were going to put in if we would allow it to come into this committee for debate and get out of second reading debate. And you took us up on our offer, and we had received those.

So now you have given us a copy of the revised version which we will study through a bit as we go. But I want, I think in fairness, to give you an opportunity to explain to the province of Saskatchewan how your amendments are now going to change the legislation that we previously saw.

Could you go through your amendments and explain how they plug into the new Bill, so that people will understand what you are doing that is different now than what you had originally proposed when we started this debate.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- All right, I shall do that. We are amending three sections: 2(b.1), 11(1)(i), and 47, which deal with benefits during a strike. It was, I think, always understood by everyone that what was intended to be accomplished by section 47 was that the employee could continue to pay for benefits during a strike or lock-out, and the employer had to remit those. There was some suggestion made in the various discussions that the legislation might be open to a different interpretation, and so we amended it to ensure that the legislation reflected that intention.

With respect to section 37.1, this section has been amended to clarify that provisions will . . . that the section which provides that with respect to cafeteria and food services, janitorial services, or security services, it states that a . . . to summarize it, a rough summarization, is that these services are often contracted out.

If a contract changes and a new person gets the bid, what the effect of these sections in effect is that the collective agreement remains in place and thereby, in most cases, so will the people -- although that's not necessarily so. This section provides that this provision only applies to the public sector in the broadest sense -- the Government of Saskatchewan, municipalities, universities, schools, and hospitals.

We amended section 37.2 to give the board the power to make different arrangements where successorship was an issue by a federal company becoming a provincial company. One of the truly delightful things about this area of the law is that every new day brings a new problem. I never heard of short-line railways until a few days ago. I had heard of short-line railways; I'd never heard of them in the context of this Act.

And a very few days ago, for the first time, someone raised the issue of short-line railways and whether or not the collective agreements which apply to the national railway system might, by this section, apply to the local short-line railways. You go from having a collective agreement which covers tens of thousands

of employees in the national railways, then covering a handful of employees on a short-line railway, and is that agreement applicable. It may not be.

What we did in those circumstances was give the Labour Relations Board the power to order alternate arrangements where that's appropriate. And of course each side would be heard.

The major change in substance is in the area of so-called automatic certifications and decertifications. This was left undefined in the legislation. It simply said the Labour Relations Board had the power to arrange for . . . to certify without a vote. And a well-defined practice had grown up in Manitoba and B.C., but here that didn't . . . And it seems to work reasonably well in Manitoba and B.C.

However, that created a very vigorous protest by a great number of employers who believed that there was a real likelihood that their businesses would be unionized without the consent of their employees. Unable to really convince people that what happens in other provinces would happen here, we decided to change this to provide that the certification and decertifications may be made, I suppose, on a conditional basis, but that before they are complete and final, a vote of the employees must take place. And that perhaps is the most far-reaching of the changes.

We had a series of provisions in the Act which required one to bargain in good faith and to apply an agreement in good faith and to bargain collectively. That was recommended by Professor Ish in his report. It did not find once in the . . . It seemed to myself and I think seemed to officials in the department to be fairly straightforward.

Surely we want people to bargain collectively and surely we want the agreements to apply in good faith. However, this time both labour and management agreed upon this one. Many elements in each didn't like the section and so we took it out, notwithstanding it appears to just be straight common sense.

There were some typographical errors with respect to the arbitration procedures, and those have been corrected in section 26. We are fixing up another technical problem. The Labour Relations Board goes from being . . . The chairperson and vice-chairperson were alternate . . . were appointed at pleasure. In order to try to wring some of the politics out of the Labour Relations Board and to make this neutral and non-political, we provided that they're appointed for a term, for a period of time.

The experience elsewhere has been if they're given a fixed term and cannot be removed, except by a vote of this legislature, governments then tend to appoint people who are neutral and who are very competent, because once they're gone, you can't recall them. It's like a missile -- once you pull the trigger, you can't recall it. And this system has worked elsewhere.

We're providing, with respect to the members . . . we

used to have alternate members which were called for given cases, and the work of the board has grown to the extent that we felt the public can be better served by permanent members, so we're going to permanent members who also have a fixed term of three years. Again, to try to wring the politics out of this whole system.

All this amendment does is . . . the only change in this House amendment to section 4 is that it provides that the existing board continues in place until a new board is appointed. The penultimate amendment that I'm going to discuss is that to section 46(3). This section provides that workers have a right to return to the workplace after work stoppage, or in lieu there of they must be paid severance pay. It was always understood, I think, that there would be exceptions to that.

Let us take the case of a plant which has been on strike for a lengthy period of time. And then let's say it's been on strike for a year or two -- this will occasionally occur. Finally a settlement is reached. The business may have declined to the point where they simply don't need all of the workers they had when the strike began. And in many strikes, many strikes are ended by a so-called protocol agreement. The technical amendment here provides something, I think, that was always understood.

And that is the union and management, in entering into a protocol agreement, may arrive at different arrangements than the strict letter of the law which would seem to provide that everybody's got to come back at once or the company's got to pay severance. That would make some strikes extremely difficult to settle.

Finally with respect to first contract settlement, this also exists in other provinces. It works, I am told, reasonably well in other provinces. Basically I'm told the jurisprudence in other provinces is that the boards do not go out of their way to make it attractive for parties to rely on this. They really, in a way, try to discourage parties from relying on the board to do the first contract. And I'm told on that basis it works reasonably well, and I'm told that by both labour and management.

Again we left this section . . . we left a great deal to the discretion of the board, and I truly think that would have worked reasonably well. However in the superheated climate in which these Bills are passed, things which would pass with the approval of all concerned in other Bills are subject to the most intense scrutiny here. And this is one of those sections.

(1530)

We therefore took the liberty of spelling out more fully how this would operate. The changes in substance would provide for a two-year contract. The purpose of the first contract legislation is that . . . and the theory behind it is that after a first contract, after a certification there's often bitterness and hard feelings, the parties aren't used to dealing with each other, and

this is a very high-risk period. Some 15 per cent of strikes in the province, or thereabouts, are strikes before the first contract. And in this section we . . . So this writes that first contract for them, gets them used to dealing with each other.

We have provided a two-year term to give them a goodly period of time to work with each other and get to know each other. We have also provided that . . . The issue was raised as to whether or not this contract can be terminated unilaterally. Here we have chosen a middle ground. We have said that it can't be terminated unilaterally, but it may be terminated on establishing to the satisfaction of the Labour Relations Board that all sides have bargained collectively and in good faith. Those are the two changes to the first contract.

Those are the changes which we have made. They have, I think, removed some of the concerns of the business community without affecting in any real way the thrust of the policy and the Bill.

The most extensive amendment is the automatic certification and decertification. There are people who would say that the policy there is changed, and I guess people will form their own views on that. But leaving that section aside, I think one can say, with respect to the rest of the sections, the policy is unchanged.

Our intent in pursuing this has been clarified, and I have always said and I said to the hon. member today in question period and I've always said that once this is understood and operating I don't think people will have much concern with it. Much of the concern arises because they don't know how it's going to operate, they don't thoroughly trust any government, including this one, and the concern expresses -- the concern in many ways is -- fear of the unknown.

And I think these amendments, if I may characterize them, clarify our intention and that gives some additional comfort, because I think they will live quite happily with what we're going to do; they're just not entirely sure what we're going to do and I guess nothing but the actual operation of the Act will wholly lay that problem to rest.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Minister, for that brief preview of your changes to the Act through the amendments that you're bringing in.

I don't know who should or who might take credit for the work that's being done here, in so far as we have now got some amendments that do I think significantly change what we originally saw. There will be some, of course, like you said, that will debate how much that change is or isn't. I personally think that it's a significant move. I obviously have to say that it doesn't go far enough, but at least it's something.

The simple fact that we have collectively, whoever can take that responsibility or that credit, convinced you to put back some democracy into your

government and its actions by allowing for votes in the certification and decertification process -- that move alone makes it worth, I think, the province having paid my wages for the last two months at least and I'll go home and hold my head up and say that I've earned my pay, simply because we now have the democratic right for people to show their views through a vote.

I do have a question about that vote though. And I want to know, is this a hand-waving vote or will this be a secret ballot?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I want to make two comments. First of all, I don't mean to flatter the member from Maple Creek and I know nothing can be worse than having an opposition member say something nice about you -- your own people distrust you.

I think the member from Maple Creek has been more than diligent in these estimates. I have not agreed with him, but I think you've been more than diligent. I think you've more than earned your pay this session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I think I have more than earned my pay. I think the two of us can go home, pick up our pay cheque, and not apologize.

Well I guess the member from Souris-Cannington isn't sure about one of those two. But I think we both worked reasonably hard.

If the member refers to the actual House amendment in section 7, it states a secret ballot therein. So the secretness of the ballot is actually written into the legislation.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Well, Minister, now that we've squared up our justification for our pay, I think we should go on with a few more of these questions that people have been posing to us.

Now the coalition of provincial associations represented by urban government -- we have the school boards, the rural governments, and the health care facilities -- sent out a news release on May 3. SUMA, SARM, SSTA, and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) have spoken to you, sir, regarding changes to The Trade Union Act that they believe are vital.

Now I'm hoping that somehow some of these amendments have changed these requests. But I want to just run through these.

Now these changes include: waiving the requirements that employers continue to pay benefit costs during strikes. Now you've made some changes there, but you haven't really done what they've asked. They've asked you to waive the requirement and you haven't done that; you've simply fortified it.

I think we need to have you explain what the change here in the policy is compared to what it used to be,

and how your new amendment is going to change what these folks thought you were going to do. Because I don't think we've quite got to the roots of what they wanted changed here.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I think we in fact have met this requirement. I think we're reading from the same newspaper article -- it's not dated -- it's Mr. Burton . . . under Mr. Burton's name. And the comment here says:

The public employers want the government to waive the requirement that the employers must maintain benefits to employees during a strike.

The clear implication of this is that the employers must pay for them; that actually was never intended. It was always understood that the employers had no responsibility to pay for them, and therefore no responsibility to maintain them. Their responsibility is simply to remit them. And the section clarifies that. So I think we have met this concern.

I don't think the public sector employers were concerned about remitting them. I think they were concerned they might have to maintain them in a sense of pay them.

And I think we have met this, so I think this concern has been met. It's clear in this amendment. They don't have to pay for them; they simply have to remit them. So I think we've met this concern actually.

Mr. Goohsen: -- I'm not going to make a judgement on that right now, Minister. You've made your explanation, it'll be on the record, and we'll let the business community assess that and have them get back to us. Because quite frankly, you know, you've got your explanation and I'm not really sure that I agree with that personally. But I have to wait for the business community to give their assessment because it might be different than mine as well.

I'm not so sure that they're going to be totally comforted. I have some misgivings, I guess, put it that way, but I'll let them express those before I continue with it. And we will be at this for another day, I'm sure.

Now the withdrawing of the amendments restricting contracting out, is what they had asked for, and here you've done some work with your amendment. I noted in your original statements that you have, with the amendment, done some work in that area. But here again, I'm not sure that what you've done has solved the intention of what these folks had asked you for. You've watered it down a bit, but perhaps you better go into that a little further.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- We've given them some partial comfort in the sense that the board . . . the interpretation was placed on this -- I don't think this was a proper interpretation -- the interpretation was placed on the existing section that the board could expand the services which could be prohibited from being contracted out. I think that was not the proper interpretation of the legislation, but to the extent that

that was a concern, that has been changed.

However, I think the substance of . . . the more substantial concern they had was that they wanted freedom to contract out these named services. To that extent we haven't met their objection. I admit that. Our rationale for so doing here is that these people are generally at the bottom of the pay scale. In any institution, the food, cafeteria workers, security and cleaning people are often at the bottom of the pay scale.

They're also often contracted out. And it is extremely difficult for them to receive any degree of protection. Because as soon as they're organized, someone else gets the contract. And they and their contract are just washed away with the new bidder.

So in order to provide these people with some minimum measure of protection, we made this provision. And we did not extend it to the private sector, because quite frankly that's very complex, to extend it to the whole of the private sector.

But we do apply it to the public sector. We are dealing with the people at the bottom of the pay scale here, and we're giving them the very minimum protection. So we don't apologize for this but I would admit that we have not met the request of all of the public employers in this area.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Minister. Mr. Chairman, the minister has alluded to the fact that we needed to extend some more protection to people who are on the bottom end of the pay scale. And certainly that's difficult to be against; it's sort of like being against apple pie and motherhood.

But at the same time the argument has to be made that a lot of folks get positions in life according to their ambition to want to do certain things, their educational pursuits, the vigour at which they go after things. There are some cases always of course -- and we can always be proven wrong here and I don't want to, as one fellow said, kick crutches out from under people with broken legs -- but the reality is that often times these folks are not really highly skilled, not really highly trained; and by contracting out these services it has, I think, been somewhat of a practice that you could easily change the personnel who are not competent to perform certain tasks in a rather -- I'm searching for a polite word -- kind of an easy way of doing it without being very messy about the whole business of having to come out and say: you're fired; you're a dirty rat; get out of here, you know, or something like that. You could say simply: we're changing the contract and we'll have to have some folks come in that can now do the job.

So I suspect that perhaps, while you have done some work in this area, that you haven't really understood the need of the business community and oftentimes to try to replace personnel without a deliberate confrontation. And I sometimes think that the process we're in where the unions press for all of these kinds of absolute guarantees, it creates more confrontation

than we had before because people that are in business don't like to have to change personnel because of incompetence, but it does have to be done.

If you have a floor to sweep and the person that is supposed to sweep the floor can't run the machine that does the sweeping, because nowadays we use machines for that . . . they've got them up and down the hall here every day, shining it. I sometimes wonder how that marble doesn't wear out the way they shine it so much, but it does indicate to me that we aren't just into the brooms and dustpans kind of era any more. So that what we're doing is that we've got people that need to run a machine that sometimes maybe they don't know how or they can't or they won't, and it's a polite way with contracts of being able to change those folks.

And I think you're taking that option away from the business community. And it's a kind of a nit-picky thing but there it is for what it's worth. And they did ask you for something that I don't think you really gave them.

They then go on to talk about the amending and definition of the technological change. Followed by that, they went into reinstating the termination of contracts during open periods. Now I guess I should let you respond to those two concerns before I get into the next one.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I just simply . . . I correct the member. This section 37(1) does not apply to the business community; it applies only to the public sector. And that's the effect of the House amendment.

The member stated that these were people who had arrived at that station of life by lack of energy or lack of ambition. That may sometimes be the case. I think a more frequent cause though is simply lack of opportunity.

When I think of the children that grew up in the farming community that I did, some of whom succeeded in life and some of whom . . . sometimes the success was considerable; sometimes the success was pretty modest. It seems to me it was more a question of opportunity than it was will-power.

And I think it's more a question of luck and birth in many cases than it is whether or not you decide you're going to be an energetic person than an ambitious person -- so the different philosophical view, I guess, of life than the member opposite on that issue.

(1545)

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Minister. Of course, a tremendous difference in our philosophical views on that issue because I do believe that ambitious people in a free society, for the most part, go ahead. And the lack of opportunity does of course sometimes happen and that will be the exception to the rule again. There always will be some example that you can dig up to prove me wrong but in the vast majority of cases those people that are willing to pursue a good education,

and have the wherewithal to be able to succeed at that intellectually, do pretty well in life. And there are some exceptions, of course.

The lack of opportunity, though, mainly comes as a result of those people who are here in this Assembly. Government direction and government policy is what determines opportunity for people. And quite frankly, I think that the legislation that we are involved with today is going to do exactly the opposite to what people want. And they're going to lose opportunities as a result of this legislation because you have put us out of context with our neighbours in neighbouring provinces and neighbouring states. I've alluded to this for you before, but it has to be repeated. You've put us out of sync with our neighbours and the business community, quite frankly, won't be here, and we won't have that job base and we won't have those opportunities.

It's the workers of this province that are going to suffer as a result of this piece of legislation that basically gives unions more power than they have any place else in the world, and more power than they should ever deserve to have. And it puts us out of tune with society.

Now had the rest of society and the rest of our neighbours introduced this legislation simultaneously to ours, most likely we could evolve with it and succeed to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Rosemont wants to enter the debate. I know he's just eager as can be to talk about scab labour and all kinds of things like that -- the kind of thing that we never see in Saskatchewan anyway to very much of an extent.

But in all fairness, Minister, your colleague from Rosemont should go and live in Ontario where they actually have some big union problems, and he could be a real star there. In Saskatchewan this just doesn't wash.

We want to get on with the list of questions and concerns, Minister, so I just will get back to the listing here. Withdrawing the amendments to the definition of employee and the purpose of the Act. The next issue was withdrawing the provisions for automatic union certification, notwithstanding the absence of a major vote by employees. And you've alluded to that and made that change, and we're happy to see that. I think we will want you to explain that voting procedure a little more closely.

The Chair: -- Order, order. Order, order.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was getting really difficult to hear myself ask the question, and I'm not even too sure that I was going to keep my thought trend much longer. But anyway, a good thing I have some notes to follow.

Mr. Minister, to what extent have you considered the recommendations made by these provincial associations, and what steps have you taken to address these concerns?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Well we've certainly considered them and we have weighed them. Some of them we have accepted and some we have rejected. You can't govern by trying to please everyone. That simply is the road to disaster. In government, one must listen to what people have to say to you. They have every right to speak to their elected representatives. But at the end of the day, you owe them not your obedience, but your judgement. So says Edmund Burke over 200 years ago, and the comment still stands. One must listen to the electorate, but at the end of the day you owe them your judgement, not your obedience. And that's what we've done.

We believe that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I've not read everything that Edmund Burke wrote recently, but I'll tell you what -- I would be astonished if he put any stamp of approval on the style of government which you had when you were in office, or for that matter, on the style of opposition. I'd be astonished -- he was a Conservative -- and I would be surprised if he would give any approval if he were here today, if he would give any stamp of approval to the kind of government which you people wrote.

Actually we weren't here to try to divine his thoughts on The Trade Union Act. I was here to answer the question which you raised about whether or not we're going to sink.

I would simply point out to the member that the most industrialized provinces are Quebec, which has had a Liberal government for a lengthy period of time, Ontario, B.C. Those are the provinces with the most progressive labour laws, by quite a degree. They're the most industrialized provinces. The provinces which are least industrialized, with the most regressive labour laws, are the Maritimes.

Now I'm not suggesting there's a correlation between the two. I don't think there is. It's more a matter of geography and resources. But there is simply no statistical, no empirical . . . there is no statistical evidence, there's no empirical evidence, there's no anecdotal evidence, no evidence of any sort, direct or indirect, which suggests that regressive labour laws will bring prosperity. There's none at all.

And indeed, if you look around the world, there is evidence . . . there's at least an analytical evidence that it will. One of the really interesting developments was put in place by the former Conservative administration. It's called the Canadian centre for labour market productivity. And one of the things . . . this is funded by the federal government, half management, half labour; the management of it is equal management and labour.

One of the things which that body has said is that jurisdictions which are going to thrive in this post-industrial world are those which can adapt readily to new technology, new information, a new way of doing things.

These days that requires the consent, and not just the

consent, the active willingness of workers to adapt to it. You can't force this extremely complex technology on a baulky workforce.

If the workers are expected to buy into the new world and the new technology, they must receive more than just a share of the risk; they must also receive a share of the benefits. And that lies at the basis of this legislation. It is our desire to see Saskatchewan not just survive in the 1990s, but thrive in the 1990s.

We believe that's going to take the active cooperation of management and labour, and labour must receive a degree of protection if they're expected to buy into the new technology.

So I think there is at least an analytical argument in favour of saying that this legislation is an important and necessary part of restructuring. There is simply no evidence at all of any way, shape, or form which suggests that regressive labour laws will bring prosperity -- none at all.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Mr. Minister, I'm going to just take you up on your argument there for just a second, because it's such a nice one to just jump right into.

You say that regressive labour legislation will not ensure prosperity. On the same note, aggressive labour legislation will also not guarantee prosperity. And there is no evidence and there is no proof and there is no measurement that can prove that overly aggressive labour legislation will also bring us prosperity.

You see I've just taken your argument, turned it around backwards, and it applies equally well. Because there is no measurement to weigh this thing by on either side. We can only use our common sense in knowing the very simple fact of life, that is, that when you are in balance, then you have a better chance at success -- only a chance, not guaranteed. No guarantees in this business. Except that you and I won't be here probably after an election or two or three. That's probably one of the guarantees in life that people can probably be happy about.

So I'll let you give a prognosis of your durability for yourself. But your argument just doesn't wash, that you have to do what you're doing because you have no proof or evidence. Because there's no proof or evidence that what you are doing will also help. So we have to use this balance.

And noting that, I want to go back to your statement where you say that you can't please everyone. And I agree with you; you can't please everyone and I can't please everyone. Even if we both thought alike, we couldn't please everyone. That's just not the way the world is.

How many people though do you think that we should please? Should we please half the people? Or should we please 25 per cent of the people? How many does it take to get re-elected? I suppose that

might be the question somebody would ask. Then that must be how many we'd have to please.

No, I say to you, it's more important that we do better than half. We have to please at least a majority. In the context of the argument of democracy itself, because in a democracy where we have the right to vote and express ourselves, we've taken the one-half vote as being the part of society that rules the day for every issue. Fifty per cent plus one or whatever, or a little over 50 per cent -- that's the majority. In some extreme cases we use a two-thirds vote.

So it has to be one of those magic numbers if we defend the principles of democracy. So I say to you, do we not have a majority of people saying to you, whoa, hold up here. Because after all, these concerns that I'm bringing to you are not the concerns of the official opposition, ourselves, and they're not the concerns of the Liberal Party over here.

These are the concerns that are being expressed quite widely, outside of this Assembly, through the media and through letters and through all kinds of outlets of person to person. These are coming from municipal governments, school divisions, from SAHO. We've got an awful vast majority of people being covered by these umbrella group organizations that are saying to you, we don't agree with what you're doing.

They have to represent . . . just by the list of the people that we've got here, they've got to represent more than 50 per cent of the people of this province. So I say to you quite simply, with Bill 54, how many people do you have to please?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- The art of government is the art of framing good public policy. It is the exercise of your best judgement as to what is in the best interests of the public. It is not a matter of attempting to gauge the wind and then go with it. You can't run a government by finding a parade and then trying to get in front of it.

Your question simply doesn't make any sense. How many people does it make? That's not the question. The art of government is the art of framing the public policy, then when it works, assuming people will re-elect you. I think that's how you succeed.

I think how you fail in government is to play too close attention to the polls. I really agree with a former and a distinguished . . . You've got to go back some time to find a distinguished leader of the Conservative Party, but I'm going to pick one -- John Diefenbaker. John Diefenbaker's comment was, dogs know what to do with polls. I couldn't agree more. I couldn't agree more.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I missed your comments on the vote certification -- whether or not that will be an open ballot in such a show of hands, or if it will be a secret ballot.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- It is stated right in the

amendment that it will be a secret ballot.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's very important that that does actually become a secret ballot because a good many people, especially at their first certification, are unsure of what's going on, are nervous about the whole process, and people feel much more comfortable when they can enter into a ballot booth where they can mark their ballot and that it is secret, that no one else knows about it.

So it's very important that that happen because we have seen in the past just some of the things that the unions have done. This Bill provides a greater power for the unions. And yet not that long ago in Nova Scotia, we saw an abuse of union power. When the union members in the province of Nova Scotia stormed the legislature, as happened here prior to the previous election, that, Mr. Minister, is an abuse of union power. And if this piece of legislation increases that power, then it's a move in the wrong direction.

(1600)

When people take the law into their own hands, when they break our civil law, that's an abuse of power. And if this Bill means giving people who will do that greater power, then the government themselves are abusing power.

You talked about the art of governing. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, the art of governing is a compromise. And truly governing by polls is not the answer. Because sometimes members -- or I shouldn't say sometimes; all of the time -- members have to use their own judgements in making decisions. And to simply follow polls will mean to swing from extreme to extreme.

The minister talked in his second reading speech about swinging the pendulum. Mr. Minister, the pendulum has not swung that far in either direction but you will push it to another extreme. I know that the union members argue that it has swung too far on the side of business, on the side of management. And yet you look from 1982 to 1991, we had a period of relative labour calm in this province when you compared it to the 10 years previously under your previous administration.

So that would suggest, Mr. Minister, that things were in a balanced position, that they were not swung out to an extreme. And this piece of legislation will swing that pendulum back to the extreme situation that was in place during your previous administration.

The member from Regina Rosemont was speaking from his chair about scabs. And, Mr. Speaker, there's some quotes that we could supply in this House dealing with scabs, that come from . . . the name the member used, Jack London. It was also used by Daryl Bean in a very contentious strike in Ontario in which, I would contend, the terms used are an abuse of a person's civil rights; that they should have been covered under our human rights legislation that was passed in the previous session.

But when asked about those very things, the Minister of Justice explained that this was a labour dispute and therefore not subject to Human Rights Code. It seems that if you have a labour dispute, almost any and all things are permitted because it deals with labour relations, and that the Human Rights Code does not apply when you're talking employees and employers and unions; that unions are somehow above the common law of the land. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, when you provide even greater powers in those kind of circumstances, you abuse the public.

Mr. Minister, when the terms used in the quote from Jack London about individuals who cross a picket line, that they should be terminated, that their death should be accomplished by the most vile of manner, I think something is wrong in the system.

And this Daryl Bean used this particular quote involved in a strike. And when your union leadership is promoting those kinds of ideas, those kinds of ideals, Mr. Minister, again I have to say you're abusing the public by providing more power to those people, to the people who would advocate and advise those kind of dramatic actions.

If we were to stand in this legislature and contemplate and endorse those kind of actions by any other group in society, by any other group of any philosophy, it would not be permitted. But because it's being promoted by union activists, it somehow seems to be permitted within our society. It becomes acceptable in the eyes of the government and its members. It becomes acceptable to the Labour Relations Board. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, I believe it is totally wrong.

Mr. Minister, when people cross a picket line, they do so for reasons of their own -- because they have financial commitments they wish to meet; because they are not supportive of the actions being taken by the union in their workplace; because they're philosophically opposed to it.

And yet under this piece of legislation you are going to allow the unions to fine and to seek redress before the courts of members of their membership who may cross a picket line for whatever reason.

Now I know of an example of a member of a union who worked for a Crown corporation in a small town of Saskatchewan, and this member was philosophically opposed to the idea of strikes. This person liked their job, and they wished to carry on with their job. This particular union went on strike against the Crown corporation.

And what was the result for the individual in small town Saskatchewan who wanted to go to work? Well because the particular company corporation he worked for utilized a large number of vehicles, the night before the strike was to take place his driveway was surrounded by other corporation vehicles, locked; and there they sat. So the next morning when

time came for him to go to work in the morning, he was not able to move his vehicle because other corporation vehicles were parked across his driveway.

Now this was being done by the union membership that has less power than what you're giving them under this piece of legislation. And I know that some of your other members support the union actions in this particular case. But it's wrong, Mr. Minister; they were breaking the law. But yet it was acceptable because it was being done in the context of a labour strike, of a labour action. And it seems that all things are permitted when it comes to labour action.

Mr. Minister, when you give people the opportunity to seek court action against their own membership for the collection of fines that they impose on their membership, I believe you have exceeded the desires of the public, and you should have exceeded the abilities of the union to impose those kind of actions on our people.

Mr. Minister, just how do you foresee this kind of action taking place where the unions can access the court system to collect fines?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- The member's logic interests me. You feel it is a violation of someone's civil liberties to be called a scab. You apparently don't feel it's a violation of anyone's civil liberties to actually be a scab or use a scab, but you don't like the language. I must say the logic of that escapes me.

Surely if scab is a pejorative term, then to be a scab is something one shouldn't be. And I would assume, since you feel so strongly about it, you'll be moving a House amendment to this which would ban replacement workers.

An Hon. Member: -- Hear, hear. And I'll support it.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Yes, you may find someone to second it. So if the member wants to carry your logic through to its logical conclusion, you may find at least one person who will second it. I just raise it to point out I think your comments are not completely thought out.

You also raised the issues of fines. You may not be aware that it was the former Conservative administration which put in the Act the right to fine. That wasn't this administration; that was the former administration. And all we do is define the process for collecting it. And I want the member to note the process. You must get a judgement. And so there is due process.

So I say to the member opposite once again, you put the provision in there -- not you; the party of which you're a member when in office put that provision in there. We didn't. We're simply defining the process. We're making them go to a court of law to get a judgement. That's due process.

I don't see where you can be critical unless you're

going to be critical of the former administration. And I can see the member from Morse looking at you intensely in case you want to criticize the former administration. So I invite the member to clarify his comments.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Well thank you, Mr. Minister, and I certainly will not be moving amendment to allow for the banning of replacement workers. But in my discussions with the Minister of Justice under the human rights legislation, I certainly did try to ban the actions being condoned by union members in threatening the lives of someone who did cross a picket line. Because in the quote that I used from Mr. Daryl Bean, he suggested that people should be either hanged or drowned in a pool of sewage water if they cross the picket line. And I think those kind of comments and those kind of actions are to the most extreme, and it should not be allowed in any context, Mr. Minister.

You talked about a judgement in applying fines. You state that the previous administration brought in the allowing of fines by unions of its memberships. Well as I hollered across the floor at you, that the previous administration did make some mistakes and perhaps this was one of them.

Mr. Minister, in talking of judgements, who would supply that judgement? Who would make that judgement that a fine was to be imposed?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- That's made according to the constitution of the union. It is the court of . . . it is a judge in a court of law which gives you the judgement which enables you to collect it. So I point out to the member that while the fine is obviously imposed by the executive of the union, it is the judge and therefore there is due process before the fine can be collected.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Well thank you, Mr. Minister. When the union . . . You say the union constitution allows the union to bring forward the . . . to seek a judgement before a court case. Who makes that determination within the union structure that a person who may or may not have crossed a picket line is at fault as far as the union is concerned?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Well that depends on the constitution of the union. It would normally be the executive, but on occasion there may be something in the nature of a tribunal set up to impose fines. But that depends on the constitution of the union.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, with respect to The Trade Union Act, I think you've made the comments about business that are well known all over Saskatchewan and probably all over Canada by now; your views on business and the kind of people that run business. It's unfortunate that you take a licence with the English language to call people the names and resort to that type of activity that you did, calling people that run business heartless and greedy and all of those kinds of things.

And I remind you, sir, that people out there that run

businesses in Saskatchewan are just trying to make a living and trying to make a living for the people that they work for or that work for them as well. And as a person who employs other people, I take great exception to the kind of comments that you make with respect to people and their motives for being in business.

And I would think, Mr. Minister, that you should offer an apology up to the people and the business community of Saskatchewan for saying the kinds of things that you do with respect to business. Any time that a cabinet minister has the audacity and the unmitigated gall to stand up and call people who operate a legitimate business in Saskatchewan greedy and dishonest and all of those kinds of things that you suggested to the people of Saskatchewan, that they are greedy and heartless and all of those kinds of things, Mr. Minister, I think you owe the business community of Saskatchewan an apology about those kinds of comments, Mr. Speaker. It's no wonder that columnists are taking you to task for it -- calling you the misfit minister because of those kinds of comments that you make, Mr. Minister.

Now I wonder if you would care to maybe offer up that apology now to the business community?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I want to make a comment about that news story in **The Financial Post**. I do not understand how -- his first name was Ashley -- I do not understand how he could have drawn that conclusion from our interview. I do not see how that story could have been honestly written.

What was actually said . . . The words, incidentally, the words, greedy and dishonest, were first used by you. If one wants to talk about members who engage in slashing, unthinking attacks, then you don't have to look a whole lot further than the riding of Kindersley.

But let's leave that aside. Nobody ever used the words greedy and dishonest. The word ruthlessness was used. What was said in the interview -- and as I say, I think it was understood and I just don't know how the column could have been honestly written -- what was said is the legislation is the product of social changes in our society. What are those social changes? There are quite a number of them: increasing number of part-time workers, increasing number of women in the workplace.

One of the changes, which every meeting with every group of businesses in Saskatchewan raised with me, was a ruthlessness on the part of a very few businesses. Nobody called all businesses ruthless. What was said at every meeting with every chamber of commerce I've met with was there are a few businesses which are behaving in a ruthless fashion. Why don't you go get them and leave us alone?

My response to that is that's exactly what we're trying to do, is curb the ruthlessness and leave the 95 per cent of businesses alone which are legitimate and

don't engage in those tactics.

Who recognizes that there is a ruthlessness in the market? Virtually every group of business people in the province. That is not to say that everybody is ruthless and that is why I find the story in **The Financial Post** highly offensive.

An Hon. Member: -- Intellectually dishonest.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Well it isn't just intellectually dishonest. It is dishonest in every sense. It is professionally dishonest, as well as being intellectually dishonest.

Nobody called all business people ruthless. Nobody said that all business people have become ruthless and that's why we're doing this. And I don't think he could have honestly arrived at that. Well I know he didn't, because we had a conversation about it.

And so I do appreciate this opportunity to clarify the remarks. But the view that there is a ruthlessness in the market-place is shared by every single small-business person who's concerned about competing with Wal-Mart, to put it bluntly. If you watch the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) . . . and I'm not necessarily suggesting Wal-Mart is a ruthless business.

But every retailer on Main Street, Saskatchewan is concerned about the super-competitiveness of some of these businesses. And they would raise it with me and they would say to me: why don't you go get the people who are causing the abuse and leave the 95 per cent of us alone?

My response was, exactly what I'm trying to do. That was the comment I made to the writer from **The Financial Post**. And I learned a long time ago, never complain because there's no accountability. You write whatever you want. In this country there's no accountability and no enforceable standards among journalists. You can't enforce it. So I don't complain to them directly.

But since you asked, I do appreciate the opportunity to clarify what I said, because what the sentiment I shared . . . the sentiment I expressed is shared by most business people in the province. And they aren't a whole lot happier with it than we are. They would much prefer to work in a market-place which has an agreed set of norms, ones that they generally follow. They'd much prefer to work in a market-place which wasn't defined by the lowest common denominator in terms of treatment of employees.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. That was a pretty good attempt at back-peddalling if I ever saw it. Here we see the minister suggesting that business groups in Saskatchewan are ruthless. Maybe you didn't want to go so far as calling Wal-Mart ruthless; maybe you'd care to identify the ones that you believe are ruthless.

You said that there are people out there that believe

there are ruthless employers, and you share that view that there are ruthless employers in Saskatchewan. Just take the time, Mr. Minister, to elaborate a little bit on that and share with us who just exactly you believe is ruthless in this province with respect to employing people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister.

Wal-Mart isn't ruthless? Who is ruthless . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Please do.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Mr. Chairman, the nature of that question simply confirms my earlier comment that the member from Kindersley is far more interested in causing problems than he is in asking legitimate questions about this labour legislation. That question has no place in this Assembly. That question has absolutely no place in the Assembly and I'm surprised that even a member of two years wouldn't know better than to ask the question.

It's a legitimate question. It might be a legitimate question in a different forum. The problem with this forum is that we have absolute immunity and you therefore use the names of individuals with extreme care. We have the right to do it and they don't have the right to complain and therefore we do not name individuals in this session. And that's a policy which all members of decency, and even without it, members with experience, do not violate. I don't name people in this Assembly. It's just a bad practice, and I suggest to the member opposite, you get back to the Bill, stop trying to cause trouble.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, it's no wonder people are calling you a misfit member and a misfit minister, when you say those kinds of things. You stand up on one hand and say that there are people in Saskatchewan that are ruthless and then you haven't got the guts to tell us who they are. That's the problem, Mr. Minister.

The Chair: -- Order, order. I'll ask the member to be aware of the use of language which is provocative and unnecessary to contribute to the debate of the estimates, and to keep his remarks in that context. I will ask him particularly to pay attention to remarks of a personal nature. It is the estimates with the minister here as a minister of the Crown that is before us and not the minister's personality.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, it's not me that called business people in Saskatchewan ruthless; it was you who called them ruthless. And it was you who went so far as even identifying one and then prefacing it quickly by saying, I don't think they're ruthless but maybe . . . I think the implication was there that it was your belief that when a company comes into Saskatchewan and they are considered to be a very extreme, a strong competitor, then you believe that they're ruthless somehow or another, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I wish you would take the time to read some of the articles that there are about you, and particularly about The Trade Union Act because there's lots of comment around Saskatchewan about

the kinds of things you're proposing to do here. You're saying that the pendulum is just swinging back towards the middle. And comments all over and columnists all over and editorials all over are saying that that isn't the case, that it's swinging far, far to the left with respect to this legislation, Mr. Minister.

And you look at things like the column entitled, Wrong message: Whether or not it realizes it, the provincial government is sending out a message to business. Simply put it is, don't come here.

Is that what you consider centring the pendulum, Mr. Minister, when you say to business groups or to people all over Saskatchewan or to people who are considering moving operations to Saskatchewan, don't move here. Is that the message that you're trying to convey to the people of Saskatchewan and to the business community of Saskatchewan?

Is that the kind of thing that we should be saying, or is that the kind of things as a government, that we should be doing to try and bring back some kind of opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan? I don't think so, Mr. Minister. And I don't think the people of the business communities support you one little bit on this, no matter what kind of side deals you and your government might be trying to cut these days on this issue.

And we understand that's exactly what you're trying to do, Mr. Minister -- trying to cut some deals with some side deals to get some support for these kinds of things from big business interests. And I hope, I hope, Mr. Minister, that you're unsuccessful in that, because even though you may be trying to do that, I'm hopeful that small business in this province will realize exactly what you're trying to do.

And it's my understanding that they're meeting, I believe it is this afternoon, to discuss what their plans are for the future with respect to this legislation. And it's hoped, it's hoped that they will pour some sand into their backbone with regard to this piece of legislation and will not support you on this kinds of stuff because it isn't the kind of thing that business needs. It isn't the kind of thing that the province of Saskatchewan needs at this time, Mr. Minister. We need encouragement for business, and we need encouragement for people to provide jobs in this province, not this kind of discouragement which is what you're doing with this piece of legislation, Mr. Minister.

And your government has continued upon this vein right from the day you took office. Retroactive legislation; retroactive deals; retroactive anything. You've set out commissions, all of those kinds of things. You ignore anything that you feel isn't in your best interests politically. And everyone understands that, Mr. Minister.

And everyone is beginning to . . . and that's why they're beginning all over this province, to call you a misfit minister, Mr. Minister. That's why people in this province don't believe that you are in a position, or

should be in a position to govern any longer, Mr. Minister, or in a position to be able to bring forward legislation like this, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I wonder, I wonder why you feel that this type of legislation is necessary at this time. Is it because you think that, is it because you think that you've got a couple more years and maybe it'll all blow over before you have to call an election? Or what is exactly the reason why you feel that this kind of legislation is so important at this time?

Are you getting that kind of pressure from labour unions? Is that what it is? Is that the kind of thing that's happening to this government right now, where you're getting that kind of pressure that labour unions are putting on you in order to get you to swing this far to the left with regard to labour legislation? Is that what's happened, or could you elaborate on that for us?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- The member from Maple Creek had already asked the same question without the wide-sweeping personal attacks. Let me repeat for the member from Kindersley what I said to the member from Maple Creek. What I said to the member from Maple Creek, I repeated some comments made by the Canadian Centre for Labour Market Productivity, an institution set up by the former Conservative administration in Ottawa, which has done some excellent work in trying to induce a more cooperative relationship between labour and management.

It is apparent from casually observing the opposition that they have, like elephants . . . they learn nothing and forget nothing. In government they sought to divide and conquer. If you've changed your view of the world and you now want to induce cooperation between various groups, it certainly is not apparent from the comments which you just made.

The Centre for Labour Market Productivity points out the future belongs to technologically advanced societies. That requires the active participation, consent, and support of labour. It's not something you can ram down their throats. And that requires them to share more than just the risk; they've also got to share some of the benefits. And I offered that explanation to the member from Maple Creek.

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been listening with some interest to the comments from both sides of the House today, and I think the minister should understand that this issue is raising a lot of very honest concern amongst people out there.

There are people that have invested their entire life savings in ventures that today employ significant numbers of people. There are people that have gone out and convinced other people to trust them in ventures. There are people that have staked their future with this province, Mr. Minister. And for them not to react in a very strong way to some of the proposals that you bring forward, I think would be unrealistic by you.

And one of the big criticisms that I have heard and have been expressed in this House to you, Mr. Minister, time after time is that I don't understand for a minute why you didn't pick that up and understand that as you supposedly went around this province over a period of 16 to 18 months putting this piece of legislation together. If you didn't understand that then, no wonder that you react the way you do in this Assembly when someone expresses those concerns on their behalf on the floor of this House.

(1630)

I would wager with you, Mr. Minister, that if your government had had the courage to hold public hearings on this issue -- as is done in many parts of the world by the way and I don't think you can deny that -- if you had had the courage to hold public hearings by a committee of this House or with yourself, where people had the freedom to come forward and lay their personal concern or their group concern before you in full view, you would have heard those things.

And you would have heard the passion and you would have heard the arguments being put forward, Mr. Minister, against parts of this legislation, and you would not then have been able to stand in this House and deny that that exists. Because that's what you do. And when you're called on it, you then brand those individuals as someone who is not compassionate, someone who does not care, someone who promotes disharmony in our province. And that simply isn't true. That simply is not true, sir.

Now you would hear those arguments from both sides of the equation. I grant you that. You would find people in the trade union movement who hold very deep, valid concerns. And I'm wondering, given what we are witnessing in this province today, which is divisive, Mr. Minister -- whether you like to say it isn't, it is divisive. As my colleague from Kindersley says, there are groups meeting this very hour who represent thousands of people who are fundamentally opposed to parts of your legislation -- fundamentally opposed.

And they are going to have to seek recourse in every way possible to get the message through to you because, obviously, during this long supposed consultation that you took, you didn't hear it. So I suspect you're going to see full-page ads in the newspapers. You're going to see all sorts of things taking place because they don't buy into this process that you've gone through.

You tell me, Mr. Minister, what would be wrong, for instance, in holding a public process, a public process that would allow people to express that, as they do in many other jurisdictions in the world. And people could get these things off their chest and you could actually sit and listen to it. You'd have to sit and listen to it because that's your job, that's what you're paid to do. Not run some kind of a sham operation around this province where you say you consulted, and at the end of the day everybody's still up in arms.

I've said to you in this House, given the provisions that you proposed for the board, where you propose an individual in our society to sit at the head of that board for a period of five years, appointed by Executive Council, why that individual shouldn't have to appear, for instance, before a committee of this House, to express their views in full public on how they would interpret parts of your legislation.

That's done, Mr. Minister, in a lot of places in the world. And people have to put on record their views on how they view labour relations, labour issues, and the necessary interaction between management and labour.

And once they state that in a public way, Mr. Minister, it would be far, far more difficult for them to change their views down the road when an issue comes up that must be dealt with. That is done in many places in the world, and legislators take that responsibility to adjudicate that process.

Then I think people would feel more comfortable. Because you keep telling us, pass the legislation and then we'll do our sector by sector things in labour standards; we'll do our trade-offs that are necessary for the economy of Saskatchewan.

We have challenged you day after day in this House to show us where there's one new job, where there's one person coming off the 82,000 people on the welfare rolls, where there's one of those 12,000 jobs that have disappeared in this province since you took power are going to come back.

And you know what? You can't do it. I know you can't do it. Now don't you think the alternative, Mr. Minister, of some type of public process where people can express themselves about those things would be preferable to you coming in here and ultimately using your majority to push through a piece of legislation, which I say to you, sir, will accomplish none of those goals?

It may accomplish some peace for you, in the chair that you sit in, with some of the people that you probably don't want to have to face on a daily basis, but that isn't the objective of this House. It never has been, never should be, and I hope never will be. The chair means you take the heat. And there are a lot of issues around this province that will never be easy to solve.

I would like you to explain to me why the route you've taken is preferable to some type of a public process where Saskatchewan citizens would express themselves no matter where they fit in the spectrum on this issue. And why that would be negative, why that wouldn't work, and why at the end of the day that process would not give you a better piece of legislation than what you propose to this House, which simply is a matter of time before your majority rams it through this House. Can you explain that to me, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Yes, I can with very considerable ease. There's nothing wrong with public hearings; we've already done it. It was done with the Ish committee.

What did it produce? Very little in the way of agreement. It produced a litany of everybody's conflicts, of everybody's past wounds, and it produced very little in the way of agreement. We've already had public hearings and the result was the Ish committee.

I truly believe there's little to be gained by further public hearings except continued expressions of disagreement. The time comes in office when you've got to make a decision. We're there and we're making a decision. We think we have chosen a piece of legislation which will further the process of encouraging industrial peace and discourage strikes and lockouts. And I can get into what portions of this I think will do that, if you want.

I'm a little surprised that the member did not hear my earlier answer to the member from Maple Creek. I admitted there were concerns about this Bill. The fact that we had these very extensive tours was an admission of that, that this is a Bill which creates enormous controversy. And I would be the first to admit that some of those concerns continue to exist.

I also believe -- and I think this is the point at which we will disagree -- I also believe that once they see the Bill in operation much of that concern will disappear, as it has in other provinces.

And just while we're on the subject of stormy seas, let's compare this province to other provinces. The controversy was considerably greater in other provinces which went through this. It was much worse in Ontario and it was much worse in B.C. than it is here. We have indeed . . . I think we have two things: I think this government enjoys . . . the problem here is that not that they fear what they understand, because they don't really understand it.

And in a way, there's no way they could until they see it in operation. There's no way you can read this Bill and really know with certainty how this thing's going to operate. So in a sense, what they fear is the unknown. They fear how it might operate. And they place their worse interpretations on all of this and that's not a dishonest process.

To some extent, one of the reasons why this has been a much calmer, a much more civilized discussion in Saskatchewan than it was elsewhere is because there's a greater degree of confidence in this government than there was in those other governments. I'm not being critical of the governments in Victoria or Queen's Park, but there has been a greater degree of confidence in this government and that is why this has been a much more civilized discussion. And it has been.

Compare this province to any other and there's no comparison. There's been a much more civilized

discussion. I'm not saying there's no concerns; I admit there is. But I truly believe that once they see this in operation much of that concern will dissipate as it did in Ontario and B.C.

I know that because I've been there. I've actually spent time unlike, I think, many members of this Assembly, I've actually invested some of my time talking to business people, talking to trade unionists, talking to government officials in Ontario and in B.C. And I have a bit of a feel for where they're at at this point in time. They're nowhere near as concerned as they were two years ago and they would admit their worst fears have not been realized.

And indeed I can share with you -- if the member is interested, all you've got to do is ask for it and I'll share it with you -- an interesting piece in the Windsor newspaper, I think it's called the Windsor Star, maybe the Windsor Sun. It is two pieces in the same paper. And this is not an NDP rag, just in case there's any doubt about it -- just in case there's any doubt in the member opposite's mind.

It was an interview with Bob Mackenzie, who is Minister of Labour. He was saying this legislation's working well. Strikes are down and there's more industrial peace. That's on page 1. On page 5 or 6 or something like that, it's an editorial which said: Part of the reason why there's industrial peace is because there's a recession in Ontario. But there appears to be something to what the minister says. The legislation appears to be working reasonably well.

And then they went on to say: It's high time the business community got on to the real problems facing Ontario and stopped wasting their time on an issue which doesn't appear to be bearing much fruit.

Now that's just an interesting bit of anecdotal evidence, if you like. But in Ontario, it's not working too badly. And I could cite similar evidence from B.C.

So I admit there are concerns. I believe those concerns will dissipate when the legislation's in effect. And I believe the reason why this has been a much more civilized discussion in Saskatchewan than it is elsewhere is because there's a greater degree of confidence in that this business . . . that this government is a government of common sense.

Mr. Swenson: -- Mr. Minister, you did not answer any of the questions I asked. I mean it is simply unfair for you to throw Ish out as any kind of a public consultative process. I didn't ever pick up my newspaper and say, come on down and meet with Dan Ish; most of that was done by invitation. Most of that was done by invitation. You appointed the chairman. You appointed the chairman, Mr. Minister.

You could have . . . I mean given the way that process went, you saw nothing but failure coming down the road very early on, because you had interim reports which you were privy to and which I was privy to which said that that was going nowhere. There was stalemate from the word go. And that should have told

you, Mr. Minister, it was time to pick up another format.

You say that B.C. and Ontario are all harmony. Well the last poll I saw coming out of Ontario was the Grits were at 55, the Tories at 29, and Bob Rae's getting close to single digits. Single digits, okay? Single digits. So that tells me that come the next election, this wonderful panacea of labour harmony that he's brought into Ontario is going to go down the tube. And I suggest to you, some of his legislation will go shortly after he goes.

And Harcourt's not doing a whole lot better in B.C., according to the last numbers I saw. People don't put them in those positions and get ready to throw them out if they love what they've been doing, Mr. Minister. So you protesteth too much, I think. It simply isn't true.

And yes, we do talk to people in other provinces. As a matter of fact, Mr. Minister, the people that are opposing this legislation in this province -- and I suggest the legal minds working on it are probably as good as what you have in your department -- rely very heavily on other jurisdictions to bring forward their arguments because they've seen what happens.

And you can go around this province and your Premier can go around all he wants and try and cut these little side deals and say to certain sectors, to certain-size employers: don't worry, we'll look after it in the regulations; don't worry, there's exemptions that can be done. And we're going to ask you about those exemptions, Mr. Minister, when we get back into labour standards.

We're going to talk about your sectoral stuff and we're going expect you to put in front of this legislature the type of deals that you're proposing by your sector committees. Because I understand that there's been some things proposed to people out there in order to get them onside. And we're going to expect you to tell this House what those are. Because before that Bill passes, all of us in this province, whether we're big or whether we're small, should understand exactly what kind of deals you're cutting, and they are being cut.

Your Minister of Economic Development, your seat mate, very free about that; that process is ongoing. Well that is very unsettling, Mr. Minister, to a lot of people out there. A lot of people don't like that process. What they would prefer, Mr. Minister, is some type of a public process, public process.

(1645)

If you have so much faith in this piece of legislation, so much faith, then why don't we have a special session of this House this fall and devote two or three weeks to nothing else but the two labour Bills. Let's put a public process in place between now and then; and then as legislators, let's come in here and devote ourselves entirely -- if you have so much confidence, so much confidence, Mr. Minister. There's lots of people out there, Mr. Deputy Premier, that would wholeheartedly

agree with me -- wholeheartedly agree with me.

Unlike you, I don't have any agendas any more, Mr. Deputy Premier, no agendas at all -- simply to come in here and represent people, simply come in here and represent people. And I don't think the taxpayers of this province would mind paying your or my salary one iota if we came in here and dealt with this thing in a proper way, instead of simply using your majority to ram through a piece of legislation that a lot of people may fundamentally disagree with.

Because your minister still hasn't answered any of those questions. He hasn't said where he's going to find one new job, where he's going to take one person off of welfare, or where he's going to have one new company come in here and employ somebody -- not one. In all this research and time that he's been putting into this you'd think he could stand in this House and rattle them off one by one by one. Because this is going to mean employment in this sector and this is going to be employment in that sector. And there's going to be harmony over here.

It simply isn't there, Mr. Minister. It simply isn't there because you haven't provided it. And you should be able to do that. If you've done your homework, if you're so sure of yourself that this harmony is going to exist, then you should be able to bring to this House any side deals that you've cut with various sectors. You should be able to bring to this House some indication to the taxpayers of this province that this isn't going to cost them more money; that this isn't going to drive people out. And at the end of the day, before your term as government is up, you're going to be able to go to the people and say, we were right on the money. Because your process has been closed; it has been driven from inside; it has had a political agenda; and it hasn't had the courage to put itself out in front of the people.

Mr. Minister, tell me again: have you got some proof? Have you got some jobs? Have you got some reduction in the welfare numbers? Tell me why you would be afraid to let this piece of legislation be talked about freely in this province for the next five or six months before this House has to pass its final approval on it. Can you tell me that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- The member from Thunder Creek made one very interesting comment. He said: I suspect that the lawyers who are acting on behalf of the people are making all sorts of interprovincial comparisons, and on that basis are attacking it. In fact they're not. There've been very, very few arguments made against this legislation on interprovincial comparisons.

Why? Because most of this Bill is already in effect. Almost all of this Bill is already in effect in other provinces with governments as diverse as Manitoba, Ontario, and B.C., and it's working well. In fact there've been very few interprovincial comparisons.

Who is making the interprovincial comparisons? It's us. We're making the interprovincial comparison

arguments; the opponents can't be seen on the area at all. They've never mentioned them. Why? Because it's working well elsewhere.

The member opposite made a comment about, it doesn't create one new job. I truly wished I could get members of the opposition to be here and listen to the questions which others answered because I've already answered this question in a number of other times, and I will do it again.

The primary function of this legislation is not job creation. I share my desk with someone who does that very ably. The primary function of this job is to recognize the basic civil liberties, the basic rights of workers to belong to a union and to organize. This legislation recognizes that basic human right. It is about compassion, it is about justice. There are other areas of this government which are about job creation. That's not primarily the role of this Act, is to create jobs.

Having said that, we believe the long-run effect of this legislation is that it will assist in the economic restructuring, and it will play an important role in job creation.

The member opposite talked about process and our closed meetings. I said to the member from Maple Creek some days ago when we began this that virtually none of these meetings were organized by me or my officials. Almost all the 200 meetings I attended were organized by somebody else.

The chamber of commerce organized most of them and they were open to everybody. The municipalities organized some, the trade unions organized some. We didn't organize virtually any of those meetings. They were organized by somebody else and they were open.

So the process was open, the discussion was open. I invite members to deal with the facts.

Mr. Swenson: -- Mr. Minister, if that were the case, and I've heard the argument made that . . . And I understand -- and you correct me if I'm wrong -- the way you've done for instance with section 33(4) will put this province in a jurisdictional position that is not the same anywhere else in Canada. In other words, we're way out in front of the pack here, okay?

And then you try and tell us, oh no that only involves, oh 5 or 6 per cent of the employees. That only deals with some of the big boys in the province and they have other ways of working these out. We're going to look after that after the fact because we'll set up some type of a sectoral side deal that'll look after that 5 or 6 per cent.

If what you say is true, if all of the folks that invited you and they were so happy, why do they put out a press release? This is the public sector side, okay? The SUMAs, the SSTAs, the SARMs, the SAHOs that say we've got major trouble with you -- you did not listen. We have major, major problems because the services

that we deliver to taxpayers are going to be impaired -- impaired. That we can't deliver our mandate to the people who elect us. Because they have been offloaded on by your government to the point where they have to go back to their taxpayer and they're saying what you're going to prohibit them from doing is deliver the type of government which they are mandated to deliver under balanced budget legislation in almost all cases, because you are putting impediments in their road.

These are the very people that invited you out -- yes, those 200 times. And you went there and you spoke, but you didn't listen. And they're part of the coalition. And they're saying it is wrong. It is wrong that you are going to increase the cost of doing business for each and every one of them, that you are going to make them lock in labour legislation which they don't want to live with.

Now how can you stand here and tell me that you listened? How can you do that? Is that compassion? Is that harmony? Is that compassion for the people who elect those folks and pay the bills? No. It's not. It's not.

That's why, Mr. Minister, it isn't just the private sector; it's not the so-called ruthless entrepreneur who's on the loose these days with NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and everything else. It's our public sector, our biggest employer groups in the province, Mr. Minister. They're still saying to you, you didn't listen. You're putting impediments in the way of the average taxpayer being able to keep his costs down. That's what they're saying, Mr. Minister.

And until you give us those answers, until you're prepared to show us that you have listened to them, then it is going to be a long time, Mr. Minister, before this Bill goes through this House.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Well it must be easy for members opposite to judge the meetings, never having attended any of them. It must be very easy for you to judge them.

An Hon. Member: -- I don't remember being invited.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Well then you should speak to the local chamber of commerce, since they organized them. I'll tell you, by golly, in my riding if the chamber of commerce and trade union people organized a meeting and didn't invite me, I think I'd be awfully concerned.

I think you should give that some careful thought, Mr. Member. If they're organizing meetings in your riding -- they're not inviting you -- that's a cause for concern. We didn't send . . . I see, I see I've hit a sensitive spot. I may have hit a bit of a nerve there, may just have hit a bit of a nerve.

To be fair to the member from Thunder Creek, there are no major urban communities in his riding. I think Central Butte is about the largest and it's still . . . maybe a board of trade but it would be a relatively smaller one. So I will honestly admit to the member

that there may be no chamber of commerce in his riding; that's quite possible, but your colleagues are not in the same position.

I want to point out to members opposite in a serious way, leaving the jocular nature of this aside, the kibitzing aside, I want to put out in a serious way; we didn't organize the meetings, they were organized for us. It was . . . and by and large they were pretty civilized discussions. And perhaps one of the reasons why the opposition weren't invited was because they did want to keep them informational and non-political.

I don't know, have you got some more questions or do you want to . . . Okay, a few more questions then before 5.

Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Minister, on that same note. I heard from the real estate board in Swift Current, I heard from the chamber of commerce, and they said to me that you didn't know anything; you didn't answer any questions; you didn't provide any information. You were completely at a . . . almost as if you were walking into an empty space. That's what they told me. It was the most disgusting piece of seeking information that they had ever seen in their life. That is what they told me, Mr. Minister.

That came from members of the chamber, that came from the real estate board, and those individuals are held in high esteem by those communities. And they told me that. They said, that is the worst demonstration of any minister in the history of speaking to a Rotary club or the chamber of commerce that they had ever seen in their life. Because you didn't provide any information, you didn't know anything, you shrugged your shoulders and didn't provide anything. That's what they told me. And you want to have that kind of a hearing process in the province of Saskatchewan?

My question to you is this: Mr. Tom Kehoe is a well-respected individual in the province of Saskatchewan, and in the south-west he is extremely well respected. He moved Spar Group into Saskatchewan because of obsessive, overbearing labour legislation in British Columbia. Did you take the time to go ask Tom Kehoe what he's going to do with Spar Group when you get done with this labour legislation, The Labour Standards Act? Did you go ask him? You should, because the people in that community will be out of jobs, 250-plus will be out of work, and you have 82,000 people on the welfare roll.

That's what we're talking about, Mr. Minister, and you haven't done anything to create a climate of investment and responsible investment for people to provide employment in this province. And that's what we're talking about, Mr. Minister, over and over again. And we believe you need to respond to that because this is regressive in every way, shape, and form. That is the real issue, Mr. Minister, and put it on the line.

The amount of time that you took to put that deal

together in Saskatoon, which was announced yesterday, cost this province \$400,000 a job -- \$400,000 a job, Mr. Minister -- and that is very, very high. If you want to deal with the 5,000 more jobs that you want to create, that's \$2 billion. This province can't afford it.

Why don't you allow people in this province, on their own merit, to invest their own dollars, and then show the people of Canada that we can make an investment, we can provide labour opportunities that have stability.

I'm just going to put another point to you, Mr. Minister, and then I'm going to sit down, because I think you need to respond to it. And that is this, the individual who runs McDonald's in Swift Current told me this. He said, you know what I'm going to do with this new labour stuff that's coming up? I'm going to ask the member . . . This individual is my constituent. He came to me on Saturday and he said, I'm going to allow the member from Swift Current to come to my office and I'll put a list of my 50 employees there and he can decide which 25 are going to be fired. Let him decide.

And I would say to you, sir, that you should go to that same McDonald's and do that for him. Because he is going to have to terminate individuals who are kids looking for work to pay their school, to work the summer holidays. And you're going to do that to those kids? That's why there's unrest in this province, Mr. Minister. And that's why we're concerned about it.

And you need to respond to that in a very clear and legitimate way and you haven't done it.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I will respond very briefly. The only name you actually gave me was Tom Kehoe. As a matter of interest, I have met with Tom Kehoe. As a matter of interest, he applauds some of what we're doing and has some concerns about some of what we're doing.

There is no suggestion he's going anywhere. And for you to suggest he is, I think does this distinguished business person a real disservice. My conversation with Tom Kehoe was private. Let me just say it was quite an enlightened one.

If you want to give me the names of the others, I'd be happy to go meet with them as well.

I think, Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02 p.m.