

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Third Session — Twelfth Legislature
4th Day

Tuesday, February 15, 1955

The House met at three o'clock p.m.
On the Orders of the Day:

DEBATE ON ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

The House resumed, from Monday, February 14, 1955, the adjourned debate of Mr. Dewhurst for the Address-in-Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. A.H. McDonald (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the students from the University for being with us here, this afternoon. I certainly do not want to steal any thunder from my good friend, the member for Saskatoon (Hon. Mr. Sturdy), as I know it was he who first suggested that we should make it possible for the students to come and sit in on one or two of our sittings during the sessions of the Legislature. I know that he will have something to say in this regard before the day is through. However, I do, at this time, want to say to the students that we appreciate your effort in coming down here, and we sincerely hope that you will be able to gather something of what I attempt to say this afternoon, and I hope that the other students who will be down tomorrow will be able to gather something of what the Premier will tell you to-morrow. I only wish that those who are here today could stay to hear the Premier tomorrow, and I might also add that I wish the ones who are going to be here tomorrow could be here today, because I know that part of the things I say here today will certainly be gone over with a good brush tomorrow by the Premier. I have often wondered, sitting here in the Opposition, if our procedure isn't a little backwards, because I would much rather speak after the Premier than before him; but apparently this is the rule of the House and the time today has been allotted to myself.

I want, at this time, to congratulate both the mover and the seconder of the Motion. I enjoyed their speeches very much, and I was pleased to hear the member for Wadena (Mr. Dewhurst) express the thought that it was a very nice thing for the constituents of Wadena to have their member move the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, especially when it had been so long since a member of that constituency did move the Address.

I also want to pass my congratulations to the member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Heming) who seconded the Address and Reply. I thought that he did an excellent job and I want personally to thank him for the few kind words he had to say in regard to myself.

I am sorry our good friend the Attorney General (Hon. Mr. Corman) is not in the House, this afternoon. I understand from press reports that he will not be a candidate in the next election, and I want him to know that we on this side of the House feel sorry about that. Our Attorney General is a great friend, I think, of all members of the House; perhaps he sometimes has a little more to say outside the House than he does here, but, after all, I think he is a very good friend, as I said a moment ago, of all the members.

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I am very pleased to see the member for Shellbrook (Mr. Larsen) back in the House, and I might say that he certainly looks as though he has regained his health. I hope that he will enjoy good health for many years to come.

I would like, at this time, to see one or two things about the speeches, yesterday. The hon. member for Wadena, when he was speaking, told us that we in the province of Saskatchewan had a potential area for the production of oil and gas in the province of Saskatchewan larger than they have in the province of Alberta; that he thought probably within a few years, we might produce as much oil in Saskatchewan, or even more, than they are now producing in the province of Alberta. I sincerely hope that that prophecy comes true, but I wish that the hon. member had gone on and pointed out the difference between Alberta and Saskatchewan, and even Manitoba, today. We find that in our neighbouring provinces, either to the west or to the east of us, a tremendous development is taking place. The province of Manitoba for many years lagged behind Saskatchewan and Alberta in the search for oil, but when they did get into the harness their rate of expansion, I think, is being greater than either Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The revenues the province of Alberta is receiving from oil production in that province have done something for the province that we need to do for Saskatchewan. We in Saskatchewan, today, are almost totally dependent on our agricultural economy. The province of Alberta has progressed beyond that stage, and today they have an economy which is bolstered by their revenues from oil, which we in the province of Saskatchewan would certainly like to see here. When you compare the revenues received in Alberta with those in Saskatchewan we can see the difference in the type of economy that supports our two provinces. Last year, in the province of Alberta, some \$90 million went into the treasury of that province from the development of oil alone. I understand that, in the province of Saskatchewan, the figure is around \$7 million — that is from the total mineral resources of Saskatchewan; \$7 million does not compare very well with \$90 million. I just wanted to mention that at this time because I would have appreciated it so much had a member from that side of the House pointed this out to us, rather than to have left it to someone on this side of the House.

As you all know this is the first time I have been saddled with the responsibilities as Leader of the Opposition. I shall endeavour to fulfil my duties and obligations to the best of my ability. I want, at this time, to congratulate the hon. member for Saltcoats (Mr. Loptson) for the manner in which he led the Opposition through our session of a year ago, and I know that I shall now have the benefit of his experience.

I also want to say a word or two about those people who have led the Liberal party in Saskatchewan and in the Legislature since I became a member of his House. It was a great honour for me to have worked with and served under both His Honour, now Lieutenant-Governor, and Walter Tucker. I think that the Lieutenant-Governor, when he was Premier and Leader of the Opposition in this province, left a record that should be a challenge to us all to try and do the best you can for all the people of Saskatchewan. It was an honour for me to have served under Mr. Tucker. I think that he led the Opposition well. While he was here he demonstrated his sincerity, loyalty and tremendous capacity for work. I appreciated having the opportunity to have served under him, and I think it has been a great experience for me, as it has been for other members on the side of the House, to have served under the different leaders from time to time.

I hope that all those people who place their confidence in me when they selected me as their leader at our leadership convention, will find me worthy of that confidence. I hope that I will be able to prove worthy to all those people — some of them sit on the other side of the House; as a matter of fact most of them have congratulated me and extended to me their good wishes, which is something I appreciate. I know that when they extended those good wishes to me they were meant in all good faith. As long as it shall be my honour to lead the Opposition — which I hope isn't too long, though some people on that side of the House think I should lead the Opposition for a long time; I would like to lead the Liberal party for a long time but, I hope, not as Leader of the Opposition. As long as I do occupy this position, however, I shall endeavour to direct and guide the Opposition in their proper functions, and shall endeavour to give constructive criticism to the Government, to make suggestions for an improved programme for the province of Saskatchewan. I hope to be able to keep the debate on a high level. Undoubtedly many of the questions which we will debate in this Chamber and in Committee will be of a controversial nature, but I hope that any criticism I may have from time to time, will be taken as criticism of government policy and not as criticism of Cabinet Ministers or criticism of private members.

To come to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, there are some things in that Speech which I could agree with, providing they go far enough; but I think that Speech from the Throne is more conspicuous because of what it doesn't include, than for what it does include. I will, during the course of my remarks, attempt to point out some things which I think ought to have been written into the Speech from the Throne, and I will also point out some of the things we hope the Government will be prepared to do during this Session of the Legislature.

The first thing in the Speech from the Throne which I could certainly agree with is the reference to our Golden Jubilee year. I think that we should all, during this coming year, make a maximum effort, both individually and as a group, to see that our Golden Jubilee is certainly a success not only in our cities and larger centres, but throughout the whole province of Saskatchewan. This is a year in which we will be celebrating our proud record — the record of our achievements of the past. We will also be honouring our pioneers, and we will be preserving their heritage. I notice in the Speech from the Throne some recommendations are proposed to increase the supplementary allowance to our senior citizens. I will refer to this again later, but I do think it is an appropriate time, when we are celebrating our Golden Jubilee, to pass on some of the revenue of our province to our senior citizens and to those people who have made Saskatchewan what it is today.

I believe the Government showed wisdom when they passed legislation back in 1952 making it possible for us to start at that time to lay plans for our Jubilee. I understand a full programme has now been arranged, and I hope that every community in Saskatchewan will take an active part to make the Jubilee, as I said a moment ago, a success even in the small communities. I was just presented with a poster here today from my own constituency from the town of Grenfell, Mr. Speaker. The town of Grenfell is sponsoring a Jubilee Ice Carnival this winter, and I think it is very nice and it shows that the spirit of celebration is already in gear in many of our smaller centres.

The Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, refers to several things that, in my opinion, should have been attended two years ago by this Government. The reason I say that is that now, this year, we are in probably the first recession as far as revenue from agricultural commodities are concerned, that we have had since the present Government came into office, and it seems

strange to me that this Government should wait until we have this recession in our agricultural economy, which is the main economy of the province of Saskatchewan, before they bring, or claim they are going to bring, certain benefits to certain groups of our people. Any benefits that are proposed for our people will be supported by myself and, I am sure, will be supported by all the members in the Opposition; but it is disappointing to see this Government, after 10 years in office, starting to take care of the matters that should have been taken care of many years ago.

The results of the past crop failure in Saskatchewan has placed a tremendous burden upon many people in this province. It has placed a tremendous burden chiefly upon the rural municipalities and upon the farmers of Saskatchewan. I do not believe that since this Government came into office, they have taken care of our rural areas, and especially the farmers, in a manner in which they should have done. If we look over the records and see what costs they have increased to the farmers, then I believe, Mr. Speaker, that they have not been 'farmers' government'. If we look at the list of increased expenditures that have been imposed upon our farmers — that list might include the amount that is now charged for grazing leases, the increase in the gasoline tax, the increase in the Education and Hospitalization Tax, the new mineral tax, the increase in drivers' licences, the increase in automobile licences and insurance, the increase in telephone charges, the increase in Power Corporation charges; then, Mr. Speaker, could any government claim to be the 'friend of the farmer' that has imposed all these increases? We, on this side of the House, do not think so.

I want to go on and deal with some of these matters individually. Last year, when I spoke during the Budget Debate, I mentioned the position of my old school district with regard to taxes for school purposes, and I pointed out at that time that my local school in rural municipality of Maryfield, namely Fairfield, No. 46, had a mill rate for school purposes of 6 1/2 mills — that is back in 1944. Ten years later, or 1954, our mill rate for school purposes had risen to 25 mills. But, Mr. Speaker, that only tells half the story, because in 1944 we had a school and we had a good teacher and she got a good salary; in 1954 our mill rate had gone up from 6 1/2 to 25 mills, they closed the school and we had no teacher. Is it any wonder that the teacher supply situation is improving when you look at the number of schools that have been closed in rural Saskatchewan? That is one way of rectifying the teacher shortage — just close the schools and then you don't need a teacher. That is exactly what is happening in many areas in rural Saskatchewan.

While I am on the question of school grants I want to say that I am pleased that this Government are making some provision to increase the grants for our schools. I hope that they will go far enough to give some relief to the farmers and the owners of property in the province of Saskatchewan. Back in 1944, when the C.C.F. were campaigning, for an election, the now Premier of this province told the people of Saskatchewan that, if a C.C.F. Government were elected, the total responsibility for education would lie upon the provincial government. It is a far cry from what was promised and what has happened, Mr. Speaker. Back in 1944 about 80 per cent of the total cost of education was paid for by property taxation and about 20 per cent paid for out of the school grants in the province. That situation still exists, Mr. Speaker. I am not at this time going to ask the Government to keep their promise in its entirety. I am not going to ask them to pay 100 per cent of the total cost of education; but if they would go half-way, and pay 50 per cent of the total cost of education, then we will be pleased for one Session anyway, and maybe we will come back next year and ask you to go a little further and fulfil the campaign promises that you made 10 years ago to the people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Last year, when the Minister of Education spoke, he dealt with this question of school taxation at some length, and he tried to show that although taxes have increased in the province of Saskatchewan, so had the ability of our people to pay taxes; their ability had increased. He went on to point out what it cost in bushels of wheat to pay the cost of education 1944 and what it costs now. I hope that the Minister of Education will bring those figures up to date, because if he does, Mr. Speaker, it will even surprise you. In 1948 the Minister told us it took approximately 4.6 million bushels to pay our school taxes; in 1944, it took 5 million; in 1952, it took 7.3 million bushels of wheat to pay the school tax in the province of Saskatchewan. That did not suit his argument very well, because it had gone up from 5 million to 7.3 million, so he went on with a further set of figures and he said that it took 2 per cent of our total wheat crop to pay the school tax in 1944, and by 1952 this had decreased to 1.6 of our total wheat crop. Well, now, the reason I use 1952, Mr. Speaker, is because it is the last year that we had the figures to work on, on this side of the House.

I would like to inform the Hon. Minister of Education that that is a very poor way of trying to demonstrate to the people of Saskatchewan that they have the tax-paying ability that this Government claim they have. This year, with our crop failure, certainly indicates that point. I know in the year 1953 it took 2.8 per cent of my total wheat crop to pay my school taxes; but do you know what it will take this year? It will take 20 per cent of my total wheat crop to pay my school taxes. I don't think that any tax structure founded on the basis that can fluctuate from 2.8 to 20 per cent in 12 months is on a sound financial foundation. I do believe that education should be financed, as I said a moment ago, out of the general revenues of the province and not out of property taxation.

The Minister of Education, at that time, went on to point out that the tax-carrying capacity of the farmer was much greater now than it has ever been in the past, and he even told us that the family allowances had increased the ability of the farmer to pay taxes. Now, Mr. Speaker did our Federal Government in Ottawa pay the young people all of the Dominion of Canada the family allowance, or pay their mothers the family allowance, to put them in a better position to pay taxes? I do not think so. The Federal Government in Canada brought in family allowances to provide better clothes and better food for the young people of this country, and any government that will take that as the basis of increasing the people's capacity to pay taxes, I don't think is a 'humanity first' government.

I suppose now that we are going to have some P.F.A. payments by the Federal Government, the Minister of Education will take that into consideration when he is figuring out what the new grant to our schools will be. I certainly hope not. The P.F.A. payments are for the same purpose, or a similar purpose, as the family allowance. They are being provided to our farmers to help put the food on the table and the clothes on their backs. They are certainly not put there for any provincial government to take from our farmers in any form of taxation.

I believe that under our present taxation policies in the province of Saskatchewan, if we should ever get into the position that we would have two successive crop failures, it would mean we would have a virtual mortgage on every farm in the province of Saskatchewan. I, as a farmer, and representing a farming community, certainly do not want ever to see that happen, and I am pleased to see that the Government is this year going to increase the grants to our schools. I hope it won't be a pitiful little increase

of, say, a million dollars. That won't touch it. We need many millions to take care of this province, and we must lift the burden off the municipalities and off the farmers. This Government must be held responsible for the tremendous burden that is there, and they must be held responsible for taking it off.

It seems to be the attitude of this Government not to accept the responsibility for these increased costs, but to sit idly by and say to the farmer, "Oh, well, you pay it." The farmer has paid it over the good years, but he cannot pay it this year, and, if the present rate of taxes continues, he cannot pay it over the next 20 years. He paid it certainly over the last three or four years with three and four of the best crops that Saskatchewan ever had in the highest farm economy that Western Canada has ever known.

This only tells part of the story as far as education is concerned, Mr. Speaker. I find that our larger units are having difficulty to finance their day-to-day expenditures. I notice that, in 1948, our larger units had borrowed some \$762,000 dollars for day-to-day running expenses. By 1952 that figure was up by almost a million dollars; it had increased from \$762,000 in 1948, to \$1,705,000 in 1952. So, if our larger school units are having difficulty in financing their day-to-day business in years when we had revenue as great as it was in 1948 to 1952, what on earth will happen to them this year? And what will happen to them next year? And what will happen to them in the next 20 years? Mr. Speaker, unless the policy of the present government is changed, I dread to think what might happen. That only tells part of the picture.

Then we have the debts of our larger school units for capital expenditures. In 1948 that debt stood at approximately \$25,000; in 1952, it stood at \$2,167,000. Well, there again, if our larger school units are going to accumulate this type of a burden in years of buoyant revenues, what on earth would happen if we got into some not necessarily crop failures, but if we got down and had the average crop that we do get in the province of Saskatchewan. This year we are under average, certainly, but we cannot expect to maintain the level that we had for the three year for years prior to this poor crop. Therefore, I hope this Government will go a long way during this Session to provide the necessary funds for our school units and for educational facilities in the province as a whole. It isn't the amount of money that is expended that counts, Mr. Speaker; it is the total percentage that is paid by the provincial government and by the municipalities.

While I am on municipalities I want to say a word or two with regard to municipal roles. I notice in the Speech from the Throne that the Government tell us that good progress is being made in mapping a great system of main market routes. I think that is a good policy. I believe that our municipalities should have some guidance from our provincial Legislature in the mapping of an integrated municipal road system throughout the province. But this is the same report we have been getting from this Government ever since they came into office, insofar as municipal roles are concerned. They have been mapping for 10 years. Apparently all they have been doing is mapping and napping, but there are no roads.

Mr. Cameron: — Planning Board.

Mr. McDonald: — And the thing that the municipalities need today is not only the plan for the roads; they need their roads! This Government has done nothing.

Mr. Lopton: — They'll never change.

Mr. McDonald: — What is the record? I note from the Public Accounts, 1953-1954, that the provincial expenditure on market roads was \$240,000 less than it was in the preceding year. The preceding year, which was 1952-53, I remember there was an election that year, and the grants to municipalities for market roads were \$660,000. Last year they dropped about \$420,000.

Mr. Cameron: — No election, last year, of course.

Mr. McDonald: — I believe it was last year that my hon. friend, the member for Cannington (Mr. McCarthy), mentioned the fact that there had been a reduction in the grants to municipalities of some \$70,000. The Minister of Highways said he was wrong. Well, he certainly was wrong; it wasn't \$70,000, it was \$240,000. Mr. Speaker, is that helping our municipalities?

Mr. Lopton: — You sure were wrong!

Mr. McDonald: — Mr. Speaker, rather than a reduction of \$240,000 we should have had an increase of \$240,000. When the Speech from the Throne refers to giving more help to our municipalities, are they going to give them the \$240,000 back, or what are they going to do? That is why I said at the beginning of my remarks I would like to have spoken after the Premier and not before. I hope that he will tell us. If he goes far enough, he will have the support of the members of the side of the House. If he does not go far enough, then he will not have the support of the members on the side of the House.

This problem of rural municipal roads is a big problem. We have a big province and we have a lot of roads. Sometimes I think that our problem dates back to the days of the survey, when the province was surveyed so that we should have a road around every section in the east part of the province and a road around every section and a half in the west part of the province. I think it was asking a lot of the population of Saskatchewan to build and finance that number of roads in Saskatchewan. But I believe that this Government must do something to tackle this problem of municipal roads. I note that in the province of Manitoba, the provincial government has given the municipalities the right to build certain provincial roads up to a standard of a Class B highway, then they are taken over by the provincial government, relieving the municipality of that road from that time on. I don't know if that is the solution we need in Saskatchewan or not. I do not think so, because our municipalities today are not in a position to build any roads up to a Class B. standard.

Because of this road problem in rural Saskatchewan today, some people seem to think that our municipalities are too small and that we should enter into larger municipal units. I don't know; I am hesitant about that. When I look at what it has cost us in the larger school units, I wonder if our cost would be correspondingly as great in larger municipal units. I am just wondering if we could not just leave our municipalities the same size, but that our provincial Government not only present them with a grid system for rural market roads, but they supply them with road-building equipment on a rental basis at as near cost as possible. I am not sure that that would not be approaching the subject better even than Manitoba have done.

This Government has bought a tremendous amount of road-building equipment. One of the big problems in our municipalities is that they spend a lot of money on capital account buying road-building equipment, and they have no money to operate it with. I believe that if they could be relieved of that expenditure on capital account for road equipment and they were given larger grants, they can and will build the roads in this province, with Government supplying them with the equipment at as low an hourly rate as possible.

At this moment I want to mention a word or two about highways. The province of Saskatchewan again has a big highway problem; not only a municipal road problem, but a highway problem. Today I was fortunate enough to get a map from the Department of Highways with a highway system drawn on it from the year 1926. This was the first highway map produced Saskatchewan, and if we look at that map and then take one for 1954, we will find that practically every road that exists on our map in 1954, is on the map for 1926. But you know, lines on a map, Mr. Speaker, do not make a road, and having travelled a considerable portion of the province, this Fall, I found that a lot of lines on the map did not exist as a road. On two or three occasions, if it had not been for a kindly farmer I would still have been campaigning for the leadership and never found my way back.

Mr. Speaker, I will admit that we have a tremendous highway problem in the province of Saskatchewan. In 1925, which is 30 years ago, in the province of Saskatchewan we had some 7,000 miles of highway. Now we have 8,300 approximately. In 1925, which was 30 years ago, the provincial Government of that day he had marked out 25,000 miles of main market roads. Now, 30 years later, we are still napping, but we have cut the 25,000 down to 12,000.

The record of this Government with regard to highways is something out of this world, and I have had a taste of it in my very own seat. The Government started to build a Trans-Canada Highway in that part of the province. They had completed it in that area with the exception of, I think, some 18 miles of blacktop that has to be completed and some shoulder work to be done. I often think, when I hear the amount of talk in this province about a South Saskatchewan dam, that this Government has built the longest dam in the world when they built this Trans-Canada Highway. What on earth they were thinking I will never know. They built a road from the Manitoba boundary to the City of Regina that has only one bridge in it.

Mr. Cameron: — They don't believe in bridges.

Mr. McDonald: — They put culverts in this Trans-Canada Highway that look like the conductor pipes from an eave-trough. They have dammed 25 miles of highway, shut-off the water route, the natural flow of the water, carried it down in a ditch, turned it through the fence and then would accept no further responsibility as to who it flooded out. As far as the Department of Highways was concerned, when it went through the fence, 'good-bye'. Mr. Speaker, there have been thousands of acres flooded in my own constituency for no other reason than for the Trans-Canada Highway. I am not blaming the highway for it; I am blaming this Government, because they did not put any culverts or bridges in the highway.

I had occasion, last summer, to take this matter up with the Department of Highways. I could not get to first base; but I want to say that I did get in touch with the Premier and told him of the situation there, and it was only a matter of hours before there was a man down to that area to look over the conditions. They did do some work, but, Mr. Speaker, the condition there now means that we will have to enter into a major drainage problem to rectify the damage has been done by the building of the Trans-Canada Highway without making proper provision for the water to pass from one side of the road allowance to the other. When the Government say they have completed a satisfactory programme, I do not know what they mean, because that certainly is not satisfactory. However, we will deal at further length with that matter when we get into the Department of Highways in this House.

The Government seem to take the attitude that if the water is drained off this land then they have done their duty. It is not as simple as that, Mr. Speaker. When you flood the land for any length of time, the alkali salts come out of the soil to the surface and that land becomes unproductive. A tremendous number of acres are dry of water now, yes, but will not grow a crop this year, and I doubt if they will grow one the following year.

Then I cannot help but think of the condition of No. 39 Highway — and the Government talk about a satisfactory programme having been completed. What year was No. 39 Highway completed from Corinne to the international boundary? I think they rushed it to completion in 1948 to get ready for the '48 election. That highway cost the people of the province \$2 1/2 million. What has happened? Today the thing is completely disintegrated, and they are building a new one alongside it. I do not think that any government that spends \$2 1/2 million building a road and then comes back, six years later, to build another super road alongside of it, has satisfactorily completed a road programme. If they were prepared to spend \$2 1/2 in 1948, they should have spent the additional money that was necessary to make a good job at that time. There are many people in this province who live many miles from a blacktop highway. They have never had their first one. Admittedly, No. 39 Highway is an important highway in the province of Saskatchewan and carries a lot of traffic; but, after all, the people who live in other areas, away from blacktop, do deserve more consideration than they have been given, and they deserve to have more money spent in their areas, rather than to go back and rebuild what was supposed to be a super-highway in the short space of time in six years.

I want to say how pleased I am, and I am sure all members on this side of the House are, at the change of heart as far as the Government is concerned in respect of our senior citizens. We are pleased that they are now going to increase the supplementary allowance. It is amazing though, for just a year ago my hon. friend from Arm River (Mr. Danielson) moved a motion in this House asking the provincial Government to give consideration to increasing the supplementary allowance to recipients of old-age-security and the recipients of blind persons' allowance to \$10.00 a month, and also the payments of such supplementary allowance to recipients of old-aged assistance and the provision of health services for recipients of old-age assistance. That was just a year ago and what happened Mr. Speaker? The Government would not support this motion, so they amended it. They virtually voted against giving the old-age people of this province an increase in the supplementary allowance, with the exception of the hon. member for Swift Current (Mr. Gibbs) — and I commend him for having the fortitude to stand up in his place and vote with the Opposition. He must be the only person on that side of the House who has a clear conscience today. But, now, a year later, we have the Government telling us in the Speech from the Throne that they are going to do something about this — what, I don't know, because the Speech from the Throne is nothing but a skeleton; there is no flesh, and part of the limbs are missing. But they do say they are going to do something. So we hope that they will at least do what we asked them to do, last year. It is a year later; they might even go further now. I hope that they will go as far as I asked them to go in my radio address of February 8th. If they do that they will have our support. If they do not, then they will not have our support.

We hope, however, that they will not only pay the supplementary allowance to our needy senior citizens, over 70, but that they will pay it to those people, aged 65 to 69 who are in receipt of old-age assistance that they will pay it to those in receipt of blind pensions, and pay it to those people

who will soon be in receipt of a disability pension. We believe that these people are all in a similar bracket: they are unable to provide for themselves. Therefore, if the Government is prepared to give some help to one group of those people, they should be prepared to give help to them all.

I notice in the Speech from the Throne that the reference to the allowance to the totally disabled did mention that provision is being made to give these people an allowance as of January 1st. Now I understand that no payments have gone out for this pension, the reason being, as I understand it, the processing of the applicants for this pension. But at this time I want to point out that 50 per cent of the cost of that pension will be supplied by the Government of Canada; the other 50 per cent will be paid by the province of Saskatchewan. I understand a similar deal has been made with most of the provinces in the Dominion. Some people seem to get the impression — in Saskatchewan probably due to the propaganda that is spread by the provincial Government — that because certain cheques for social services are sent out from the city of Regina, the pensions are paid by the provincial Government. I would like to draw the attention not only of the members of this House, of all those people who may be listening to me today, that this is certainly not the case. In the year 1952-53, if you totalled the amounts that were spent in the province of Saskatchewan to pay grants to the anti-tuberculosis league, mental hospital grants, air ambulance service, cancer commission, grants and loans to hospitals and health centres, assistance to health regions, municipalities and L.I.D.'s, health services for old-age pensioners and related groups, payment to the Hospital Services Plan out of the revenue account, the provincial share of the Old Age Assistance and Blind Allowance, Mothers' Allowances, municipal social assistance, provincial social assistance, you would find that in the year 1952-53 the total amounted to \$22 1/4 million, but, in that same year, the Federal subsidy that the Federal Government of Canada provided the province of Saskatchewan with \$2 million more than was expended by the provincial government for these different services.

I think that indicates where the money is coming from to provide services for these different groups of people in the province of Saskatchewan — that the \$20 1/4 million certainly doesn't tell the whole story. We can add to that nearly \$3 million in health grants for old age and blind persons paid by the Dominion Government and expended by the Provincial Government. In addition, nearly \$39 million expended by the Dominion Government itself on old age security and family allowance, which makes a total of over \$64 million expended by the Federal Government of Canada in the province of Saskatchewan in the fiscal year 1952-53 for social and health services. I think we should keep the record straight when we are telling the people of the province of Saskatchewan what we are doing for them. We should tell them where the money is coming from. Sure, the province of Saskatchewan is paying part of the shot, but so is the Federal Government in Ottawa, and I think that they should have as much credit as any government throughout our land.

Before I leave the question of social services I also want to say that I am very pleased that the Minister of Social Welfare of Saskatchewan (Hon. Mr. Sturdy) has had a change of heart, not only since the last session, but since last July, when they had a C.C.F. convention in the province of Saskatchewan. I would like to read from a press release in the Saskatoon 'Star Phoenix' of July 17, 1954, regarding the question of whether they were going to increase the supplementary allowance to the old-age pensioners and related groups, and it says here:

“One of the delegates, urging that something constructive should be done by the provincial government immediately towards increasing benefits, commented that the topic had created a great deal of discussion in the panel and said that the Minister in charge, the Hon. John H. Sturdy, was the worst offender in the panel.”

Apparently he was less prepared to provide for the old-age pensioners than were many of the followers of his Party.

I want to commend, again, the member for Swift Current (Mr. Gibbs) for the attitude he adopted at this convention, and I want to read what it says in regard to Harry Gibbs, M.L.A. for Swift Current:

“Mr. Gibbs, in speaking on behalf of the amendment, said the provincial government should allocate money coming into the province from natural resources for increasing the pensions.”

I can agree with that. If we just had \$90 million (as I mentioned a while ago) out of our oil resources, we could pay our old-age pensioners instead of \$2.50 a month under a means test, \$25 a month with no means test — if we had \$90 million a year revenue, which we ought to have. Geologists tell us that 80 per cent of the oil-bearing structure in Western Canada lies under the province of Saskatchewan. Admittedly, we are seeing some progress in this regard, but most of the oil that is being produced in the province of Saskatchewan is of low gravity; it is difficult to get a good market for it, and it has a low price at the well head. That is one place where Manitoba has been very fortunate; their oil is of a very high gravity; it is situated close to the Trans-Canada Pipeline and much closer to the eastern markets than ours. Consequently their revenue, although their total production in barrels is not as great as it is in the province of Saskatchewan, is going ahead in leaps and bounds. I hope that in Saskatchewan we, in spite of the attitude of this Government, will have further development not only in the oil but in the mineral resources of our province, and I hope that in the very near future we will have an economy that is not supported entirely by agriculture, but will be supplemented by the natural resources of the province of Saskatchewan.

The present Government seems to take great delight when they talk about mineral production in Saskatchewan, but, unfortunately, they only talk about a certain type of minerals. I think, if they are going to discuss minerals in Saskatchewan, they should certainly go into the whole field, that is, the hard rock minerals, base metal mines and everything else. There is only one mine of any account producing ore in this province at this time, apart from the Eldorado and the uranium mines, and that is the mine at Flin Flon which was established in this province many years ago before this Government ever came into power, and before the C.C.F. Party was thought of.

I that we can continue to have some expansion in our mineral production so that we in Saskatchewan actually can again look to that development for some help in our economy, to offset the years such as this when we have a partial crop failure in Saskatchewan. I noticed, the other day, when going through the ‘Western Miner’, a reference to the petro-chemical plant which had been established in Canada and it says this:

“Before Leduc, Canada had two petro-chemical plants worth \$4 million; today, seven years later, we have 24 plants worth \$275 million.”

Now I wonder, Mr. Speaker, how many of those petro-chemical plants are in Saskatchewan. I don't think there are any. If we had the oil development that our friends opposite would like to tell the people of Saskatchewan we have, then I imagine we would get a petro-chemical plant; but I suppose our petro-chemical plants will be something like this pulpwood industry we have been hearing about in the north. Ever since I became a member of this Legislature I have been told that we are on the verge of getting a pulpwood industry in northern Saskatchewan. Where is it? It is something like an imaginary line — it is on the verge; we'll never get over it.

Mr. Cameron (Maple Creek): — Options extended again!

Mr. McDonald: — The options have been extended again, certainly. They have to be extended because these people, for some reason or other, have not been prepared to come into Saskatchewan and set up a pulp industry in the northern part of our province, while the two provinces on the east and the west of us have gone ahead and developed their pulpwood industry. We must have this development because it would do two things for our province. It would employ a far greater labour force in Saskatchewan, and it would give us a larger market for our agriculture products, two things that we certainly need in the province of substantially. A petro-chemical plant is only one item. I notice that the Government is extending its operations as far as sodium sulphate is concerned. I hope they have more luck in their new venture than they had in the one venture they have been running for some few years now.

I was also pleased to note in that Speech from the Throne that the Government is now going to make amendments to the Vehicle Act. I think it is about time. I realize that, to cut down the accident rate in Saskatchewan, probably we did have to take some steps to awaken our people that they must be careful and prudent drivers in order to have the privilege of driving on our roads. But on the other hand, when we make the penalties and infractions so steep that you are driving people off the roads — there are women and there are men in this province today, and especially in our cities, who are afraid to drive a car, because of the stiff penalty if they happen to go through a red light or turn the corner when the light is the wrong colour, or something. I believe that we must take every precaution to have safe drivers in Saskatchewan, but we must also make our highways free to all people of Saskatchewan. People should be free to drive and use our highways.

There is one other thing that I was personally very interested to see in the Speech from the Throne and that is the fact that this Government is now going to give veterans who are settled on Crown land an option to purchase that land. A few years ago it was my privilege to second the motion by the hon. member for Last Mountain at that time, asking the Government to do what they apparently propose to do today. I think the veterans should have had the option of buying the land when they established themselves after the last war, rather than 10 years later. I believe we will all agree that when the average veteran comes out of the service he will be somewhere between 25 and 30 years of age; and if he has to remain a tenant of the government of this province for 10 years before he is given the option to buy land, that will make him between 35 and 40. Then, if he has the option to buy, in all probability it will take 10 years to pay for it; he is going then to be between 45 and 55 years of age.

People who are supposed to know tell us that the average veteran is 10 years older than his age. Here, we have the position in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, where the veterans of the last war are going to be 60 years

of age before they own the land that they reside on. That isn't good enough! I hope that this Government will not only enter into an agreement to purchase as far as the veteran is concerned, but I hope that they will apply every nickel that that veteran has paid in rent to the purchase price, and I hope that, when the purchase price is set, it will be set at a price that is fair and equitable and what the land was worth when the veteran settled on it.

I understand there will be a board set up to evaluate this property. I hope that the personnel of that board will be fair to the veteran and fair to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. I should like to recommend now that the board should consist of one member of the judiciary from the province of Saskatchewan, there should be one member chosen by the Government and one members selected by the veterans themselves. I think that, if the Government is prepared to do that, this board will assess that land at a fair and equitable value so that the veteran will have every opportunity of being able to pay for it as quickly as possible.

Some of this land is situated in an area of the province that hasn't fared very well over the last two or three years in Saskatchewan, and I am referring to the north-eastern part of our province. The condition in that area seems to be caused by excess rainfall. I don't know whether that is the total cause or not, Mr. Speaker. Probably in part of that area, that is the only reason for the conditions that exist there today; the balance of the area, I am convinced, should never have been settled by farmers until such time as proper drainage facilities had been put into drain that land and guarantee that it would produce a crop over a period of years.

The Government claims that it has taken prompt steps to take care of the situation in north-eastern Saskatchewan. They have inaugurated a work-and-wages programme . . .

Mr. Cameron: — Pick and shovel.

Mr. McDonald: — I am pleased that they have done something, but a work-and-wages programme of this type hasn't accomplished anything. It has not rectified the situation that caused the flooding of that land, and it has not rectified the financial position in which the farmer has found himself in that area. This work-and-wages programme is providing little more than the necessities of life for the settlers or the farmers in that area. They need more than that. The farmers in that area are in debt and they must be given the opportunity to make some money to help pay off that debt and to put them in a financial position to take care of their expenditures for the next season in an attempt to grow another crop.

I hope the Government will embark upon an extensive programme in north-eastern Saskatchewan to take care of the flooding conditions in the area that is already settled, and to help expand our northern frontier as far as agriculture is concerned. We realize that that is the only portion of Saskatchewan where we have new land that could be opened up. I do not believe it should be the responsibility of this Government entirely. I think they should have some co-operation from our Federal Government, through P.F.R.A., to help do the job, because I do realize that it is a tremendous job. I hope this Government will do its part and that it will urge the Federal Government to help in the problem.

There is one other thing affecting agriculture in the Speech from the Throne that I would like to refer to; it is in the fourth paragraph,

and it says this:

“Saskatchewan’s 1954 crop was one of the most disappointing ever experienced. Continuous wet weather, the most widespread rust infestation in history, and frost reduced a very promising crop to the lowest level since 1943. The effects of crop failure combined with relatively low farm prices has caused a drastic decline in the farm income.”

But what do they propose, in the Speech from the Throne, to do about it? As usual — nothing! They are like Nero, when he sat and fiddled while Rome burned. These people . . .

Mr. Cameron: — Plan!

Mr. McDonald: — . . . Plan and run about the province in vicious political propaganda campaigns and do nothing about the falling economy in the province Saskatchewan. They do nothing about the rust infestation; they have done nothing about the flooding in the northeast. Mr. Speaker, four years ago, when I spoke in this House on the Budget debate, I drew the Government’s attention to this rust menace. What did they do about it? Nothing. They sat here for four years and now this rust has wiped out practically an entire crop in the province of Saskatchewan. Apparently they do not propose to do anything about it now. I do not want to blame the Government. I do not think they should accept the responsibility for the rest. Why should they? Nor do I expect them to pass an act outlawing it; but I do expect the Minister of Agriculture to vote a considerable sum of money to help in the research work as far as rust is concerned. I know that any vote he puts into his estimates will be given every consideration by this side of the House. Probably rust is the greatest menace to all the plant crops in Canada today and what are we doing? As I said a moment ago, the Minister of Agriculture and his Government apparently are not prepared to go out and accept their fair share of the responsibility. I think it is not only the responsibility of the Government; I think it is the responsibility of every farmer, every merchant, every professional man and every man, woman and child in western Canada, because, after all, we are supported by an agricultural economy and we can see, this year, what is happened when our agricultural economy is cut from under us.

I hope there is an estimate, and a goodly sized one, to help in the fight against rust in Saskatchewan. We, in the past, have endeavoured to breed new varieties of wheat and other grains which were resistant to rust. Today, scientists tell us that the chemical industry may be able to help us, that we may soon have a spray that will help to control rust. I hope this Government will not embark on a program of their own but that they will work with the other interested parties — the Federal government and some of the grain companies, some of the chemical companies — in helping to face the situation so that here in Saskatchewan we may, in the future, look forward to better year so far as our agriculture is concerned and so far as the rust menace is concerned.

I notice the reference to that South Saskatchewan dam in the Speech from the Throne. Now I believe that the South Saskatchewan dam, when built, will benefit the people of Canada. Therefore, I believe that the people of Canada ought to build that damn. I believe that the provincial Government must be held responsible for any expenditure as far as power is concerned, because I think they realize, as well as I, the precedent that any Federal government would be setting up if they commenced subsidizing power in Saskatchewan. I do hope that the dam will be built, and I sincerely hope that it will be built by the Dominion of Canada.

I also note in the Speech from the Throne the reference to the possibility of several volumes of the report from the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life being tabled, this Session. I realize that this report will be very lengthy, and I sincerely hope that when it is tabled in this House we will be given some time to consider that report before we are asked to discuss it. Undoubtedly it is going to be very long, as I said a moment ago, and it will take weeks of study. I have found that, if a member does his job, he has little time for this extra work during the Session itself, and I think he ought to be given some time after the Session is over to peruse the different reports, as they will certainly affect the economy of the province for many years to come. I should think we will all be very interested in them and want to take advantage of the experience of the people who are preparing a report for us.

There is one other thing in this Speech from the Throne that I feel I must touch on, and that is the matter of rural electrification. The Speech from the throne says this:

“The fact that six thousand five hundred additional farms were served with power, last year, indicates the popularity of the Farm Electrification programme.”

I don't think the number of farms that received electrification indicates popularity at all. I do not believe that the Rural Electrification scheme, as we have it in Saskatchewan, is popular. Certainly, the farmers and the people in the rural areas want electricity; I want it myself, and shortly before I came to the city of Regina I gave the Power Commission two cheques for \$500 each in an effort to get electricity to my farms. It wasn't very popular. I want electricity, but I certainly hated to part with two cheques for \$500 each, and I believe that this Government must make some effort to try and take power to our farms without cost. We have advocated this. It has been in the Liberal platform for years and we on this side of the House have advocated it.

Some of our neighbouring provinces are following a policy of that kind; I have found in the country that you run into opposition from certain C.C.F.'ers and they tell you that, in the province of Manitoba, they have a land tax to support rural electrification. Mr. Speaker, that statement is not true. There is not today and never has been a land tax in the province of Manitoba to support rural electrification. The Manitoba system is simple, and there is no reason in the world why this province and this Government could not adopt that system. Why on earth should the farmer be asked to pay around \$500 to get the hydro pole in his yard with a transformer on, when the urban dweller gets it for nothing, when the people in other provinces are getting for nothing? There is nothing strange or difficult to understand about the Manitoba system. The provincial treasurer advances money to the Power Corporation; the Power Corporation puts the pole in the farmer's yard for nothing; then the rates for electricity are set up in the province of Manitoba so that each month the person who is receiving the electricity pays for the electricity consumed plus a portion of the capital costs, and over a period of 20 years your capital cost is being paid by the farmer; but he is not asked to go out and pay \$500 down payment and then wait for a year, or maybe two years, to get his electricity.

I maintain that the plan in Saskatchewan is not popular, that they are again the people have accepted it because they do want rural electrification. I think we should make that plan more acceptable to the people, and

that we must provide the people in rural areas with electricity at a low rate not only for the capital costs, but a low rate for the electricity consumption.

I also note that the Government is taking great pride in itself in the position that the Co-ops now occupy in the province of Saskatchewan. The province of Saskatchewan has been known as a co-operative province for many years and again I have an account, written in 1925 which was 30 years ago, with regard to co-operatives in the province of Saskatchewan, and it says:

“... co-operative enterprise which has made Saskatchewan famous the world over as the great co-operative province.”

That was 30 years ago! Then, again, on the next page, they mention several things about the different co-operatives in the province of Saskatchewan and list many of them: “The Co-operative Elevator Companies, Saskatchewan Co-operative creameries, the Saskatchewan Wool Growers Co-operative, the Saskatchewan Municipal Hail, the Wheat Pool, Poultry Pools, Co-operative Stockyards” and so on. This province has been co-operatively-minded for many years, and I think it is a good thing for an agricultural province such as Saskatchewan to be of that frame of mind. I want to commend this Government for what they have done to help and assist our Co-operatives, but, after all, co-operation did not begin in Saskatchewan in 1944; it began here almost as early as our province was formed. I have another booklet here, prepared back in 1917, where they referred to the principles of co-operation and they mention the support that the co-operatives were receiving from the provincial government of that day. I think it is a great thing for any government to give support to co-operatives.

In conclusion I just want to mention, as I did last year, propaganda. Some people seem to think that if you tell anything loud enough and long enough you will get a certain percentage of the people to believe. That seems to be the attitude of this Government. There is hardly an hour goes by, during the day or night, as far as radio is concerned, that this Government is not on there spreading political propaganda, which is being paid for, not by the C.C.F. Party but by the people of the province of Saskatchewan. I went to a hockey game the other night, and you know I don't know who I watched most — the players or the Provincial Treasurer — because I noticed, between the first and second periods, he scampered out of his seat and up to the broadcasting booth, and they handed the microphone all around and everyone had a little visit, and they carried on for about five minutes after the players were back on the ice playing hockey; then, between the second and third periods, away he goes again. It was quite entertaining for me; the hockey game was good, but I did enjoy most of all the antics of our good friend, the Provincial Treasurer.

But after all, Mr. Speaker, I do not think the money of the people of this province ought to be spent in that manner. Probably if we gave a grant to the hockey club that would do more good than it does for our good friend, the Provincial Treasurer, to get up there and spread political propaganda. I know that this propaganda is costing our people a tremendous amount of money, and I would like to know the exact figure — I think we will find out during this Session. It is amazing to me that when some of our employees who are for this Government have been told that they will have the string along, there will be no more wage increases, “we have to hold the line”, well then I think we should ‘hold the line’ on our propaganda and give that extra money to the employees who work for this Government and for the different Crown Corporations. It might not amount to very much, but it would be better spent,

and would do more good than the Provincial Treasurer does with his little story in between. Some are hockey games. I only use the hockey games as one example, because there is hardly a sports event taking place in this province in which our provincial government is not taking some part.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, Saskatchewan has an agricultural economy, and we in the Opposition are convinced that the welfare of our farmers is of paramount importance. The Opposition will advocate and suggest that policies be adopted in the interests of our farm population. We shall continue to criticize this Government until something substantial is done to lessen the tax burden and to assist the municipality substantially in a financial way to meet the duties and obligations cast upon them by the various Municipal Acts. The Opposition will not only advocate and suggest these policies, but will be prepared to put them into effect when the Liberal government is elected in this province.

Hon. T. C. Douglas (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, may I begin my remarks by extending my congratulations to the mover and seconder all of the Address in Reply to that Speech from the Throne. I want to congratulate the member for Wadena (Mr. Dewhurst) who did himself and his constituency proud, yesterday, by making a most exhaustive resume of the Government's activities, and presenting a very forward-looking program with respect to the things that need to be done in this province.

I was particularly impressed when he said at one point that he was pleased with the Government's forestry programme. He said, "I am pleased with the Government's forestry programme, and I don't just take that from the Government; I take it from people who know what they are talking about." There was never a truer word spoken.

I also want to offer my congratulations to the member from Moose Jaw (Mr. Heming) who did a very excellent job in helping to point out the interdependence and the inter-relationship between labour and farmer in this province, and I think his remarks were particularly apt at a time when there are those in this country who are seeking to drive a wedge between farmer and labour. Never was there a time when we needed to realize so much the inter-dependence of these two great groups, in which the farmer is dependent upon the purchasing power of the labourer, and the labourer dependent for his employment on the purchasing power of the great farming community. I am sure that both the workers and farmers of this province must have listened with a great deal of interest to the excellent speech made by the member from Moose Jaw.

I would like, also, Mr. Speaker, in order to save time when the Orders of the Day are up, to express our pleasure of having with us students from the University. It has become an annual affair, ever since the Minister of Social Welfare first came forward with the idea, to have groups of students attend on two days of the Session — I am not sure they are the two best days, the days when they have to listen to the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Government. I hope they don't think that all the other days of the Session are as quiet and everybody is this self-restrained as we are in the first two days. In these first few days we are on our dignity, and we are sort of trying to give an impression of statesmanship, which I can assure you will deteriorate very fast when we get into the hurly-burly of the discussion. But we are delighted to have these students with us. We think it is important that

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they should have an opportunity of hearing the public issues of the province discussed. We hope that some day some of them will be sitting in the seats which we now occupy, and whether they are in the provincial House or in some other position of public responsibility, we know that they are destined to play a part in the democratic life of Canada.

I should like, Mr. Speaker, to extend my congratulations to the Leader of the Opposition, first of all on his election to the high position which he now holds, namely, the leadership of his party and the position of Leader of the Opposition in this Chamber. The position of Leader of the Opposition in a parliamentary form of government is an extremely important position. It has a two-fold function. The first is that of criticizing the government, keeping it on its toes, examining public accounts, and giving the public every opportunity of knowing exactly the nature of public business which is being transacted. That is important. The opposition are the watch-dogs of the government, and I think it is a singularly significant thing that, in parliamentary government, there should be such a position of Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition. In other words the people pay someone to watch the government and, believe me it is a good idea and it is a full-time job.

The second function of the Leader of the Opposition is that the people may know that at all times there are individuals who are becoming increasingly familiar with government, who are trained in the practice of government administration, so that, if and when the people decide to remove the government that is in, there is another group of people ready and prepared to take over the responsibilities of office. That it is an important position. As I have said to the Leader of the Opposition privately, and I now say again to him publicly, in the onerous task which he has undertaken I am sure he will have the co-operation and the understanding and assistance of all of us on this side of the House.

I think it is a matter of congratulation to the Liberal Party that they have selected the young man is the Leader. I think they need a young man. I think they need someone who does not have to get into office for too many years, and who can afford to wait 20 or 30 years until the people of this province want to make a change.

I am not going to go on to discuss the speech which was made by the Hon. Leader on the Opposition. I shall reserve my remarks with reference to his speech until later. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to move the adjournment of the Debate.

(Debate Adjourned)

The Assembly adjourned at 4:40 o'clock.