

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of gravely concerned citizens over the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The names on the petition are from Regina, from small towns in southern Saskatchewan adjacent to Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The petition is signed by people from numerous communities throughout southern Saskatchewan and the city of Regina.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre closure. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Goodwater, Weyburn, and Estevan. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to also present petitions of names from Saskatchewan residents regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Regina.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of people concerned about the future of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this are from pretty well across rural Saskatchewan in the south, and also the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed it are from Regina, from McLean, from White City, Kayville, and Humboldt. Thank you.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And the people who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from my constituency, from the towns of Pense and Rouleau.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on day 31 to present petitions along with people all throughout Saskatchewan and my colleagues in regards to saving the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are mainly from Preeceville, Gainsborough, Carnduff area, but also a few of the constituencies right here in Regina — Albert South and Elphinstone constituencies, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and all members of the House some folks who are sitting behind the bar here today. They are people who have met with us just recently regarding changes to the government's SAIL (Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living) home oxygen program.

Mr. Speaker, the three folks sitting behind the bar are Mrs. Doreen Klassen of Regina here, and her attendants, Jeffrey Beer and Merle Natyshak from Medigas here in Regina as well. And I'd ask all members to please welcome them here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Speaker, today is Yom Hashoah or Holocaust Remembrance Day, the day set aside to formally remember the 6 million Jews murdered during the darkest days of an often black century; 6 million murdered along with Slavs, gypsies, homosexuals, mentally handicapped people, and others, quote, who were undesirable, all in the name of racial purification.

Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago during a visit to Poland, I visited the Warsaw Ghetto Monument and the sites of the death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek. I can tell you that the atmosphere of evil was still then overpowering.

And today, 50 years later, there have been torrents of words attempting to explain why such an unspeakable crime by supposedly enlightened people could be allowed to happen in a supposedly enlightened age, and that torrent of words still is inadequate to describe the depraved power of that event. As one writer among many says, and I quote:

The holocaust was so beyond the pale of previous human experience that it eludes language. In mounting the Holocaust, man turned his ferocious power on himself. In so doing, he deformed the image of man himself, turned morality into its opposite, and humanity into an effigy of death.

Mr. Speaker, we turn our faces from the lessons of the Holocaust because the knowledge is too terrible. But one lesson of many that we, as legislators, must remember is that the event we recognize with horror today was an act of government policy carried out by government officials. That too we must never forget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add my voice to those taking time today to remember those victims who lost their lives in the Nazi death camps during the Second World War.

Millions were sent to their deaths at the hands of the worst mass murderers in the history of the world. Fifty years have passed, but the atrocities that took place in Europe so many years ago carry the same resonance with us today.

That's how it must be, Mr. Speaker. As has been stated by men greater than myself: if we don't remember history, we are destined to repeat it. We must never forget or downplay the horror of those death camps. We must strive to remind our

children and grandchildren of the evil that men can do. Only then can we be assured that these horrific acts will not be repeated.

We must also remember the survivors of death camps. Those few fortunate souls who walked away from the camps have done their part in reminding the world of what took place there. Their stories are unimaginable, yet they are all too real. We must never stop listening to their stories, unpleasant as they are.

Mr. Speaker, never have the words "lest we forget" been more important as they are today as we mark Holocaust Remembrance Day. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Roy C Hill Award

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate a grade 8 industrial arts teacher at Victoria School in the city of Saskatoon — Victoria School is located in my constituency — a Mr. Slawko Kindrachuk.

Mr. Kindrachuk was the recent recipient of the Roy C Hill Provincial Award presented to him at the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation annual spring council last week in Regina.

The prestigious Roy C Hill Award is presented annually to recognize innovations in teaching by any certified teacher or a group of teachers working in elementary or secondary schools across Canada.

Mr. Kindrachuk, recognizing the need to modernize traditional industrial arts courses, initiated and started a project called "Exploring Technology." The goal of his project was to provide an industrial arts course that met both female and male students' needs and interests, took into account social and parental expectations, reflected the experience and research of industrial arts teachers, and emphasized technology literacy as a common essential learning.

The result of Mr. Kindrachuk's innovations has been the development of a course that moves students' learning experience from an industrial model to a contemporary focus on technology, thereby better preparing our students for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mr. Slawko Kindrachuk on his award and for his commitment to the young people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Passing of John Melvin Hill

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House today to express my condolences on the passing of a great local sports hero. Sadly, last week, John Melvin Hill of the Fort Qu'Appelle area passed away. In the 1930s, Mr. Hill captured the imagination and hearts of hockey fans across Canada when he played for the Boston Bruins. He gained the nickname Mel "Sudden Death" Hill after scoring three winning overtime goals in the 1939 play-off series against the Rangers. The Bruins

went on to capture the cup. Mel's feat is now hockey legend. He also played with the Toronto Maple Leafs when they won the Stanley Cup in 1945.

After leaving hockey, Mel returned to his roots in Saskatchewan. He operated Mel Hill Beverages in Regina until 1970, when he and his wife Jean retired on a farm near Fort Qu'Appelle. He is survived by his son, Roy, and his daughters, Peggy, Arleen, and Sandy, and their families.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in expressing my condolences to Mr. Hill's family and friends.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Low Rental Housing Tenants Meet

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday evening in Saskatoon I had the pleasure of attending a meeting of Gladmer Park and Edmund heights tenants, about 150 all together. These tenants are worried and concerned that their low income housing complex has been sold to private interests and the certainty that their rents are surely to rise.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the federal government no longer has a social housing program and I wish to commend these families and hope things work out for them. The meeting was well organized. There was a real sense of community, a real sense of empowerment and resolve and determination for these tenants to influence the decisions and take some control over their lives here, in this area.

We all know the importance of quality and affordable housing to the health and well-being of her citizens. Mr. Speaker, I wish the residents well, and I thank them for inviting me to this important meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lake Lenore Lancers Win Basketball Championship

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Lake Lenore Lancers who won their fourth consecutive provincial 1A girls basketball championship, and in the process made history. No other team in the 1A division has achieved so many gold medal wins in a row. Following the final game, the Lancers were also named the recipient of the Canadian Olympic Association's banner for fair play and sportsmanship. Congratulations to the coaches, Wade and Val Weseen, and congratulations to the Lake Lenore Lancers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Soil Conservation Week Activities

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I recognize the outstanding and commendable work done by a constituent of mine, Mr. Doug McKell. Doug is the executive manager of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association which is headquartered in Indian Head.

This is National Soil Conservation Week in Canada from April 15 to 21. During this week, various organizations will be conducting activities to increase the awareness of necessary soil conservation efforts in Saskatchewan.

In 1995, the United Nations issued a report citing soil erosion as the number one threat to our planet. Despite this warning, the report received little or no immediate coverage. Doug and many other members of the SSCA (Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association) are focusing their attention on agriculture diversification in Saskatchewan which is essentially dependent on the quality and productivity of our soil resources.

Government agrologists, industry, and producer organizations like the SSCA, work together in developing agriculture systems that ensures the protection of our soil. A tremendous amount of innovative information and technology has been introduced to assist farmers and others in developing new practices. These successful efforts continue to be developed by Saskatchewan people for the benefit of all of us.

No other province can top Saskatchewan in the area of soil conservation. Let's take time to encourage and support these efforts so this valuable Saskatchewan resource is protected for our future generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Government Amalgamation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Municipal Government made some amazingly contradictory statements to the media. She said some municipalities are telling her to tie revenue sharing into municipal agreements. Mr. Speaker, she is obviously not listening. Not one municipality in this province that I have talked to wants revenue sharing tied into amalgamation and shared services.

Will the minister now admit she has made a mistake by trying to force shared services and then force amalgamation on municipalities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I wasn't sure whether that was a member's statement or a question. But I did . . . we've been having some discussions, interesting discussions, with municipal organizations, Mr. Speaker, about the fate of The Service Districts Act and how municipalities can cooperate further than they are now to provide services to the people that they're elected to serve in a more efficient manner.

I was commenting on some suggestions that were made to me by municipal organizations, that it was possible that cooperation, intermunicipal cooperative agreements, could be tied to revenue sharing. I think that the municipal organizations have had some very innovative ideas and we'll continue discussing them in the next round table, which is scheduled for April 26.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, my purpose was to be provocative and I see that I have succeeded.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, it seems completely backwards that we would go to round-table discussions after legislation has already been brought to the Table.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities have repeated over the last number of months that the service district legislation is not needed. Then the minister stated yesterday that municipal officials don't believe her.

Well, Madam Minister, why would they? The minister does not consult with them, then brings forward a very flawed piece of legislation and wonders why there's so much distrust. The government's record on health care — now education — and broken promises, are good examples why no one in rural Saskatchewan believes a word they say.

Will the minister now admit that this is a poor piece of legislation that wasn't wanted and was not needed and should not have been brought forward in the first place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, we have had a number of discussions with the municipal organizations about the status and intent of The Service Districts Act, which we introduced into this House earlier in the session. We're very good listeners, Mr. Speaker, and their arguments with respect to this proposed legislation are beginning to have some resonance with me.

And I think this shows that we are flexible. We're prepared to listen. We're prepared to work with them to reach cooperatives ends. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that we have a very good, open, honest, and frank relationship with the municipalities and their organizations. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I would say that if the minister is listening, she's just not hearing. Mr. Speaker, with The Service Districts Act the municipalities are getting mixed messages.

At SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) the Premier stated, one way or another amalgamation will happen. The Finance minister stated at the budget briefing to the media that cooperation, coordination, and amalgamation were a must.

Now the municipal minister stated that amalgamation is not the be-all and end-all. Then she says municipal officials do not believe her. Who should they believe? They are getting mixed messages. She also stated, if municipalities are not going to use this Act, why would you do it? I guess she's saying, why bring it forward?

Mr. Speaker, it seems the minister does not believe in her own

legislation. Yesterday she also stated this legislation cannot be withdrawn without the consent of caucus. Will she now take this very poorly designed piece of legislation to her caucus and have it withdrawn once and for all?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the service districts legislation has already been introduced into this House and had first reading. And you can hardly tell that that happened because the members opposite haven't read it. They think that it's about amalgamation. The Service Districts Act is not about amalgamation. So I suggest before the members opposite make comments upon the virtue or lack thereof of a piece of legislation, that they should read it and understand it, Mr. Speaker.

And I also think that in our work with the municipal organizations, we have heard again and again that any moves to coordinate, cooperate, amalgamate, whatever, those decisions should be made at the local level. We agree, but we can't wait for years and years and years for this voluntary action to take place.

So we are opening up the debate; we are bringing it out of the closet, and we are talking openly about how these ends can be achieved. And they want to get to the same place, Mr. Speaker, as we do. And we're cooperating with the organizations, unlike the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Local Government Funding

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An editorial appeared in the April 8 edition of *The Northeast Booster* which members of the NDP (New Democratic Party) government may wish to look at. I'd like to provide copies for them. This article states:

Like the premier and his colleagues in Cabinet, (the member for Carrot River Valley) . . . vigorously denies that the provincial government is downloading on to municipalities and school boards.

He says, instead, that the provincial New Democrats are "challenging" the lower levels of government to come up with changes that will make things happen more economically.

Mr. Speaker, this government continually whines and cries the blues when met with federal transfer payment reductions. Will the member from Carrot River Valley explain why, when this government turns around and shafts towns, villages, and RMs (rural municipalities) in rural Saskatchewan, it's not downloading, it's challenging?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, all members on this side of the House have the utmost of respect for those people who are elected at the local level to form the governments that serve

the people that they're closest to. And we believe that they have the intelligence to make the decisions that will affect them. We know that they appreciate that there's fiscal pressure, starting in Ottawa with the federal Liberals and their downloading onto the provincial government.

They know that Saskatchewan is a community, Mr. Speaker — Saskatchewan is a community. We need a collective response to the kind of assault that we're having from the federal government. And those levels of government are working together with us to meet those challenges. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, this editorial goes on to indicate that no politicians are more masterful at the art of the double-speak than Saskatchewan's New Democrats. And here we have a perfect example. The fact is the net difference in transfers over the next three years is \$106 million — only 1.5 per cent of the provincial government's annual revenues.

Mr. Speaker, this editorial goes on to state that the member from Carrot River Valley in the NDP government can, and I quote:

... take their challenge and shove it.

Because what they are doing is throwing the onus for providing services deserved by taxpayers on to levels of government much less capable of raising funds than the province.

Will the member explain when this government will begin concentrating on ways to make Saskatchewan's economy grow and prosper instead of blaming Ottawa for everything from education and health cuts to April flooding, dandelions, and mosquitoes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to answer the member's question.

The members opposite refuse to focus on the one central argument we're making about the federal government, and it is this: there is a budget called the federal budget '96-97 in which three-quarters of all the cuts made are to health, education, and social programs. What we say is these are the wrong priorities. These are not the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan.

We have also noted that the members opposite are willing to support, either silently or vocally, a budget in which the majority of cuts are to health, education, and social programs. And we won't let the people of this province forget that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Home Oxygen Program

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my

questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Health.

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, a couple of weeks ago we asked you about your department's plans to change the home oxygen system offered by the SAIL program. At the time, you said no one who needs oxygen is going to be deprived of oxygen and let there be no doubt about that.

However, what is in doubt is the quality of life that the recipients will have under your system. The restrictions that have been put on the oxygen supply of low income recipients forces them to do little but to stay at home quietly in a chair.

Mr. Minister, your changes to the SAIL program will restrict recipients to 10 non-refillable tanks a month — tanks that are much heavier and more awkward than the small canisters currently used by most oxygen users.

Mr. Minister, why are you making this change which will restrict oxygen users to be confined to their homes most of the time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I see today we have, along with Mrs. Klassen who I welcome to the Chamber, some representatives of the oxygen industry. And I want to say that there are some things that the oxygen industry can do. And I want to say to the industry, I expect them to do them. Namely, to come up with smaller aluminium cylinders; to come up with oxygen concentrators to make the oxygen go further; and, Mr. Speaker, to come up with dual packages for people so that they can have oxygen concentrators in the home and mobility packages to be mobile.

And, Mr. Speaker, the choice to be made here is between the biggest profit to be made off oxygen and coming up with packages that meet the needs of the people. And I expect the industry, by June 1, to come up with proposals — not to maximize profit, but to help the people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I believe that there is a solution, and that solution is to use that which is already available, and that's the system that Mrs. Klassen is currently using. I don't think she agrees with your rosy assessment of the system that you are proposing.

The Speaker: — Order, order. I just want to remind the member that it is not appropriate to involve guests in the Assembly in the debate, and I'll just ask him to ... I'll ask all members to phrase their questions and answers with respect to that tradition.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Here are some of the thoughts on your new oxygen system:

It's heartbreaking because I'm a person who must get out. While I was in hospital they gave me a cylinder and I could

hardly manage it. When I first came home from the hospital I was depressed as I thought I was going to be a shut-in.

Mr. Minister, those who can afford additional tanks will be able to remain mobile, while people like Mrs. Klassen and others will remain confined to their own homes. Mr. Minister, why are you creating a two-tiered system for oxygen users?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I've discussed this matter on a few occasions with the Saskatchewan Lung Association, and the Saskatchewan Lung Association takes a very big interest in this matter. And what they say is that:

The SAIL Working Group has attempted to develop practical guidelines (and we have to) . . . find a fine balance between ensuring that home oxygen is accessible to every patient who needs it, while at the same time eliminating the excessive costs incurred by inappropriate program usage.

The program is an expensive one.

This is what the lung association says.

And they go on to say, Mr. Speaker, they're quoted in the *Leader-Post* February 29:

There is new technology in Alberta that uses light aluminium cylinders and a device called an oxygen conserver that SAIL should look into acquiring, he said.

And what I am saying to the House, Mr. Speaker, and to the third party, is that there are options available that do not involve simply charging the highest amount of money, but provide mobility to people. And I expect the industry to find ways — and there are ways — where mobility will be provided to Saskatchewan people at a lower cost to them, at a lower cost to the taxpayer, and allowing everyone to have the access to oxygen that they need. But this should not be a question of profit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right-to-work Legislation

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Labour. Mr. Minister, the SaskTel strike appears to be turning into a long drawn out affair. No doubt this is going to place a lot of financial hardship on many of the striking workers and there may be some who are going to start thinking about laying down their picket signs and coming back to work. However, that would be extremely difficult to do because of the threat of retaliation from the unions under our present system.

Mr. Minister, later today I will be moving a motion in support of right-to-work legislation in order to protect any workers who wish to cross the picket lines and return to work. Will you support this motion, Mr. Minister. Do you support the right to

work?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I will tell the member flat out that this government does not believe in an attack on the principle of free collective bargaining. Free collective bargaining is comprised of three characteristics: the right to associate, the right to negotiate, and the right to withdraw one's labour — the only thing that a person has to sell.

Those three mean free collective bargaining. What the third party is suggesting, the Conservative caucus party is suggesting, is the destruction of free collective bargaining by the removal of a third important component, namely the right to withdraw one's labour, and to introduce Alabama North right-to-work legislation, so-called.

Mr. Speaker, that puts us back to the 19th century and earlier. That's maybe for the Conservative Party; it's not for us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Government Amalgamation

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Government. Mr. Speaker, I guess the municipalities don't like the carrot that the minister was offering and now she's pulling out the stick. Yesterday she said sharing may be tied to intermunicipal agreements, and if municipalities don't want to participate in the NDP's forced amalgamation scheme, they will lose their revenue-sharing grants, according to the minister.

Madam Minister, could you outline how your little blackmail scheme is going to work exactly; exactly what hoops will municipalities have to jump through; and if they don't jump through those hoops, what will the financial penalties be?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has been reading the newspaper or having somebody read it to him. And he has taken some words out of context, in that I didn't say that the government intended to do that; I said that it had been suggested to me by some municipal organizations that this might be one way to encourage cooperation.

So I think it was thinking out-loud, it was putting out ideas, options, and I think we need to continue to bring this subject out of the closet and continue talking about it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Madam Minister, thank you for the recognition that we were thinking and that it was out-loud; it's better than some of the statements that were picked up about cutting back the funding yesterday, which was short of at least one of those two characteristics.

We have received numerous letters from towns and villages and RM councils who are opposed to your service districts. And you mentioned a little earlier on that you'd been talking to them; I guess you haven't been talking to very many of them because they see it as nothing more than a plan to force amalgamation against their will.

And as one of the letters we received said, municipalities are responsible enough to initiate change when it is required. They do not need it imposed on them by a bloated senior government.

Another RM writes that your proposed amalgamation scheme is going to turn into another health reform fiasco.

And people should recognize, and this one I quote, “the dictatorial, uncaring, selfish, heartless, and idiotic actions of this regime”.

Madam Minister, will you listen to what local governments are telling you? Be flexible like you said you were going to be; withdraw your service district Act; and withdraw your threat of financial penalties; and leave local governments alone to decide the best way to deliver services to their own local ratepayers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, we have been not talking to local governments; we have been listening. Mr. Speaker, to local governments . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and there is a difference, yes. And they're anxious for us to work with them to develop some options for how they can deliver services more efficiently.

And again, again there's a reference to The Service Districts Act as an Act which will lead to amalgamation. Mr. Speaker, for anybody who has paid any attention to the wording of that legislation, it has nothing to do with governance, nothing to do with amalgamation.

So please, Mr. Speaker, could I ask the opposition, before they raise concerns in this House about the nature of legislation, could I ask that first they read it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Executive Salaries

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the people of this province were shocked to learn that SaskTel managers are receiving \$50 for each hour of overtime performed during the current labour dispute.

Taxpayers were also shocked to learn recently that Don Ching was hired as the Crown's new president at an annual salary of \$167,000 in addition to untold bonuses. And it doesn't end there. Garry Simons, a former president of the New Democratic Party, when hired by this government as a vice-president of SaskTel, was taking home an annual salary of \$105,000. Today his wage is \$117,000 or 12 per cent more than he was earning three years ago.

Will the minister in charge of SaskTel explain why a 12 per cent raise is warranted for her NDP friend at SaskTel, while offering the average working person much less?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say

that one credential that the member opposite forgot to mention was that Garry Simons has 18 years of service in the company of SaskTel as an employee previously, so he is more than eminently qualified to hold that position.

I also want to address the question about the overtime. When a repair and install person goes out on overtime — this is after-hour pay that we're talking about — the regular rate of pay for that person after the eight hours is \$44 an hour, Mr. Speaker. And so there is not this huge differential for management compensation during the current labour impasse that they try to make out.

But, Mr. Speaker, the main thing, the important thing, is that we are wanting collective bargaining to work. We have, as the Premier outlined in his answer earlier, respect for those three pillars that affect working people in organized labour. Their solution is replacement workers — replacement workers, back-to-work legislation. Mr. Speaker, that's not what this government is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I did forget to mention something in my earlier question about Mr. Simons. And one of the things is with respect to his initial benefit package which included a leased vehicle, a club membership, and SaskTel discounts. Can the minister confirm if these aspects of Mr. Simons's initial contract are still in place?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the only comment I will make with respect to executive remuneration in SaskTel or any Crown or any company in this province is that it is probably considerably less than executive compensation in the private sector or in the Crown sector elsewhere in Canada. The remuneration to our executives in the Crowns by comparison, Mr. Speaker, is extremely modest.

And I think rather than criticizing the levels, that the members opposite should do some of those industry comparisons; should make some of those comparisons within and without the province with executives of different companies. And I think they will realize that their concerns are without merit, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another question for the minister. And I would just caution her that I do have constituents who are concerned about their telephone exchange and when they may expect it to be digitalized. So I would ask that she take care in her answer and take that into consideration. There are people who are waiting for that very thing.

Mr. Speaker, you know there's another government document that notes that Garry Simons served as a director of LCL (Leicester Communications Limited) cable. This subsidiary to SaskTel paid the Crown company \$50,000 for providing Mr. Simons to its board as a director.

Will the minister explain how much of this money ended up in the hands of Garry Simons, and how many free trips and other perks he received for serving as a director on the board of LCL cable?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I think we've reached a new low in this House when we criticize individuals. I think what's important to remember is that the LCL venture was initially a fairly modest investment on the part of the people of Saskatchewan; that it returned last year, according to the financial statements just tabled, a \$114 million capital gain to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Of course there were some costs incurred in making investments and in dedicating personnel to do the work which resulted in that gain which accrued to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I think that we should be grateful to those people who made those efforts, who brought that profit into the province, rather than critical, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Property Tax Assessment

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this House later today, the government is expected to introduce legislation which will revamp the property tax assessment system. These changes will affect almost every property owner in Saskatchewan. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Government admitted that some people living in older neighbourhoods maybe in for a bit of a surprise in expecting a reduction and that they may not receive any reduction at all.

Mr. Speaker, my concern is for the seniors living on fixed incomes. Many of them live in these older neighbourhoods, and at the end of the month their money has already been used to pay for their mortgage, food, heat, and power. There is nothing left over.

Will the Minister of Municipal Government tell the seniors of this province what she will do to help ease the burden on their already strained finances when she forces through this property tax reassessment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, first of all the legislation that we will introduce is enabling legislation. It's the local municipalities that set their mill rate.

Again . . . If the members opposite would care to hear the answer. Again it's a question of not reading the whole article in the newspaper, Mr. Speaker. What we were commenting on was that age alone was not the single factor, that the assessment system is moving towards market value. And in an older neighbourhood where there have been renovations and where perhaps there is trendy shops and so on, that the age of the district or the house alone will not be the only factor because those things accrue to market value.

What's important, Mr. Speaker, to those senior citizens living in older homes in the rural and urban Saskatchewan is the fear that they have, is what the federal Liberal government is going to do to their pensions. That is how the ability to pay their taxes is going to be tied to their future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 70 — An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'll ask members on both sides of the House to come to order, please. And we're not looking for advice. Order.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 71 — An Act to amend The Rural Municipality Act, 1989 and to make a consequential amendment to The Municipal Board Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Rural Municipality Act, 1989 and to make a consequential amendment to The Municipal Board Act be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 72 — An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Northern Municipalities Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 73 — An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 1983

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Planning and Development Act, 1983 be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I recognize the . . .

why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Draude: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a friend of mine from the Yellowquill Reserve, Mr. Robert Whitehead. He's here with some other residents of Yellowquill for an audience with FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). Please welcome my guest.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Cannington on his feet?

Mr. D'Autremont: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the House, I would like to introduce a past member of this Assembly, Ms. Anita Bergman, sitting up in the east gallery. I would like to welcome her here today and hope she enjoys the procedures. And I would like everyone to welcome her here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Julé: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the member to my left beat me to it that time, but none the less we are very pleased to have with us a former member of this Assembly, Anita Bergman. And I too would like to welcome her along with my caucus . . . or our caucus, and ask the Assembly to do the same.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I table the answer to no. 68, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 68 is tabled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I table the answer to no. 69, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 69 is tabled.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I table the answer to no. 70, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 70 is tabled.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Effects of Provincial Budget on Rural Saskatchewan

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do intend to introduce a motion for debate and it is my pleasure to initiate this this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan is taking it on the chin once again. This urban-dominated government could care less about what happens to rural Saskatchewan.

As the details of this budget have come to light, it all becomes readily apparent.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan was built by hundreds of thousands of people who flocked to our rural communities and wanted to build better lives for themselves. Since that time, pressures from economic and technological change have altered rural Saskatchewan.

Most people in rural Saskatchewan can accept those changes. They can accept the changes that altered their communities because we all know that change is inevitable. Change might be inevitable, but the very destruction of these communities does not have to be inevitable.

While economic and technological factors are forcing people in rural areas to change, this government is making cuts to rural programs that are denying rural people a fighting chance. Rural people are adapting to new times and new challenges. With all things, however, this takes time.

In recent years we've seen rural communities make some significant moves forward. We've seen an incredible adaptation to new crops and new production techniques as well as new livestock enterprises. Diversification by creating small processing plants is also taking place. These new crops and livestock and new techniques have led to the development and manufacture of new products right here in rural Saskatchewan. This is the spirit of conquering challenges that has always been the proud mark of rural Saskatchewan and is an inseparable part of the fabric of this province. Even though rural people demonstrate a great capacity for change, they need time to properly adapt. The few years that they get here and there provide them with a fighting chance to adapt and survive and build a prosperous, thriving community that is the backbone of this province.

Mr. Speaker, when this government hacks services in rural Saskatchewan or alters programs so that they disadvantage rural Saskatchewan, they are robbing these people of their opportunity to adapt. We all know what happens when towns lose their essential services. If a government hacks at a program, then a family or two moves out. A few customers are lost from the local store, the local café, and it goes on and on, and pretty soon someone else closes up shop, and so the process

continues.

When towns lose an essential service or a government facility, often the whole town becomes a less attractive place to live. The value of the property drops and people quit building or renovating homes because they know they will be hard-pressed to recover their investment at a later point in time.

The whole community is slowly eaten up by what is in effect a cancer. Just when things start turning around with higher grain prices, however, rural people have come to expect government to return again and take something else.

Government cuts even more services because there are fewer people left in the area. The highways fall into a greater state of disrepair, and it gets even more difficult for the locals to keep their rink open or keep their community service clubs. The brief remission gives way to the relapse and the cancer continues to eat at the very fabric of our towns and communities.

When this happens, Mr. Speaker, it eats away at the very fabric of our province and it destroys the very thing that makes Saskatchewan the best place in the world to live.

Mr. Speaker, in the last budget we saw the government put rural Saskatchewan back into relapse. And slowly but surely cuts are once again eating away at the infrastructure that helps bind and sustain our many small communities.

In the last budget, the members opposite continued the course. A few years ago, this government introduced health reforms or wellness. It's the oldest political trick in the book. If you want to cut a program you rename it or remodel it. You take and try and pass it off to the public as an improvement.

That's what this government did with health care. It cut health care funding, closing some 52 rural hospitals, and promised us all that we would have a better health care program because we would be worrying about staying well rather than treating illness — a new slogan, but the same old thing that this government continues to dish out to rural people who don't think they count at the ballot box. Cuts and more cuts by another name will always just be that, Mr. Speaker; they're cuts.

In the last couple of weeks we've seen just how the budget decisions of the wellness reform are affecting our province. Recently in this House we had the Minister of Finance quoting from a letter from the Moose Jaw-Thunder Creek Health District. While the Minister was glad to quote from the health district then because she found a line in their letter that fit into her blame the feds theme, I wonder whether she would be willing to listen to their plight today.

That district, thanks to this government's health reform, is going to be getting 3.3 per cent less in funding from the provincial government. Depending on what happens, a board that avoided getting into a deficit may in fact be forced into one or into another round of scaling back services.

All this, Mr. Speaker, is the result of a nice, nifty part of this government's wellness reforms. The part I refer to is the needs-based funding. It's sort of a system of funding districts

that allows the governments to gut rural Saskatchewan without having to be accountable for it; they don't even have to make a decision, they just set up a funding formula that will stay in place for who knows how many years. And this system will continue to cut funding to most rural areas and reduce services.

Mr. Speaker, basically what this needs-based funding system means is that if rural people need health care, then it's going to need to go to the city. They'll need to go to the city to get it because this government doesn't need rural votes to get elected. The only part of this needs-based system that the government hasn't figured out yet is that rural people don't need these New Democrats either.

Mr. Speaker, while health care will continue to be gutted, thanks to this budget, there are a couple of other disturbing problems. This government introduced an Alabama-style highways snow removal system. It shut down 26 rural depots in the Department of Highways, taking away service in much of rural Saskatchewan. Last winter was a terribly icy cold winter, and I'm sure the members opposite would agree with that.

Without these highways depots, people are just going to have to wait until the sun comes out — from that new day dawning, I should say — and that's the promised snow removal system, of course. It is just like Alabama.

The poor service that will result from this aside, I think the members opposite haven't given some of their decisions much consideration. In my own constituency two of these depots will be closed — one at Mossbank and another at Hodgeville. The highways across much of Thunder Creek are in a sorry state.

Just west of Moose Jaw, for example, we now have a little orange sign — some people are starting to dub them the New Democratic election road signs — but it is a marker on the Trans-Canada and it marks just another one of those terrible spots in the highway. And it is a shame that this is on the Trans-Canada Highway, which stretches, you know, across our country. And just imagine other highways in my constituency, like No. 363 and No. 19, which are even worse.

While the government cuts the depot without care or concern for the safety of rural people, it also is not considering what effect it will have on some of the employees. Some employees, for example, don't live in town where the depot was closed; some live further away in neighbouring towns.

(1430)

This government closes a depot in Hodgeville, then expects these staff members to work out of one in Gravelbourg, which is 40 kilometres away. Unfortunately for the workers living out at Hodgeville, the commute isn't 40 kilometres; it can be like 70 or 80 if you live in Morse, or Herbert. Given that this government is abandoning towns, like some of the banks are, while other essential services are scaled back, it gets a lot more difficult for a person to sell their house and relocate.

Mr. Speaker, this government also cut the Energy Conservation and Development Authority. Speaking about the town of Hodgeville did remind me of that cut. The Authority did good

work in helping that town and many others save money on the power bills for their local rinks. With fewer government services and declining populations and activity in some towns, a service like that was incredibly useful in preserving local rinks, which are often the heart and soul of many small towns in long winters like this past one.

Mr. Speaker, we've also seen the perilous situation this government is putting people in rural Saskatchewan in with its announced cuts to municipal revenue-sharing grants. We all know that amalgamation will not affect the larger centres. They already have a large enough economy of scale that they don't have to worry. Cutting their grants will certainly cause them hardship, but it will not force them to amalgamate further.

But that is what this government has planned for rural Saskatchewan. If you can't force them to amalgamate by legislation, then just cut their grants and it'll do the same job. That is what the government has done. Tell the towns, RMs and villages that you will cut their grants by 25 per cent next year and force them to amalgamate on their own.

Those strong-arm tactics not being enough however, this government took it another step yesterday by suggesting that they might cut grants back to municipalities who don't start on this slippery slope towards amalgamation. If they don't cooperate with the members opposite, then they'll be forced to cooperate.

Mr. Speaker, an administrator in my constituency had put it this way to me. He had said we already operate an efficient show. If I have to cut something else, what is it going to be — my arm? Many municipalities already have the administrator doing quite a few jobs and are often sharing these officials with other RMs.

The members opposite will say that the member from Thunder Creek wants smaller government, but he complains every time there are cuts. That, Mr. Speaker, is once again a case of the members opposite twisting the facts to suit their own ends.

Yes, we want a government that is more efficient, but at the same time we want one that remains fair to all people in this province. The rural people should not be targeted for the bulk of cuts by budget decisions or by funding formulas like the health care needs-based funding that continually attacked the things that they value.

Smaller centres should not have jobs yanked out of their community and centralized for no reason, as was the case with the community living division that moved from Moose Jaw to Regina.

People deserve fairness and this government's attacks on GRIP (gross revenue insurance program), on highway spending, on rural hospitals, on Crop Insurance and municipal grants, as well as other programs, are unfair attacks on rural Saskatchewan. While this government attacks rural Saskatchewan, it thinks nothing of continuing to reward its own friends with patronage.

If the members opposite would travel to Gravelbourg they would notice that there's a beautiful court-house building that is a local heritage site. The Saskatchewan Property Management

Corporation wants to board up the windows on that facility. While the government boards up one heritage site in rural Saskatchewan, it thinks nothing of pumping in \$37 million to turn one in Regina into a casino. I would ask the members opposite if they consider that to be fair.

Mr. Speaker, we want more efficient government. And I say to the members opposite, if they want to cut to get us there, then just assure the people of this province that the cuts you've made are fair to everyone. Make sure that the cuts to essential services and front-line workers are the very last resort. These should only come after this government has gotten rid of all of its waste and patronage. Get rid of the fancy Manhattan hotel stays and cushy jobs and raises for NDP patronage appointees, before you cut any more services in rural Saskatchewan.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, this government should take some pointers from its own employees. Before you let managers decide to lay off people and cut things, this government should be taking a more positive course of action at reducing government spending. Instead of making the public servants victims, make them partners in reducing costs.

Do like municipalities like Ajax, Ontario have done; get your employees to deliver the same level of services at less cost, by having them share in the savings that are produced. Give them an incentive and the authority to cut costs. Don't just behave like Conrad Black, laying people off even though the bottom line for the province continues to improve. There are better ways of saving money and reducing the tax burden.

And just in closing, Mr. Speaker, I would at this point in time like to introduce this motion, seconded by the member from Wood River:

That this Assembly condemn the government concerning the budget decisions made in the 1996-97 provincial budget as it will seriously devastate the essential services in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to add my voice to this debate because I think it is a matter that goes directly to the heart of what is wrong with the government we have in place in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have always rallied around one another during difficult times. Citizens helping citizens; everyone sharing the burden equally — at least that's how it used to be.

But, Mr. Speaker, we've now had to endure two successive governments that have sought to divide our province, pitting urban versus rural. During the 1980s, the Devine government thought it politically expedient to curry the favour of rural Saskatchewan, because that's where the Tories' political strength then lie. In doing so they turned their backs on the urban centres.

Now we see the exact opposite occurring. The NDP is seeking to completely divorce itself from rural Saskatchewan because their political strength lies in the cities. The provincial budget is only one of a number of policy initiatives this government has

brought in that has shown the complete urban mind-set cabinet ministers opposite are in, Mr. Speaker. Each and every day services are being ripped out of rural areas and sent to the cities.

We've seen the loss of Crop Insurance offices. Rural services centres have been shuttered. SaskPower offices are disappearing in rural areas. And of course, who can ever forget how this government continues to chip away at what's left of health care services in rural Saskatchewan. It goes on and on and on.

By rural Saskatchewan I don't mean just our small towns and villages and the farms that surround them. I'm talking about our smaller cities as well, such as Melville. Since 1991, Melville has seen government service after government service, job after job after job, transferred out of the city. Four or five jobs here and there might not seem like a lot to the cabinet, these people from the larger cities, but in a community like Melville every job that is ripped away has devastating impact.

But the government opposite simply refuses to see this. They are so convinced that rural Saskatchewan is a dead issue, they are determined to make it a self-fulfilling prophecy. Through its actions, this government has put many of our smaller communities on death row. Through their determination not to anger city voters, the hard axe of government cuts has fallen almost completely on rural Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it may be politically expedient for the NDP to act in this brutal manner, but they have to know it's simply not right. It was not right when urban Saskatchewan was unfairly targeted by Grant Devine and it's not right for the current Premier to target rural Saskatchewan.

This government was elected for all the people of Saskatchewan, not simply for those who chose to support the NDP. As I stated previously in this House, I find it absolutely astounding that those few rural members that the NDP has, let this go on without a word of protest.

I recently received a copy of a letter that Mayor Paul Elder of Swift Current sent to the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to table that.

Swift Current took a big, big hit in the budget, losing about 90 jobs due to these cuts. As Mayor Elder points out, a cut like this in a city the size of Swift Current is the equivalent to cutting 1,000 jobs in Regina. Of course a move such as that would be unacceptable to this government, yet they think nothing of wreaking that kind of havoc on smaller centres.

We on this side of the House all feel for the devastation the people of Swift Current must be feeling, but do we hear a peep of protest from the NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Swift Current? Of course not, Mr. Speaker. But we can't unfairly blame that member because we know back-benchers on that side of the House are not listened to. They are not heard. I don't think many members of the cabinet even have much say in the decisions that are being made. But I would hate to think the rural members on that side of the House aren't even trying to fight for their communities.

We hear the constant chirping from the member from Lloydminster in this House, yet has she tried to draw the concerns of rural areas to the Premier's attention? I doubt it. I doubt it. Member after member on that side of the House appear to be muzzled. I can't believe they are willing to put up with such treatment — utter contempt. I can't believe that they are willing to abandon the voters that sent them to this place.

Yes, the government can get re-elected on its strength in the cities, at least for now, but don't the rural-based NDP members care about how the policies of their government are hurting their own communities? Are they willing to sit there in the back benches and not do anything? I can't believe they are.

Mr. Speaker, what this government seems to forget is that our larger urban centres are fed economically by a vibrant rural economy. When rural Saskatchewan prospers, urban Saskatchewan benefits. Unfortunately this does not work in reverse. By cutting rural Saskatchewan adrift, this government is harming the entire province. Their politically motivated policies that curry favour with city voters are harming the future of rural Saskatchewan and therefore harming the cities as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, they have their blinders on. I don't know if they can see the effects of their wrongdoings and their wrong-headed policies, or they simply don't care.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House do care. We care about both rural and urban residents. The time for playing these two sides against one another passed a long time ago. It didn't work for Grant Devine and it won't work for this government. The people of Saskatchewan, both urban and rural, aren't motivated by political expediency like this government is. They know everyone has to cooperate in this province in order that we all succeed. This government should be ashamed of itself for its blatant disregard for half this province.

They may have forgotten the voters outside the cities, but they can rest assured the voters won't forget their action. And after the next election, the rural members on that side of the House can return to their communities full time to see the devastation their policies created. And they can always remember their silence helped contribute to that devastation. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to enter into this debate and to speak against this motion — as a rural member.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Battleford-Cut Knife represent fairly well the blend of the Saskatchewan population: farm families, young people, seniors, working men and women, business people, and first nations. I represent people who are enterprising, creative and resilient.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people are determined people. They are determined to maintain their farms, their businesses, and their communities. I can walk through our local cemetery and on the headstones read the names of the families that founded our local village, and their descendants still farm there: the Forbes's, the Coopers, the Murrells. Our forefathers withstood

prairie fires, the Dirty Thirties, and hauled their wheat to the millers by wagon.

This was determination, and this determination will enable this generation to adapt and cope with circumstances we can't control. The closure of elevators has encouraged community leaders to plan and prepare for the 21st century. Inland terminals are being built by both larger grain companies and by community people.

(1445)

And what about the federal Liberals abolishing the Crow? Is this not an attack on rural services? What about the deregulation of the railways by the federal government? Does this not affect rural areas? What about the funding the federal government has removed from farm programs? Did Ottawa listen to the rural people? No.

But our government responded with a balanced budget, and our government is working with farmers to find solutions to deal with the federal dismantling of rural areas — alternatives such as farmer-owned grain cars, short line railways — and our government is consulting and listening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — And our farmers are preparing, preparing for seeding and planning, planning to grow crops that will become a finished product here in Saskatchewan. Trucking companies are preparing to haul wheat, canola, and barley to local plants for processing. And grain cleaning plants — many farmer owned — are opening their doors as a service to their neighbours.

When the federal government cut our local post offices, did we stop writing letters and mailing parcels? No. We had to adjust.

Now let's for a moment reflect on what the member opposite is doing. He is condemning this government's budget decisions concerning essential services to rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan told us their top priority was jobs and opportunities, and the 1996 budget responds to that message.

Partnership For Growth is for Saskatchewan people, all of our people, building on our strengths in exports and world trade. The Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership will enable business, industry, and government, in cooperation, to find and develop new markets and trade opportunities for Saskatchewan products.

Mr. Speaker, the theme for the movie *Field of Dreams* was, if you build it, they will come. And that is a vision that I see for Saskatchewan. It will not matter whether it is a business or a product that was created by our REDAs (regional economic development authority) in our local communities or if it was developed by a major company. The market-place will support it if there is a need for it. And this vision will promote and expand our export and trade business and create jobs for Saskatchewan people.

For example, Saskatchewan people and now North America have access to the E-ZEE WRAP dispenser, a product, Mr. Speaker, that was developed by a farmer at Perdue and now sold in major stores. A vision, a need — a farmer who saw an opportunity and built on it.

That's what this budget does. It allows businesses to grow. We are using targeted tax incentives and cutting red tape. And we are continuing support for regional economic development authorities and northern Saskatchewan community-based regional economic development organizations.

Our opportunities for growth are there and this government is doing what it should do, cultivating a positive business environment which will allow all partners to build on their economic strengths.

This budget supports another major strength of Saskatchewan — agriculture. It invests up to 238 million in agriculture to diversify and strengthen this vital part of our economy. It provides a 125 million to upgrade and maintain our highways so farmers can get their products to market.

Let's be more positive in our outlook and look at the good things that are happening in rural Saskatchewan. In early December over 2,500 people attended the first ever elk breeders sale in Lloydminster — 120 elk were sold via video totalling sales of almost 1.5 million. An 11-year-old bull elk sold for \$130,000 to a Kansas buyer.

This is a reality about vision — people planning for their future and investing in rural Saskatchewan. Agriculture biotechnology is experiencing rapid growth and we will all benefit through it.

We have seen our services change, but we must cooperate and work with the people of this province to redesign and streamline programs and delivery. Years ago we could not have a heart transplant nor a hip replacement. And yet we, the people of Saskatchewan, both rural and urban residents, have access to this now. Our local health districts are building strong, community-based services with new services — physiotherapy, cataract removals in Battleford and a youth counsellor in Unity. These are new initiatives to service rural residents.

Our education system is being affected by depopulation in rural areas, but we must be flexible and work to maintain the core of this system so that our children will be the priority. This budget enables school boards to plan and prepare for change and back-fills the federal cuts 100 per cent.

Social services is being redesigned to benefit all people in need, protecting our children, helping people to move off welfare into work and independence, and ensuring our young people receive training.

We must also look at the reason we are faced with the loss of services and the restructuring and building of our systems. First of all, the debt. Never let us forget the former government's spending spree. Secondly, federal cutbacks because of their debt. And thirdly, our ever-changing world.

Mr. Speaker, are we wearing rose-tinted glasses that we cannot

accept change nor plan for it? The opportunities are here. This budget provides us with a sense of confidence and security and a vision. And this budget is forward-looking. But it is based on the realities of the present and the future and guided by the values of the past — compassion, community, and cooperation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would much prefer to live in rural Saskatchewan where we know and greet our neighbours by name, seldom lock our doors, and where I can look out my window and watch the sun set on a field of golden grain.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members opposite to take a look at the headlines from the *Citizen* of Kipling and the *Davidson Leader*, rural newspapers expounding support for our budget and agriculture.

I and all rural residents who are positive, progressive, and adaptable to change will work to maintain and improve our quality of life with a vision for the future. We will build it so that future generations will come and stay in rural areas, the best place in Saskatchewan to live.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, because I believe in rural Saskatchewan, I would like to move an amendment as follows:

Delete all the words after “Assembly” and substitute the following therewith:

“commend the Government of Saskatchewan for arranging its budget to preserve essential services available to all Saskatchewan residents, including those in rural Saskatchewan.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House and speak in favour of the amendment so eloquently stated by the member from Battleford-Cut Knife. I would like to commend the Minister of Finance and her astuteness in presenting a budget which will help us move into the 21st century, both urban and rural, and with optimism and hope, not the doom and gloom that we hear from our opposite side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, our government has been guided by the enduring values that have stood the test of time — community, cooperation, and compassion — that are so representative of most of the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, rather than slash the educational, health and social programs, as has been done in other jurisdictions — especially by the federal Liberals in emasculating our national health, education, and social assistance programs — this government made every effort to back-fill these areas which the people of Saskatchewan said was the most important in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite the members opposite to join with us in condemning the federal government in their misplaced priorities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — We agree that the national government must balance its budget, but we disagree wholeheartedly in their prioritization; 73 per cent of their downsizing — that’s 73 of the downsizing — occur in health, education, and social services.

Where were those Liberals across from us when this was going on? Where did their cries of protest come? Nowhere could they be heard. Where were their tax reforms? Where were the taxes on the corporations? How about Senate reform? No vision, no vision for the future at all.

Mr. Speaker, our four-year plan in the 1996-97 budget safeguards the health, education, and social services; the cornerstones of our quality of life will be preserved.

I’m not sure where the opposition leader comes from. At one time, he demands that we have less taxes. Then he says he wants more services. Then he wants to protect jobs which there are no need for. Of course, coming from Swift Current, I do not like the idea of all of these jobs being downsized, but it had to be. And so as a result of that, that happened.

Would the opposition have retained those jobs at Agriculture Credit when they are no longer needed? Perhaps they could have looked out of the west window in the afternoon and the east window in the morning.

Mr. Chairman, preparing for the new century means preparing for change. It means adjusting to new fiscal realities and competing in a global market-place with new and changing technologies.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate in Saskatchewan. Our province is in an excellent position to welcome the future and to build a thriving economy for the new century. The economic outlook shows economic growth for the province of 2.5 per cent, a growth driven by exports and investment.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, we’re planning for tomorrow today. And Saskatchewan’s updated economic blueprint, the *Partnership for Growth*, points the way to continued success.

The business community was an important factor in writing this plan. The word partnership appears quite often these days and frankly it only makes common sense to include all the sectors in decision making of this amplitude. Partnership identifies and builds upon our strengths — agriculture and biotechnology, natural resources, information technology, cultural industry, tourism and trade.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take just a few moments to speak about some of the things which this government has done and has planned to do in the next four years.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we did not slaughter the social programs but brought a great deal of financial stability and confidence to the financial interest. Heaven above, even Dale

Botting, who lauded this government's initiatives . . . Mr. Speaker, the gloom and doom from the members opposite is out of sync with reality.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses create the vast number of jobs. A major concern of small business was the amount of government red tape. Our government is committed to reduce the number of regulations which impact on small businesses. We will present a plan which will review all government regulations, thus reducing the regulation burden. We will also educate young people about the option of going into business for themselves and make regional economic development authorities the focal point for developments in our communities.

I'm excited about the entrepreneurial centres being developed across the province with a partnership of the chamber of commerce, educational leaders, business leaders, agricultural entrepreneurs, credit union representatives, and government representatives. And these centres are being organized to encourage and provide young people particularly an opportunity to focus their ambitions on creating new business.

Mr. Speaker, the establishment of the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership corporation will also help increase trade. This is a major source of where Saskatchewan economic growth will take place in the 21st century. Saskatchewan economy relies heavily on exports, as exports account for about 40 per cent of our total income.

Another potential area for growth is the tourism sector. To create growth and increase job prospects through *Partnership for Growth*, we will be developing a provincial tourism strategy. We as a province have so much to offer. The crystal clear water of the northern lakes, the vast expanse of the prairies, and the warm, friendly people of Saskatchewan will attract many visitors to our province.

But as the new tourism executive stated, we are our worst enemy. We do not talk about the space we have. We do not talk about the security we have in Saskatchewan. And it's time we did these things to attract these people to our great province.

Mr. Speaker, there is reason to be optimistic about the job situation across Saskatchewan. A recent survey by Manpower Temporary Services shows that 22 per cent of the local firms surveyed plan on hiring workers this spring. This percentage has increased compared to three months ago and demonstrates the optimism in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong commitment in creating meaningful jobs for Saskatchewan people and providing training for jobs of tomorrow. Our economy is growing; we're creating jobs by diversifying into new products and new technologies.

I feel rather concerned about some of the opposition members who believe that the government does not have any interest in agriculture. I ask them, where were they when their federal cousins did away with the Crow rate? Where were they when the railroads were being deregulated?

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is and remains the mainstay of

Saskatchewan economy and a source of optimism for the future. Mr. Speaker, more than 200 million will be made available over the next four years through agri-food innovation, agriculture development, and agri-food equity funds to encourage research, development, and diversification in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, the role of government in economic development is vital to our survival as a favoured province. This government realizes that it must accept responsibility for things that the market cannot or will not do and is prepared to accept this responsibility. We are prepared to ensure that incentives are in place to encourage investments for the long term.

Mr. Speaker, this government is prepared to assist the people of Saskatchewan to meet the challenges of the changing economy. We will work to ensure that the people have the skills and the infrastructure support necessary to enter the 21st century. I'll be most pleased and proud to vote for the amendment and oppose the motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping to give more time today to some of the newer members that would perhaps like to get into the debate and get their feet wet and learn about some of the debate that could happen here in the legislature. But after hearing a few of the comments from the members from Battleford-Cut Knife, and the member from Swift Current, I felt it was only appropriate that I say a few words.

Because I come from a perspective, Mr. Speaker, as you well know having been here for some five years, and I've seen what in fact the government has done. And so then I think that it's only fitting that some of the new members actually hear where this has gone in the last few years, Mr. Speaker.

And I recall something that the member from Battleford-Cut Knife spoke of just moments ago. And that was the fact that, you know, how they're bringing in change and the change is positive, and in fact so many have opposed change as though that they're for something good and positive and the rest of us aren't.

The fact of the matter is, I think, Mr. Speaker, that people across this province are for change. If it wasn't for the people out in . . . you know, outside of this building making a lot of change, I don't think there would be very much done at all.

But see, what people are opposed is not change, but it's change when in fact it's not done in a positive way. You can say, well change is doing, you know, changing highways from pavement to gravel — that's change. And you wonder why people are opposed. Well because it's not a positive change. That's the whole point. If you would get out of the building sometimes and go out and talk to people and listen to what they're saying, it's not change they're opposed to, it's when change is the buzz word of the day used to have in fact more cuts to their services.

And I listened to the member from Swift Current and he made a few comments, Mr. Speaker, about I think it was institutions and policies, but mainly institutions having stand the test of

time. And I felt that was rather interesting, Mr. Speaker. Because when we talk about the test of time, what has really become apparent to the people in this province was the way over the 1940s, '50s, '60s, what in fact a lot of the institutions of this province — your schools, and your hospitals, your highway system, your infrastructure of the communities — that's when these things were built up.

And you know a lot of times those were what I think even the elderly people, they would say were tougher times. I don't think we're living the tough times. I think you're perhaps bringing us into some rougher times — certain people, certain sectors, certain areas of the province, you're really pulling down.

But how is it then, Mr. Member from Swift Current, over the . . . if you want to talk about the test of time, it was over those years that we built up these great institutions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well sure it was. And I realize, Mr. Speaker, that he spoke once, but he'd like to heckle from his seat, but the fact of the matter is, he was talking about the test of time. And I'm not going to guess at the age of the member, but I'm sure he's old enough to know full well — full well — that I'm correct.

And that's when these values and institutions and policies were developed. And only in a few short years they're being ripped apart. So I would just ask that member to give a little consideration, when he's getting up to speak in the House, of perhaps coming from a base of knowledge or fact, and he will find that his first term in the House will be much more eventful and fulfilling.

Well let's take a look for a moment at what this government has done. And you know when we look at the . . . we talk about essential services, and the best thing to do is in fact to look where we've come in the last few years. And I'm just going to run through a few of the essential services that the people of this province rely on so heavily, those being . . . Take the first thing, you know, that the government, in 1992, in the winter of 1992, attacked, and that was the member from Rosetown, and was then the Highways minister, I believe, and he was the one that came out with the announcement that they're going to revert hundreds and hundreds and thousands of miles of provincial highway system — paved highway — back to gravel.

Now for the new members who talk about positive change, I would have to ask you — do you think that's positive change? Because the people of the province were completely up in arms, if you will remember, Mr. Speaker. It was in the headlines of the paper. I recall having a group of farmers in the south-west myself that gave the government a rather rough time and actually convinced them to re-look at this.

I'm going to stick with highways just for a moment, because it is such an essential service in the rural areas. And we take a look at already how far apart these rural highway depots were, but yet only a few years ago the new Minister of Highways — I think he's from Carrot River, or whatever the constituency is, Mr. Speaker — his department was going to close down quite a few of the rural highway depots throughout the province. And I recall the RM and the town of Val Marie inviting him down to a meeting at Val Marie at which they also invited myself to have

a bit of a debate, and through embarrassment the minister actually stood up in the hall in Val Marie that night and admitted that a horrible mistake had been made, instructed his deputy to reverse the decision. And I publicly gave him a lot of credit.

But obviously in this upcoming budget, the minister from Carrot River, the Minister of Highways, was overruled by the Premier, the Deputy Premier from Elphinstone, and the Finance minister. Because highways does not mean a lot to the people that do not have to go out through rural Saskatchewan and drive them, if in fact you have to. If the closest you get to rural Saskatchewan is to fly over it in a government jet on the way to Europe or South America, hey, well I can see why in fact they're out of touch.

And I recall, Mr. Speaker, it was a few years ago, whether it was the last budget or the budget before, when in fact there were some news releases that came across my desk where in fact they were talking about some of the new pavement projects, highway projects, in rural Saskatchewan. And they really emphasized this — rural Saskatchewan.

And I don't read all the government news releases, but these I just happened to wonder, well do you suppose that they're in the south-west part of the province. So I went through the news release and what I read was . . . well I don't know if it was . . . to say it was funny or sickening. They referred to rural Saskatchewan as the Ring Road and Circle Drive around the two major centres. That was a rural paving project through the eyes of the Government of Saskatchewan.

And now it sort of brings it all home to the people of Saskatchewan why it is you're cutting so much out of these small towns when in fact if you think rural Saskatchewan is Ring Road or Circle Drive; if that's the parameters, you know, of your life, well I guess that says a lot.

And you know, it really showed itself again the other day, Mr. Speaker. I was up to a meeting in Liberty. And that highway — I guess it's Highway No. 2 that we drove on — it was so filled with holes . . . well it's not that I speed at all, Mr. Speaker, but in fact no one could have. It had all these . . . and I thought they were small New Democrat lawn signs, little orange ones, but in fact they were actually for highways, to warn people of these potholes.

You know, and I'm going to move along because one of the other members — I guess it was from Swift Current — talked about agriculture and all the things they've done for agriculture. Well since I've been a member — and I would like the new member to listen up — since I've been a member I watched the Department of Agriculture get cut almost 50 per cent each and every year. It's right down to bare bones at this point, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is, the members across, I'm sure that they thought the only seed money that was out there that the farmers are talking about, was this \$100 that you could pick up to go and gamble at the casino.

That's not what they meant by seed money, Mr. Member. What

they're talking about is to ensure that they have the finances available to them to plant their crops. And you remember they're doing it without a lot of the programs because it was the government across that cancelled programs using retroactive legislation to in fact cancel the GRIP program, leaving us with just, well a real unworkable crop insurance program. And it became evident by the people not taking the program out, because now of course your government is closing those Crop Insurance offices. That can only send the message I guess that in fact you have no intention of improving the program at all.

So I see, Mr. Speaker, my time is pretty much up, and I've barely got into some of the things I wanted to touch on. And of course the main one would be health care — the devastation they've created in health care. The education cuts, the rural government . . .

(1515)

The Speaker: — Order. The member's time has expired. Debate will continue.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to join in the debate on this issue. It was instructive for me to listen to the members of the opposition in the points they're trying to make. I must say that some were made better than others. Certainly the last speaker rambled on a great deal and did not intersperse his ramblings with very many relevant points. But be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to enter into debate.

As I listened to the speakers, I tried to think of what is it that they're trying to do here with this motion. What is it that they're trying to do here with their remarks? And it's very obvious that the Liberal opposition is trying to establish for themselves a stronger presence in rural Saskatchewan because some of their thunder has been stolen by the Progressive Conservative caucus which is also strongly based in rural Saskatchewan.

So the Liberal members are now thinking about the next provincial election and trying to decide where is it that they can get their support from in the next provincial election. So they have to make some choices about who it is that they're going to speak to, who it is that they're going to try to stand up for, what kinds of issues it is that they're going to be raising here on the floor of the legislature.

And obviously they've taken a position that they need to exert themselves more strongly on behalf of rural Saskatchewan so as to, if you like, steal some of the thunder that has been displayed by the Conservative third party in the Legislative Assembly.

And I must say upon reflection, that they're sounding more and more like Progressive Conservatives every day. The basic tenet of conservatism — the basic tenet of conservatism is that you don't change anything, is that you never change a thing.

And as I listen to the speeches from the Liberal opposition it's clear that they don't want to change anything. What they're saying is that you should kind of ignore what's happening in rural Saskatchewan; you should ignore what's happening in rural Saskatchewan and don't change a thing.

It's ironic that the Progressive Conservatives are now more like Reformers. They seem to be wanting to change everything, with the exception of course the things that are happening in rural Saskatchewan. There they don't want to change a thing, you know.

So it was especially interesting to listen to the Leader of the Opposition who seemed to have some notion and expressing in some way one of the criticisms that was levelled by the previous PC (Progressive Conservative) opposition from '91 to '95, and obviously didn't sort of take hold very well in the election campaign.

But that opposition charged that there was some sort of rural revenge on the part of the NDP government with respect to rural Saskatchewan. And obviously that didn't work very well because now they have five members as opposed to ten members, and their argument really didn't seem to hold a lot of water.

But the Leader of the Opposition picked up on this argument, somehow painting some picture that the NDP government has got it in for rural Saskatchewan and that's what's kind of driving NDP policies provincially in this province, and that those policies are kind of geared to the detriment of rural Saskatchewan.

Well I can tell you, we sit around in our caucus and we don't sit around and talk about how is it that we can get rural Saskatchewan. We don't have much of that kind of talk. No, we do talk about how is it that we can put forward policies and programs that can maintain Saskatchewan in the market-place that we have; that can maintain Saskatchewan in a fast-changing federation of Canadian provinces — how can we maintain that, how can we put forward programs and services for the benefit of Saskatchewan people.

You know it's not as if we can ignore what's happening in rural Saskatchewan; we can't ignore the massive changes that are sweeping across the countryside in Saskatchewan. And we can't, like the opposition want us to do, subject it to some kind of cyrogenic experiment — that is, you know, freeze it and so that you never have to change a thing. We can't do that, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that we have to recognize is that there have been massive changes in Saskatchewan — massive changes. What was it in the early part of the century when Saskatchewan was homesteaded? What was the basic farm size? Didn't they talk about that the . . .

An Hon. Member: — Home quarter.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Was it the home quarter? That the basic farm unit was one quarter section of land, one quarter section. That was when Saskatchewan was initially homesteaded and the basic quarter served us through into the 1920s or so. What is the basic farm size now? What is it now? Is it more like five or six quarters . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Five or six quarters.

So that when you have . . . where in the early part of the century you might have had one family per quarter, now you've got one

family for five or six quarters. So that suggests to me that there has been a massive change in Saskatchewan since Saskatchewan was first populated — massive changes.

Now I think it's evident to everyone why these changes have occurred, why these changes have occurred, and partly the changes have occurred because of technology. I mean you can have far better farm machinery; you've got far better fertilizers; you've got far better everything to be able to produce products on the land. You can now . . . one farmer and one farm family can do this on five or six quarters, where in the past you might have had one family and probably needed help in that family from the kids in the family to be able to do one quarter.

So you've got fewer farmers. You've got far fewer consumers for the small towns in rural Saskatchewan, although we really haven't changed the basic government structure in rural Saskatchewan because we still have the same rural municipal structure in rural Saskatchewan even though we had these massive changes occur in rural Saskatchewan.

We've also had, in addition to technology, we've had far better roads for people in rural Saskatchewan to be able to access regional centres. And I guess if there's anything that you can go back and blame governments for, it's better roads because it's the better roads that have meant the demise of many a small town as individuals, as individuals made the freedom of choice to not shop in their local town, to not shop at the local store but to go to the regional centre instead. Those are decisions by individuals; freedom of choice for individuals.

No, Mr. Speaker, the changes in rural Saskatchewan have been massive, and those are changes that I think will continue and that have nothing to do with the government — nothing to do with the government. The fact that a farmer buys a bigger and bigger tractor so that they can farm bigger and bigger parcels of land, what has that got to do with the provincial government?

No, that's a recognition and a reality of the market-place, and that will continue. And that's not something that you can change, I can change, or that the provincial government is going to change. Let's recognize the reality of what's happening in rural Saskatchewan.

But the Liberals and PCs (Progressive Conservative) say no, we should ignore reality. They support the right of the individual to not shop in their small town, to go to the regional centre because it's more convenient, because it's cheaper. They support that.

They support the right of their friends and businesses to close down the businesses in their small town and to relocate to the regional centres. That's okay.

They support — no, they encourage — they encourage the federal government to make massive changes in terms of the Crow rate that have a massive and devastating effect on rural Saskatchewan. They support that.

But when it comes to the provincial government changing one thing, they say, don't change anything. We want the provincial government to ignore the reality — not everyone else. We want

the provincial government to ignore the reality. Don't change a thing. You know it's one standard for everyone, and then it's a different standard for the provincial government. They say, don't change a thing.

And it's interesting; they point to two relevant examples. One is health care. One is health care. As I read or listen to their comments, they say in health care, don't change a thing. Don't even think about, you know, changing the previous system and the costs that implied for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. They say don't change a thing. Keep the old system that you had: a hospital in every small town, whether you needed a hospital or not. Don't change a thing.

Does anybody remember the *W5* program where they interviewed the people at the hospital — I think it was in Coronach — where they had a beautiful 10-bed hospital and not one patient? Oh no, sorry, they did have a patient. They had a person in there recovering from a hip injury and had been there for I don't know how many months. He thought it was . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time has expired, and debate continues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the decisions made by this government that laid the groundwork for the '96-97 budget document will have a dramatic effect . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The 65 minutes has now expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. With the first 65 minutes under rule 17 having expired, we'll now proceed to 10 minutes for questions and comments by members related to the debate. So questions and comments for 10 minutes.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to put the question to the member from Battleford-Cut Knife. And the question that I would have for that member is, one, why in fact as a rural member and being as far from the larger centres that she is, is she's so supportive of in fact the kind of cutbacks in health and education to the Department of Highways as she is. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that she would have a number of people in her area that in fact need those health services. And could she give a response as to how, as a member of this House and a rural member of this House, she could take such a stand as she has done?

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. I guess my problem is I'm very realistic, and it's very tough, you know, to have to respond to such a negative question when you live in a positive area such I do. We understand that you need people to maintain these services, and that because we do not have 50 people in every location to maintain one patrol . . . so we're trying to make sure that our systems are delivered efficiently and that we can maintain the services that we have, plus that we can expand on the services that we have and make the delivery much more efficient.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member of Thunder Creek because he raised it first. This is the question of highways and spending on highways. And he leaves some kind of an implication that there's less money being spent on highways maintenance than the previous year. Yet I look at the *Estimates* booklet and I see that this year for preservation and maintenance, the expenditure is 108 million as opposed to last year's 107 million. And for construction, this year it's 43 million as opposed to last year's 41 million. Where does he come to this conclusion that somehow less money is being spent on maintenance of Saskatchewan highways?

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can only assume that the member from Elphinstone must be referring to the fact that probably we're going to be seeing some rather larger NDP campaign signs on the sides of the highway warning for the potholes that people daily fall into. So I'm sure there is some contingencies with that respect.

And also there is the very fact that what are we going to with relocating all of these individuals and with the closures of highway depots and certainly a great deal of that will undoubtedly be used up for that very thing.

Mr. Koenker: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask a question of the member for Kelvington-Wadena. And I'd like to ask her to briefly summarize her speech.

Ms. Draude: — I'm here to tell you, in a brief summation, that everything that I saw in the budget, whether it was health care or education or highways or economic development, did nothing for rural Saskatchewan. I can tell you that honestly and truly. And when I'm standing here, I really believe that if you had any part in this budget discussion, that you don't care about rural Saskatchewan either.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Swift Current, and it is just this. Has the member from Swift Current undertaken to make contact with any families that are being affected by government cutbacks and closures in his own centre, and will he undertake to do his best to try and lessen the worries and anxieties that no doubt are amongst their families at this point in time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1530)

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. In response to this part here, our government has a great program for severance. It has relocation. It has a much better program than private industry would ever have with regards to relocation of jobs and so forth.

Of those people who are involved, very few of them will be losing their jobs. They will be either relocated or they will find employment in another department. So I've talked to some of them. Yes, I have. I've talked to some of the Highway

employees and so forth.

I haven't talked to anyone with ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) because that's going to be an ongoing concern for four years. Those 90 jobs that the mayor talks about does not occur in this year, as the hon. member stated. It's not going to be this year. Yes, it's going to be over a period of four years, but there is no reason why Agricultural Credit should continue because there are other organizations which will do a much better job than they do. Thank you.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the member for Kelvington-Wadena, since she was at great pains in her answer to say that everything that's happened in this budget strikes at the heart of rural folk, what she is prepared to do in terms of meeting with her federal counterparts to reverse some of these situations.

And if she is unable to answer that question or unwilling to answer that question, I would like to ask any of the members opposite who represent rural ridings if they have looked at the statistics of population in their RMs in the '30s and compared them with the statistics of populations in the '90s. And if they would tell us to what extent they feel those changes and those declines are related to federal Liberal policies, particularly with respect to the Crow . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now I have to remind the member that in questions in rule 17 debate, the question can't be directed to anyone; it has to be directed to a specific member, and it has to be directed to a member who participated in the 65-minute debate. And to whom are you directing the question?

Ms. Lorje: — Well I was directing my question to the member from Kelvington-Wadena, but I would certainly encourage the member for Wood River to answer the question.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll tell you, I don't need a lot of encouragement, but the fact that the member asked the question to another member knowing full well they just nicely stepped out of the House shows . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Order, order. The hon. member knows that the rules of the House don't allow him to refer to either the presence or the absence of another hon. member. And I'll ask him to put his question directly . . . or his response directly.

Mr. McPherson: — Oh well thank you, Mr. Speaker. But to answer the question . . . Because obviously there we have a New Democrat member who lives in the heart of Saskatoon, doesn't get out in the rural areas very much. And so we're not surprised on this side of the House why in fact she has so little knowledge and understanding of rural Saskatchewan. But you know the concern is that you have so little care of rural Saskatchewan.

But even when we hear the member from Swift Current, in his response to what's going to happen with 90 jobs lost in the community of Swift Current, his response . . . and I'm sure the chamber of commerce in Swift Current and the town of Swift

Current, the city of Swift Current are going to enjoy hearing that, well we have a program for severance.

You're missing the point. You're missing the point. The fact of the matter is, the fact of the matter is, it's not programs for severance. And the motion is dealing with whether we . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time has expired. Further questions or comments?

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard some comments about our concerns about what's happening in rural Saskatchewan. And it just brings to my mind once again something that's unforgivable, that this government refused to allow private enterprise to initiate a project near the city of Melville which would have accommodated upwards of 120 jobs without any taxpayers' funding and without the need for any guarantees of loans.

And I can recall and I want to reiterate the Finance minister of the day who said, when heard about the project, this is a Finance minister's dream. Lots of jobs and no government money invested.

And yet this government allowed Mr. Jack Messer to disallow that particular project to go ahead, which would have reduced the need for landfill sites which are in desperate need throughout rural Saskatchewan. It would have gotten rid of all kinds of garbage . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It was not tires. And if members would pay attention . . . It had nothing to do with tires; it had to do with the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. If the member is making a comment, his time has expired. If he's putting a question, I ask him to put it directly. Is he putting a question?

An Hon. Member: — It was a comment, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Okay. Then we have time for one more question or comment.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's time we did a little reality check here and recognized that there had been massive cuts by the federal government in the areas of health, education, and social services. Everyone knows this. Everyone knows this and knows that the cuts are going to be deeper next year.

We should recognize that the provincial government has back-filled, that is, made up for the loss of money in those areas of health, education, and social services to the benefit not of rural Saskatchewan, not of urban Saskatchewan, but for all of Saskatchewan, and no thanks to the federal government or the Liberal members opposite who continue to stick up for the federal government and their harmful cuts to all Canadians.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Time for questions and comments has expired.

Bill No. 01 — An Act Respecting St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill No. 01, An Act Respecting St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate St. Paul's Hospital (Grey Nuns) of Saskatoon be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Bill No. 02 — An Act Respecting Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill No. 02, An Act Respecting Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan, being An Act to Amend and Consolidate An Act to incorporate the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Saskatchewan be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Bill No. 04 — An Act to Amend An Act incorporating Luther College, Regina

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of a very few remarks, I will move the motion with respect to Bill No. 04, An Act to Amend An Act incorporating Luther College, Regina.

I just wanted to point out to the Assembly that the Bill before us is very non-controversial in the nature of its amendments, which are twofold. The first is to update the language in the legislation to be consistent with and reflect and accommodate a church merger that happened in 1987, which was after the Act had originally been passed.

Secondly, to extend membership to the Luther College Board of Regents to those outside of the Lutheran faith. That will extend arms out to the community that Luther College serves and allows for a wider reflection, the towns of the community.

Those in essence embody the nature of the amendments that are presented.

And I now would move Bill No. 04, An Act to Amend An Act incorporating Luther College, Regina, be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 4 — Saskatchewan Workers' Right to Work

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to have the opportunity to make a motion which I will allude to so that folks will understand what we are attempting to do here. And it will read as follows, and I will move the motion when I complete my remarks:

That this Assembly urge the government to support any initiatives allowing Saskatchewan workers the right to work under any circumstances including crossing picket lines with no penalties; and further, in order to maximize individual freedoms of choice in the pursuit of employment, that the right to work shall not be subject to undue restraint or coercion; that the right to work shall not be infringed upon or restricted by membership in affiliation with financial support or a labour organization or a refusal to join, affiliate with, or financially or otherwise support a labour organization.

That, Mr. Speaker, is very quickly going to explain why we are here. And we want to add to that some comments that will clear up some misconceptions about the concept that we are talking about.

We are pleased today to be able to talk about the rights of Saskatchewan workers and the freedoms that they deserve to have. Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, this government has no idea how to create positive economic climates so that business will move here, or that investors will have confidence to invest in our province.

I would think that given the NDP's job record and job creation record — or should I say the lack of a job creation record — any good ideas that have worked in other areas or in other places in the world would be welcomed here and the government would be happy to consider them and to understand them. You would hardly think that though, when you see the reaction of the Premier this morning in question period.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before any government members get up and start to waving their arms and saying that right-to-work legislations means anti-union legislation, let's stop and examine exactly what right to work really means. Because I really don't think that the members opposite have any understanding or concept of what is happening in the world around them.

Mr. Speaker, it is not an anti-union legislation. Instead, right-to-work laws bring about fair and equitable rights for all workers — union and non-union. The point, Mr. Speaker, is that each and every worker has the right to choose what is best for them — individual rights, individual choices. We even thought that the NDP stood for those kind of things. But obviously not.

Take right now for instance. We have SaskTel, Mr. Speaker, employees picketing in front of this legislature every day. I'm not so sure that it amounts to a real picket any more; it looks more like a picnic out there with hot dogs and coffee and all the rest. But we have workers, we have workers who have been burning the Premier and the Finance minister in effigy in front

of the building, because these workers are on strike.

I'm certain that there are people — single mothers, young families that have mortgages to pay — that are concerned about the SaskTel strike and how they're going to keep themselves afloat. In fact we have talked to some of these people who in fact fit that description exactly, and they do have some of these very real concerns.

(1545)

Or how about these employees that don't believe going on strike is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker, but have no choice in the matter and are forced to strike anyway. What about those folks that don't believe in the system that they have been forced into. If one of these individuals crosses the picket line, as things are now, and works, what happens to them? Let's ask ourselves that very real question. And from past history, let's be honest about the answer. What can the unions do to them?

Well they will be chastised, fined. Their names would be printed in the union newspaper and so on. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have made it easier for unions to force such moves onto workers.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe it's fair that employees, because of the labour laws that this government has put into place, really have no choice in the matter. They cannot cross picket lines even if they want to for fear of retribution from the unions. And it's just not fair. And unfortunately it gets carried too far. It's like the old problem that we had in our high schools at one point, where we had initiations, and each year the people who became the new class to initiate the ones below them thought, I'll get even and we'll do even more. That kind of philosophy and concept creeps into the union retribution process against workers.

Now Dave Somerville, the president of the National Citizens Coalition, said recently, when speaking to the North Saskatoon Business Association, that he was delighted to be in a province that has been the source of so many of Alberta's outstanding entrepreneurs — *Star-Phoenix*, September 9, 1995, in case anybody wants to check it. He said high taxes and a pro-union attitude from governments are hurting Saskatchewan's business prospects and accused the NDP of cutting deals with the unions on its Crown tendering policies and changes to The Labour Standards Act.

I believe Mr. Somerville is on the right track, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is time to be fair to everyone — workers, employers, and taxpayers alike. I believe Mr. Somerville is on the right track, and we need to consider what he has said. That is why it is imperative, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our province should study the benefits of right-to-work legislation and what it has done for many jurisdictions to date.

And the members opposite will want to take particular note of what has happened in the world around us. Mr. Minister, right-to-work legislation or RTW, as we refer to it in short form, would allow individuals the freedom to choose to work at any given time without having to worry about fines or penalties and the like.

Now we have been studying the benefits of such legislation. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government, with their sorry job of job creation and their sorry record, ought to be doing the same thing. Quite frankly we believe that they should be studying it and implementing something along this line.

In the United States, for example, 21 out of 50 states have some form of right-to-work legislation, and it has been to the benefit of all of the people of those areas. Now according to *Site Selection* magazine, 7 out of the top 10 states in which to do business in 1994 had right-to-work legislation laws in place.

Now let's take a look at some straight facts, some inarguable facts that the members opposite can't really take issue with because they are recorded facts. Florida was the first state in the United States to pass some form of right-to-work legislation back in 1944 — way back when. The latest state to enact similar legislation is Idaho, which implemented right-to-work legislation in 1986. Mr. Speaker, the economic impact through investment, growth, job creation, and income growth has been impressive in right-to-work states in comparison to non-right-to-work states.

The appropriate comparisons across city, states, or regions in measuring economic well-being is the purchasing power of after-tax annual income. That is the way you want to measure it. In other words, the relevant question is, is money income adjusted for taxes and the cost of living higher in the non-right-to-work areas than in the right-to-work jurisdictions?

Research conducted by Professor James Bennett suggests that in 1993 after adjusting for the cost of living and the local tax burden, the average after-tax annual income is \$36,540 in right-to-work areas versus only 33,688 in non-right-to-work areas. In other words, a typical urban family in a right-to-work state has close to \$3,000 more in after tax purchasing power than a similar family in a non-right-to-work state.

Now I don't have to tell you what such a boost would mean to Saskatchewan families. It is a much needed boost that they desperately need.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, everyone benefits with right-to-work laws. Businesses create more jobs. More people are employed. Workers have the right to join or not to join an organized union, and the economy and the families of the area benefit and prosper — proven by time, history and facts.

It should be noted that the gap in living standards between the right-to-work areas and the non-right-to-work areas is growing larger by the month, Mr. Speaker. Over the past six years, the gap between the average families after-tax purchasing power has grown by \$1,500 per family. That's about double, Mr. Speaker. In addition, 77 per cent of all new high-paying manufacturing jobs in the U.S. (United States) were created in 21 right-to-work states even though these states have less than 35 per cent of the U.S. population.

Now again, Mr. Speaker, this could be the case for Saskatchewan. Right-to-work states also attract 57 per cent of new and expanded corporate facilities. And as well, they create

over 98,000 more non-agricultural jobs than the non-right-to-work states during the same six-year period. Now there's the fact. There's the proof. I could go on with more statistics, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hard facts regarding the benefits of right-to-work legislation, Mr. Speaker, are there for people to consider and to work on and to understand.

But the bottom line, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that while economic numbers speak for themselves, passing right-to-work legislation allows workers to speak for themselves. It forces unions to be more responsive and responsible to their members as well. Instead of using coercion, union leaders have to persuade and please their members or possibly lose them. And that's fair ball. If you can't win your membership over with common sense and logic, then you really shouldn't be able to force them.

Mr. Speaker, the right to work is in place and has proven very successful in other countries as well. We will cite you some other examples. Between 1984 and 1991, Mr. Deputy Speaker, New Zealand enacted what is called the ECA or the Employment Contracts Act. Among its key features were the reintroduction of the voluntary union membership, turning unions into strictly private associations without legal privileges. Opponents at the time said, as I am sure the members across the way will say, the Bill will cause real wages to fall, creating low-paying jobs.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just the opposite has in fact happened. An econometric analysis found that a good deal of New Zealand's employment growth rate can be attributed to the ECA or, in our terms, what we would call the right-to-work legislation.

Further, in the first four years of the right-to-work laws in New Zealand, 150,000 jobs were created which is the entire workforce of Christchurch or Wellington. Unemployment prior to the right-to-work legislation in New Zealand was 11 per cent — 11 per cent unemployment, Mr. Speaker. And within a few short years, it fell to 6.6 per cent. Further, it should be noted that the wages and the salaries per employee in the business sector rose after the right-to-work legislation.

So when opponents of giving workers freedom of choice stand here today and try to dispute these facts based on ideology and idealism, the facts speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, we have had virtually no job creation in Saskatchewan since 1991, and again the numbers speak for themselves. Further, our families are in desperate need of something that will help them to survive after the members opposite have taken an extra \$5,300 from the average family over the last few years in taxes, fees, and utility rates.

I'm not saying that passing the right-to-work legislation would be the answer to all of the province's problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would certainly be a big step in the right direction though. And that is what we have to do . . . is to start somewhere. Our province's economy desperately needs initiative. Saskatchewan employers and small-business owners need the right-to-work legislation. But most of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our province's workers and their families need the

right-to-work legislation, the right to be able to work, free choice for them to decide on.

That, Mr. Speaker, is why I move the following motion today. And I move:

That this Assembly urge the government to support any initiatives allowing Saskatchewan workers the right to work under any circumstances, including crossing picket lines with no penalties; and further, in order to maximize individual freedom of choice in the pursuit of employment, that the right to work shall not be subject to undue restraint or coercion, and that the right to work shall not be infringed upon or restricted by membership affiliation with financial support of a labour organization or a refusal to join, affiliate with, or financially or otherwise support a labour organization.

It is seconded by the member from Cannington. And I so move. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of this motion. There is a misconception among the members on the government side are fostering that says that this motion and indeed our caucus are anti-union. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not the case, and I'm glad that the members opposite have finally recognized that fact. Our caucus believes firmly in the rights of individuals to work together collectively for their joint interests, and obviously this applies to the rights of workers to engage in collective bargaining.

However the other side of that coin is the individual's right not to participate in that process. Our democratic society is founded on the liberty of individuals, and this is a difficult value to argue against. And yet that is exactly what those opposite in opposition to this motion are and will be doing.

The member from Regina Albert South mentioned Mexico when my colleague was mentioning a number of U.S. states as an example of an area where unionism is not prevalent and points to that third-world country's lack of income for its citizens. And he's correct that that area does not have a high income for its citizens, but it is progressing, and it is growing.

But maybe we need to look at an area that has had virtual unanimous union activity for the entire workforce of the nation, and that is the former Soviet Union. And while they followed that collective bargaining system throughout their 75 years of history, we saw the net result of that philosophy was the ultimate and utter destruction of their entire economy. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that whole area of the world today is in utter chaos because of the philosophies that they followed previously.

What do unions do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They represent the workers that have been joined with that union in wage and benefit negotiations and in grievance procedures. They also become involved in a wide range of other activities, other causes, such as foreign aid, research projects, etc.

And let us not forget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, partisan political

action for a particular political party, a party which does not necessarily represent the interests of all union members, but nevertheless their union dues go to support a particular political party. And the rank-and-file union member does not have the choice, does not have the opportunity to say whether or not they wish their hard-earned money to support any political party. This decision is made by an elite of party bosses without any consideration given to the fact that they are supposed to be representing the people and their membership in a wide range of views, not a single partisan entity.

(1600)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we view with some disgust the old days when preachers unfairly used their moral influence by standing up in their pulpit and telling people how to vote. And I remember that happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I remember that happening in church on a Sunday morning when the minister stood up and said, you will vote this way, and he had no right to do so. It was for the official opposition, Mr. Member, from some place in Regina. And that was wrong. That was absolutely wrong.

It's wrong if an employer stands up and says, you will vote this way if you want to maintain a job, and it's wrong for the union to do exactly the same thing to its members. How is union activity any different from the church pulpit? It goes completely against the grain of our society to have any kind of elite using their position to force — to force political contributions or political views on individuals or workers.

This phenomena doesn't stop at political matters, however. How often have we seen strikes start over labour and management quibbles about a quarter per cent difference in wages? The workers sometimes lose more in the strike than they ever get out of a settlement. But hey!— at least the union representative got to save face.

Another major objection that our caucus has, and I think most decent people have to current union practices, is their militant and inflexible attitudes towards strike situations. Pick up any union pamphlet describing so-called scabs, and this may very well be people that are going back to work in their position that they left to go on strike.

The language used is often so appalling that in any context it would be considered illegal hate literature, language which calls for the physical harm and indeed the destruction of a group of people who only want to work. These attitudes show no sense of humanity or compassion for people who are caught in the middle of a strike situation, a situation once again that they may very well never have agreed with in the first place.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that there are picketers outside who are wondering how they're going to meet their rent payments. They may well be single mothers wondering how they're going to feed their children. But these humane and compassionate situations do not matter to the modern union ideologues. If any of these people dare to go back to work, they are branded for life as scabs.

So in summary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me repeat that we are

not opposing the concept of unions of collective bargaining through this motion. What we are opposing is a mentality and an ideology and a system of propaganda created by the union elite for their own benefit, not for the benefit of workers.

The acceptance of this motion would allow workers the freedom to assess their own best interest, the freedom from having to accept partisan political views forced on them, and more importantly, the freedom from being judged by a rigid, impractical, and inhumane ideology.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to start out by congratulating both the member for Cannington and the member for Cypress Hills because they have managed in 15 or 20 short minutes to do what Grant Devine failed to do after 9 years of profligate fiscal mismanagement. What they have managed to do is state very succinctly the fact that the Conservative Party is not a party fit for governance. It is not a party of moderation. It is not a party that cares about either individuals or collections of individuals.

Rather, it is a party of hatred that wishes to pit worker against worker, individual against the collective, man against woman, and even, if you would believe the member from Cannington, the pulpit against politics. He asks how pronouncements from the pulpit differ from pronouncements made by trade unionists.

I would say this to you, Mr. Member, pronouncements from the pulpit are — I'm told by my religious friends — divinely inspired. Decisions made by trade unions are democratically inspired. And there is the difference.

And, Mr. Member from Cannington, you betray an extreme lack of understanding and knowledge of what trade unions are all about. Trade unions are free, fair collectives where people democratically make decisions about the kinds of things that they will bargain for with their employers. I had thought for a brief little while that perhaps the Tory Party, having seen the error of their ways in terms of adding on over \$1 billion of public debt for each year that they were in office, when they recognized that fiscally they were total failures, that perhaps they were going to learn something and perhaps they were going to learn how to be a party of moderation.

I am sorry — watching this performance by the two members opposite over the last few minutes, I have clearly recognized that not only are they not moderate, they are not even respectful of human beings' rights to associate, to gather collectively. The member for Cypress Hills has just launched an absolutely unnecessary and reprehensible attack on organized labour, all through the guise of so-called right-to-work legislation.

Of course people want the right to work. Work, as we all know, is the sure means to enhance human dignity and to ensure that all of us have the ability to participate in all the fruits of this wondrous Canadian society. But right-to-work legislation, no matter how you might want to tart it up and no matter what fancy phrases you use, right-to-work legislation is an entirely different matter.

The member from Cypress Hills wants to attack free and fair collective bargaining. He does this by saying, well perhaps what this will do if we can get rid of this fact that people have this so-called compulsive union membership and the fact that we do not want scab labour in this province, he says that this will somehow magically allow us to encourage entrepreneurship. I would suggest to the member opposite that he perhaps has more knowledge of the farming situation than a business situation. Because quite frankly, what is required for entrepreneurship is flexibility, risk taking, and independence. It is not necessary to trample the rights of workers to collectively bargain in order to have entrepreneurship in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation being proposed by the member for Cypress Hills strikes at the very core of what it means to be a Canadian. Indeed, it strikes at the very core of the Saskatchewan sense of community. We are justifiably proud in this province of doing things differently — collectively. We are justifiably proud of continuously striving for the greatest good for all people rather than being mere petty apologists like the members opposite, mere petty apologists for grubby individualism.

Yes, we care about individuals. Yes, we care about the rights of individuals, but — and this is crucial in Canada — in Canada we do not elevate the rights of individuals to such an esoteric position that they circumvent all the rights and responsibilities, needs and expectations of the greater community.

I notice that the heckling from the members opposite stopped momentarily. If you need to, I could send you over a dictionary so that you would understand the meaning of esoteric and circumvention.

The rights of individuals, as expressed by the members opposite, as expressed particularly by the member from Cypress Hills in his right-to-work proposal, that is really just shorthand for Alabama North and I'm not having any of it. It's shorthand for a general devolution of Canadian and Saskatchewan society.

An Hon. Member: — They're wondering what that means.

Ms. Lorje: — Now again, they don't know what devolution means. Definitely they are in need of a good Canadian dictionary.

Now I would like to suggest that not only are free and fair collective bargaining rights important in Saskatchewan; they're also important in Canada. And even more importantly, the United Nations has recognized the moral and economic imperative of free, collective bargaining rights. They've recognized it in their Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I quote here from section 23. They say:

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment. And more importantly, everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of their interests.

The United Nations has recognized the moral and economic

imperative of free collective bargaining rights. The country of Canada has recognized the moral and economic imperative of free collective bargaining rights. Over 125 years ago in Canada, we had the sorry state where unions were termed, quote “illegal combinations in restraint of trade”. Union members could be charged with an offence simply by conducting union business in the open.

Canadian citizens, decent folk concerned about the collective rights of our society, were nauseated at this state of affairs, and justifiably so. They acted and they reacted in various forms, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to change this sorry, sorry condition.

I think of the Masons with their proud tradition of collective gathering to enhance the rights of workers. I think of the workers of the mid-1800s who were tired of having to have their unions operate underground simply because the robber barons of the time wanted to make sure they could maximize profit by minimizing worker safety and compensation.

Canadians quite rightly rebelled against this situation and insisted that their politicians reverse the odious abuse of power by greedy owners. Consequently, labour legislation was introduced to allow for workers to have solid rights to associate, to negotiate, and to withdraw their labour if necessary.

I am very proud, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Saskatchewan under Tommy Douglas was the first jurisdiction in Canada to introduce a Trade Union Act way back in the '40s. It is the framework for our current legislation, and I'm very proud of that.

And we on this side of the House will not stand idly by and let the right-wing reactionary members opposite us, under the guise of a twisty propaganda phrase like right to work, we will not let them roll back the clock.

At this point I would like to remind the member from Cypress Hills that if he is truly concerned about a national Conservative agenda — and I admit that this is somewhat in dispute, given the provincial PCs weakened repudiation and snubbing of their federal leader, Jean Charest — but if he truly wants to represent Conservative opinion in Saskatchewan and Canada, as opposed to reactionary right-wing opinion, he ought to learn a lesson from his Conservative counterparts in Alberta.

Last year, they set up a legislative committee to study right-to-work legislation, and what were their conclusions, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Conservative Alberta studied it and they said, phew, no thanks. We are not enacting right-to-work legislation.

That committee legitimately rejected the idea, the odious notion put forward by the member from Cypress Hills.

(1615)

But let's not limit ourselves to comparisons with Alberta. What about states in the United States where right-to-work legislation has actually been stuffed down the throats of ordinary, decent, hard-working men and women. Has it achieved the panacea that the member from Cypress Hills says? No it has not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are lies, there are bigger lies, and then there are statistics. And I would suggest that the statistics quoted by the member from Cypress Hill are grievously in error. When he talks about average incomes for people in right-to-work states, he is very conveniently ignoring the fact that what has been created in those right-to-work states is an extreme skewing of income distribution. So there are very few millionaires making gobs and gobs of money, but there are many, many hard-working people who can barely eke out a living because of the right-to-work legislation stuffed down their throats.

Indeed, in those 21 states in America that have this legislation, if you take a look at the list, they're generally acknowledged to be the backwaters, economically and culturally, of that supposed great first world power. I'm thinking here of states like Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and so on — great music, great food, but not great economies.

These were the same states that had to be forced through a civil war to abandon slavery. They have the lowest minimum wages. They scoff at occupational health and safety and they are the bastions of rugged individualism.

And let's look closely at this concept of individualism, members. Stripped of the blinkered romanticism with which Americans and the member from Cypress Hill view it, individualism for workers simply means weakness. It means one person against the corporation. It means Joe Smith saying to Imperial Oil, this is what I believe my wage should be. It is Jane Jones saying to Xerox corporation, this is what I believe my working conditions should be.

To which we all say, Mr. Speaker, sure, let's hear it for the glory of the individual. We're dealing here not with a myth, because a myth suggests something wondrous and uplifting. No, with this kind of individualism, we're dealing with a lie, and the member from Cypress knows it. But given the . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, a point of order. I believe that you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly in this House, and I'd like you to point that out to the member, please, in her statement.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I take the member's point of order. It is well taken, and I will ask the member to refrain from that kind of wrong language.

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I withdraw that remark, and I apologize to the member opposite for making that kind of statement. I realize that he is simply misguided in his notion of what will help us to achieve nirvana in this society.

We have a particular point of view, and that happens to be that together we're all stronger. We do not glorify the rights of the individuals, because quite frankly, the rugged individualism that he is proposing could lead to the situation where any jerk with a grievance can say, I don't like this. I won't do it. And if you don't believe me, just remember Waco and Oklahoma City and the Unabomber.

It's a situation where we could have a society that is dealt with

by threats of violence. That's not far-fetched, Mr. Speaker. If you admire that country to the south and want to imitate it in part, you have to recognize in reality you'll probably get the whole ball of wax. You buy the squeal; you buy the whole pig. You buy into individualism, and you buy into Oklahoma City.

Most of us prefer Canada to Oklahoma City. When worker's collective rights to bargain, to work with their employer for improvements in working conditions and wages, are thwarted, this can unfortunately lead to violence. We've seen it historically in Canada. We see it still today in the United States. Allowing legitimate union activities is a much better way. Emphasizing free and fair collective bargaining rights is a better way.

Together we are all stronger than the darkness cast by our own individual shadow. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to be very brief in this intervention for a couple of reasons, but the biggest single reason is this is such a pole . . . from so far in ancient history that it really . . . this regressive motion really doesn't warrant serious debate in the Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan.

The facts don't bear out that this motion should take place, but I can appreciate the motion being right-to-work legislation, being anti-union legislation right from the third party, right-wing legislation which simply follows from the opposition or Liberal red book in the last election where I just want to quote their policy:

Liberals believe in a fair employment environment for all workers in Saskatchewan in which individuals cannot be compelled to join or pay dues to unions as a specific condition of employment.

Mr. Speaker, simply put, this means right to work. That's the Liberal belief, that's the Conservative belief, that's the right-wing belief. And it is a grievous mistake if workers get caught up in words like freedom and right to work.

Of course we all want employment, Mr. Speaker, but let's — this is not a new idea — let's acknowledge that in the good old U.S. of A (United States of America) they've had right-to-work legislation for some considerable time now. And I simply want to point out, using as a source the U.S. Department of Commerce *State and Metropolitan Data Book* of 1988 — now I don't think even either of the two opposition parties would accuse the U.S. Department of Commerce as being a blatant union organization — but between 1982 and 1988, there was four states that experienced an increase in unemployment. Three of them were right-to-work states, one was not — three were right-to-work states, one was not.

Some other interesting things, the average rate of decrease in the unemployment rates from 1982 to '88 in the right-to-work states, that average decrease was 2.9 per cent; in other states, 4.1 per cent. Clearly a better decrease in the unemployment rates in the other states.

In terms of percentage increase of jobs. Again using the U.S. Department of Commerce, in the right-to-work states, the percentage increase in jobs per thousand citizens . . . or hundred thousand citizens, pardon me, in the right-to-work states, that rate of increase was 5.1 as opposed to 6.4 per cent in the other states.

It just doesn't matter how you slice it, whether you're talking total numbers, whether you're talking percentages, the U.S. experience, where they've been way out in front on this one . . . so far out in front that they very much deserve to stay there because the results of it are clearly bad. Right-to-work states have a terrible ratio of job creation.

There is a difference, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out one final thing, that is average pay. I know the members opposite talked about average pay. Don't get confused with average pay and average income. Because as the member for Saskatoon Southeast pointed out, average income includes the millionaires that are just abusing workers badly, paying them horrendously low.

The average annual pay in right-to-work states — this according to the U.S. Department of Labour, average annual pay by state and industry, 1993 news release, September 23, 1994 when it was released — right-to-work states average annual pay, \$23,549. The other states, \$27,892.

Now you don't need to be a genius to know that that means more than \$4,000 per year into the pockets of working people as opposed to in the pockets of abusive Luddites, abusive, abusive employers that have nothing in mind other than to get the lowest possible rate of pay.

Mr. Speaker, I said I was going to be brief because this motion clearly deserves simply to disappear, and I'm going to urge all members to vote this down.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:27 p.m. until 4:47 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 4

Boyd	D'Autremont	Hepner
Goohsen		

Nays — 37

Romanow	Van Mulligen	Mitchell
Wiens	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Shillington	Anguish	Atkinson
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Lautermilch
Renaud	Pringle	Koenker
Trew	Bradley	Lorje
Stanger	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski

Ward	Sonntag	Jess
Flavel	Murrell	Thomson
Osika	Aldridge	Draude
McPherson	Bjornerud	Julé
Krawetz		

The Speaker: — Order. I'll ask all members to come to order, please.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

