

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**Fourth Session - Seventeenth Legislature**  
**40th Day**

**Friday, March 29, 1974**

The Assembly met at 2:30 o'clock p.m.  
On the Orders of the Day.

**WELCOME TO STUDENTS**

**Mr. F. Meakes** (Touchwood): — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to this House a group of 42 Grade Ten students from Kelliher High School under their teachers, Mr. Ledingham and Mrs. Olekson, in the west gallery. I hope that their stay here today is an educational one besides a pleasant one. And may they benefit from their studies in the coming year from this visit. I wish them a safe journey home.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet I should like to introduce a second group of 8 adult students from Lestock, they are upgrading students under their teacher, Mr. Tusa. I wish them, as well, a pleasant journey home and an instructional day while they are here.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. A. Thibault** (Melfort-Kinistino): — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure on behalf of Mr. Cody who is the Member for Watrous, to introduce a fine group of students from Cudworth. They are led here by their teachers, Mr. Peter Yuzik and Mr. Jim Bridgeman. Their bus driver is Mr. John Diakiu. There are 34 students from Grade Eight. They have toured the city since this morning and this afternoon they are visiting, I believe, the telephone building and I am sure that this day is going to be an educational one and I hope that today will be an exemplary one in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all Members will join with me in welcoming this fine group of students from Cudworth.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. H. H. Rolfes** (Saskatoon Nutana South): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and to the House a group of 33 students from St. Francis School. St. Francis — the actual building is not in my constituency — is about a block outside of my constituency, but many of the students who attended St. Francis School, however, do live in my constituency. They are Grade Seven and Eight students. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Nicholson and Mr. McGartlin. I had the opportunity to spend one hour with them, last Monday, to discuss with them the procedures in the House. I hope the hour will be worth-while. I will be meeting with them this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. W.A. Robbins** (Saskatoon Nutana Centre): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to add a word of welcome to the students from St. Francis School and their teachers Mr. Nicholson and Mr. McGartlin. I do this because I welcome any group of students to the Assembly, but I understand they are now in the new constituency of Saskatoon Nutana which is, in the main, the constituency I currently represent, Saskatoon Nutana Centre.

I appreciate very much the fact that they are here today and I sincerely hope they enjoy a reasonable educational experience. I hope along with the Member for Nutana South to speak to them shortly after they leave the Chamber.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. R. Romanow** (Saskatoon Riversdale): — Mr. Speaker, St. Francis is probably the most welcomed school in the history of this Assembly. I simply want to welcome them because they are still in Riversdale constituency. That was in the good old days when we had the distribution done. I welcome the students, I hope they find their visit here entertaining and informative.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## STATEMENTS

### Oil Policy

**Mr. A.E. Blakeney** (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I announced the provisions of an agreement regarding the increase in the price of crude oil in Canada. I also mentioned that today I would indicate what measures our Government would propose to alleviate the impact of this increase as it is reflected in gasoline and petroleum products prices on Saskatchewan consumers.

During the debate on Bill 42, we argued that the windfall profits accruing from the increase in the price of crude oil should benefit the people of the province and not the international oil companies. We indicated that this natural advantage we have as an oil producing province should be reflected in the prices which our consumers pay for their petroleum products.

Accordingly, today, I will announce the measures which we will propose to introduce to shelter the Saskatchewan consumer from the increase in the price of gasoline by the increase in the price of crude oil.

Effectively May 15 the gasoline tax in Saskatchewan will be reduced from 9 cents per gallon to 12 cents per gallon — a reduction of 7 cents per gallon.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — This move will reduce the costs of Saskatchewan motorists by approximately \$19 million. When this reduction is combined with the transfer of 3 cents per gallon to the AAIA fund, the total reduction in gasoline tax will be 10 cents

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per gallon, and will effectively bring Saskatchewan's tax rate to what I believe to be the lowest in Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — On May 15th we propose to reduce the tax on diesel fuel, used on highways from 21 cents per gallon to 16 cents per gallon. This will reduce the revenues accruing to the province from this tax by about two and one-quarter million dollars per year.

While these selective tax reductions are of benefit to users of taxable gasoline, they do little for our farming community who use tax free gasoline for their farming operations. Accordingly, effective May 15 we shall be introducing a farm cost reduction program.

Under this program the Government will be compensating farmers for their increased costs of production due to the increases in the costs of purple gasoline and diesel fuel used in farm production up to a level of 7 cents per gallon.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — We estimate that this Government of Saskatchewan roughly \$14 million per year and reduce farm operating costs by up to 3 per cent.

The date of May 15 has been selected as the commencement date since the Federal Minister of Energy Mines and Resources has requested that the oil companies not raise their retail prices for six weeks when their inventories of gasoline and other fuels produced from low cost crude will have been depleted.

For the companies to do otherwise, i.e. for the companies to increase their prices immediately, would result what we would think to be unjustified windfall profits accruing to them at the expense of the Canadian consumer. We would certainly hope that the companies would adhere to the request from the Hon. Donald Macdonald.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — In total the measures I have proposed today will save the Saskatchewan consumers approximately \$35 million a year.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. D. G. Steuart** (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, we welcome the announcement by the Premier, we looked forward to this when Bill 42 was brought in and the promise was then made to protect the Saskatchewan consumer against any possible rise in the price of oil and oil products because of the world market situation. I presume this will do it. I presume what we have heard is that this will cover the increase that can be anticipated.

I look forward to finding out from the Premier or from the Finance Minister, if they intend to take that amount of money- if he said it I missed, I am sorry – if they intend to

take that amount of money in from the oil revenue into general revenue, reducing the gas tax to 12 cents from 19 cents and the fact that they have siphoned off 3 cents is going to mean that we have an effective gas tax now of 9 cents a gallon which is pretty drastic drop. This is fine now when we have very buoyant revenues. I wonder if the amount to replace that money will be earmarked from the revenue from oil down the road for any distance so that a year or two or three years from now when things return to normal – if they ever return to normal. Future administrations may find themselves in great difficulty if they are looking at an effective gasoline tax of 9 cents.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Steuart:** — I didn't hear the muttering of the gum chewing Minister for Moose Jaw but I am sure if he said something intelligent it was purely by chance.

**An Hon. Member:** — Don't worry about that.

**Mr. Steuart:** — We probably will have to worry about that, that's why I raised the question. I look forward to hearing that there will be a transfer from oil revenues into general revenues, as a matter of fact, I can't understand why the oil revenue is not going to be taken into general revenue, unless there are agreements with the Federal Government. As was said yesterday by someone on the national scene, there is a little bit of funny work going on to fiddle some of the other provinces out of what might be considered their rightful share of the tax equalization grants. Of course, if Saskatchewan was joined in the fiddle – well I suppose we can't complain. I presume some other governments may have something to say about that later on.

Anyway, we welcome this, and as I say we look forward to an explanation of how they intend to replace these revenues, if in fact they do, from oil revenue.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### SUSPENSION OF MEMBER FROM LEGISLATURE

**Mr. C. P. MacDonald** (Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Privilege, before the Orders of the Day, I wish to make a very brief statement on the events of last evening.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, order! I don't think that private Members should make statements on Orders of the Day. Furthermore, I think what happened last evening should not be raised at this time.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Mr. Speaker, since when is it your ruling, Sir, that a Member cannot rise on a Point of Privilege?

**Mr. Speaker:** — If a Member has a Point of Privilege, he should state just what the Point of Privilege is, and acquaint the Chair with the Point of Privilege. But not to try to make a statement of what had happened and so on. The bare facts of a privilege should be raised.

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**Mr. MacDonald:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, may I point out what my Point of Privilege is to you, is that your ruling?

**Mr. Speaker:** — I am willing to entertain your Point of Privilege, if you are rising on a Point of Personal Privilege.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — It will be very brief, Mr. Speaker. I personally regret the sequence of events that occurred last evening. However, I can in no way regret the principle that I expressed in remaining firm in my decision to call upon the Member for Nutana South (Mr. Rolfes) to provide the proof of his accusations against me personally and against an unnamed civil servant. I wish to repeat, Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely unaware that at any time during the leadership campaign did any civil servant campaign for me on government time. I have also checked with my campaign committee, they also deny the allegation and they have substantiated my position.

The real issue here, Mr. Speaker, is the honor and integrity of the public service of Saskatchewan.

I wish to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that I will introduce a Bill that will prevent this unfortunate circumstance from occurring in the future.

First, it will guarantee the right of any civil servant in Saskatchewan to participate in municipal, provincial or federal politics as a candidate and assure his right to leave of absence to campaign.

Second, guarantee the right of any civil servant to participate in our democratic system outside his hours of work and on his own time.

The third, and most important, to prohibit any government from granting a leave of absence to a civil servant to actively campaign on behalf of a political party other than as a candidate. It will prevent the government of the day using the taxpayers' money to build up a bank of political organizers that can be used in an election campaign.

I expect, and I believe that the public of Saskatchewan will expect, that the Member for Nutana South will provide the name of the civil servant and what is more important, the evidence to back up his charges. It is unthinkable that this Legislature can be used by any Member to make an unsubstantiated attack on the good name of public servants working in the Department of Welfare or any other department.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### **RULING BY MR. SPEAKER**

**Mr. Speaker:** — Under the circumstances we are prepared to entertain the full statement of the Hon. Member, I would say the last half of it did not altogether comply with a Point of Personal Privilege because it was just a notice of introduction of a bill.

What I would like to read to the Members, Beauschene, page 126, Citation 145, which I think covers the problem we ran into

yesterday. I quote:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers in the Canadian Commons that a statement by an Hon. Member respecting himself and peculiar within his own knowledge must be accepted. But it is not unparliamentary to temporarily criticize statements made by the Member as being contrary to the facts. But no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. A statement made by a Member in his place is considered as made upon honor and cannot be questioned in the House or out of the House.

I think that along with the statement made by the Member for Milestone should close the incident at this time.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### PRIORITY OF DEBATE – PRIVATE SESSIONS OF CROWN CORPORATIONS COMMITTEE

**Mr. J. C. McIsaac** (Wilkie): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day, I should like to ask for leave under Rule 17 to move a motion asking for the Priority of Debate for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance. I regret the lack of two hours' notice, part of the problem being the matter I referred to arose out of today's edition of the Leader-Post which I happened to see about 1:15 this afternoon. I want to state the subject matter to be as follows:

Today's report that Government Members of the Crown Corporations Committee, a Committee established by the Legislative Assembly, have held private sessions, at the request of the Ministers, to question Corporation representatives.

The reported reason given by the Chairman of the Crown Corporation Committee for these secret meetings was to give Government Members an opportunity to question Corporation officials in private prior to the regular public meetings of the Crown Corporations Committee. This represents a serious breach of the spirit under which the Crown Corporations Committee was established.

Therefore, this Assembly should order the Chairman of the Crown Corporations Committee and the Members of the Executive Council to cease and desist from this practice.

As I say again, I certainly suggest, Mr. Speaker, this is a very urgent matter dealing with the privilege of all Members of this House. And the abuse of privilege I suggest that this Committee is perpetrating and as I say, I regret I didn't have notice. I do ask that priority to debate be given this matter.

**Mr. Speaker:** — I have the notice from the Hon. Member for Wilkie and as the Member for Wilkie has mentioned I have had no prior notice whatsoever of it so I haven't had the chance to peruse all the various rules which may apply to this type of a motion. Rule 17 says that two hours' notice shall be given but it also gives the Speaker the right to waive the time if he so feels. Now this is a situation the Member pointed out which he had no knowledge of until after lunch time today, which he could not

raise on an earlier occasion. I am not trying, at this time, to judge what the facts are, whether the statement is correct or incorrect, whether meetings have in fact or have not been held. That is not my job to judge. But I do think the House would want to express its opinion on this allegation if it is correct in fact or not. They would like to express their opinion on it. So I believe that under Rule 17 that the Speaker can waive his right to have the debate so I will ask the House if Members are agreed that the Hon. Member should have leave to proceed with this debate.

**Mr. R. Romanow** (Attorney General): — Mr. Speaker, just before you do put that question, I am wondering if I can rise on a Point of Order. This depends I suppose to a large extent on what the interpretation of the words ‘public importance’ are to mean in terms of this motion. My submission to you, Mr. Speaker, is that what we are really talking about is something which may relate to Members’ privileges, Members’ rights. But the meaning of the words ‘public importance’ really have a different connotation. It has a connotation of “public” in the sense of external from the conduct and activity of Members here, problems of public issues of the day, public debates or public problems that arise. When we are talking about ‘urgent public importance’ we are not really talking about urgent importance of the Members’ rights. This is really what the Member is saying. If we are, we have other mechanisms for that. When we are talking about urgent public importance, we talk of something about feed grains subsidies or transportation or something of that nature. So I would argue, Mr. Speaker, not argue but I am just wondering if Mr. Speaker might consider the helpful or otherwise comments that I have to make with respect to the meaning of the words ‘public importance’.

**Mr. McIsaac:** — Mr. Speaker, just a word on that point raised by the Attorney General. Surely the Attorney General isn’t trying to tell the House or you, Sir, that the question of the privileges of the Members of this Legislature aren’t considered of public importance.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McIsaac:** — That’s the argument he tried to make as I listened to him. Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you, what could be more important than the rights of the duly elected Members of this House?

**Mr. D. G. Stuart** (Leader of the Opposition): — May I just talk briefly on a point the Attorney General raised. Crown Corporation meetings are now on, they will again resume the consideration of the reports of the Crown Corporations on Tuesday. All the members that are on the Crown Corporations Committee are elected MLAs and they have a prior responsibility over and above their political responsibility to the people that elect them. One of the reasons that a Crown Corporations Committee is set up is to make these very important Crown Corporations that are a vital part of the life and the fabric of Saskatchewan’s society, accountable to the Legislature and to the public through these open Crown Corporations meetings. It is an excellent forum. It’s a very distinct possibility that by having these secret meetings, as they have been described, that questions that should be asked publicly and answered publicly for the information of the public are dealt with on that basis and possibly for that

reason, and not only are the Members of this House being treated differently but it may be that the public is denied some information that is vital to them, vital to their understanding and their appreciation of what happens in Crown Corporations. So I think it is important and I think there is some urgency that this matter be settled.

**Mr. Speaker:** — I realize the point the Attorney General made which I believe is well taken. Yet at the same time it puts the Chair in a difficult position to make a ruling on this type of a case. Because whether the statements as listed here by the Member for Wilkie (Mr. McIsaac) are correct or not is, as I said, beside the point but there are certain statements made that meetings are being held ahead of the official meetings. So I don't see anything in the rules that says that a meeting should or should not be held, or it could or it couldn't be. Before I make a definite ruling I know the Leader of the Opposition thought this, but I think he was speaking to the subject matter of what the Member wishes to raise because this is the type of a topic which has not come to this Legislature before and I will ask Members not to speak on the subject matter. If they wish to speak on what they feel the rule should be to guide me in my endeavor to make a ruling on it, but Members may only speak once on speaking to a ruling because it isn't a back and forth, open free debate. Are there any members who have any more they wish to say on the ruling before I make a ruling on it?

**Mr. Meakes** (Touchwood): — Mr. Speaker, I rise only on one point. I don't claim to be an authority on rules but I have heard you a number of times, the Chair a number of times say that we cannot go on the reports of newspapers. As I understood the Hon. friend from Cut Knife (Mr. Kwasnica) said he read it in the paper. I don't know whether that would apply in this ruling or not but I have heard you tell Members that we should not, in this kind of a situation use newspaper reports.

**Mr. C. P. MacDonald** (Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention a work about the urgency of this matter. A Crown Corporation is a public corporation. It does not operate under the auspices of any political party. The urgency of this debate is the fact that this Crown Corporations group may meet again or there may be another secret meeting involving the confidentiality of a public corporation. What information was divulged in these private secret meetings, to Members of a political party, not a legislative committee. For example, SEDCO. What loans? The Intercontinental financial statements. There could be so much information of a confidential nature that is not the prerogative of any one political party and is public knowledge if it is to be revealed. Second, there is a real threat to the rights of civil servants when they are being forced to appear before a political party and an NDP caucus . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — . . . the subject matter of the motion.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Mr. Speaker, I am. Here are the civil servants who are supposed to be independent and an independent corporation are being forced to come to a meeting at the request of their Minister. That is the urgency, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is a matter of urgent public importance because of those two



aspects. And I do hope that you will stand by your original ruling.

**Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, if I might with your permission again speak to the Point of Order, that is to say the matter of public importance. I think those are the words to this . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — He spoke before I asked the House to give me a discussion on the rules, so I will entertain — I am not trying to be too strict I want to try and get this off the ground right.

**Mr. Romanow:** — I would just refer your honour to your ruling on November 30, 1973, in the Debates and Proceedings on page 10. Your honour there outlines some of the rules and determining what is the matter subject to immediate debate. I would quote from page 10, your honour said as follows:

I would refer Members to Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, 17th edition, pages 364 to 370 and further . . .

Then you quote from Erskine May:

A motion for priority of debate must involve the administrative responsibility of the Government and it must be so pressing that public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention.

Now the key words there, Mr. Speaker, I refer to what I said earlier about public importance, are "Administrative responsibility of the Government". The Crown Corporations Committee is not an administrative arm of the government. The activities of the Crown Corporation in committee are not administrative functions of the Government. The activities or the non-activities of the Crown Corporations Committee are the activities of this legislative body. If Erskine May is correct, then I would argue to you, Sir, that the debate must involve an administrative responsibility of the Government, something that the Government can be held accountable for. With respect, Sir, that is not the case in this case. We are dealing here with an administrative responsibility of the House, if I can put it in those terms, and not an administrative responsibility of the Government. I would suggest, respectfully, that this matter can be passed on for judgement or comment by the Members at another equally advantageous opportunity, private Member's resolution. But the key words, Mr. Speaker, I say to you on Erskine May and on the precedent is the words, "Administrative responsibility of the Government." Surely this does not involve the administrative responsibility of the Government.

**Mr. E. F. Gardner** (Moosomin): — Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Crown Corporations Committee, I would certainly have to suggest that Crown corporations are an administrative responsibility of the Government. I would also have to suggest that the Crown Corporations are certainly a function of this Legislature. I believe that as a result of today's disclosure the meetings to date of the Crown Corporations that we have had may have been held under a cloud of suspicion in the minds of the general public, and I say 'may' but certainly with the disclosure that we have had, and I am not going into the subject matter of it, but I believe that this cloud should be removed from the operations of the Crown

Corporations Committee and subsequently on the operations of the Crown Corporations. I believe that the only way to do this is to have the debate and get to the bottom of the matter and certainly this would remove the cloud and suspicion that people may have because of the report that we have today.

**Mr. E. C. Malone** (Regina Lakeview): — Mr. Speaker, if I may I should like to use the Attorney General's remarks earlier on this Point of Order, just to prove the case that the Member for Wilkie has brought to you. Crown Corporations are a definite administrative responsibility of the Government. One of the checks on those corporations is through the Crown Corporations meetings that we have. If those meetings are in any way infringed upon or tampered with in any matter, I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is a matter of urgent public importance. The matter before you is directly pointed up, as the Attorney General has indicated in his remarks to you, that these Crown corporations are the direct responsibility administratively of the Government, they are being questioned in these Crown corporations, therefore, this matter is properly before you.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Well, I think this is one of the most difficult positions for the Chair.

**Mr. K. R. MacLeod** (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if I can contribute much more before you make a decision. But I should like to refer to the last time we dealt with this, if I may, Mr. Speaker. One of the problems that you, Mr. Speaker, face is the question of the administrative capacity of the Government to deal with this and the remarks that were quoted by the Hon. Attorney General say that on a motion for priority of debate, the debate must involve the administrative responsibility of the Government. Now, Mr. Speaker, I presume that the Government referred to is the government of the forum in which we are dealing, namely this Legislature, not the legislative authority of some other government because otherwise we could wander around with priority of debate all over the place, which is exactly what the Government has attempted to do in the past, Mr. Speaker. On the 25th of February, 1972, in fact the Hon. the Premier sought to have priority of debate and did so on the export of grain through the Pacific coast ports, a matter which was rather far afield from our own duties in the House here today. Now, Mr. Speaker, I would urge you and I understand the difficulty you are facing, when the Government obviously doesn't want to debate the matter and the Attorney General is persuading you not to allow it. The rules I think, therefore, must be interpreted in such a way that, quite frankly, it is a matter of the administration of the Government of this day. Quite frankly, this is something that is, I suggest, within the realm of the rules clearly, because, first of all it is a matter of urgency. We must deal with it now if we are going to deal with it effectively. I think the timing is very important.

Secondly, it is clearly a matter within the administrative competence of this House.

Now the third argument I put to your honour is this, that it is a matter for the public. The Attorney General has suggested to you that something of public importance is something that is

entirely separate from this Government or separate from this Legislature. Mr. Speaker, what I am doing here and what you are doing here and I suggest what all of us are doing here is of supreme public importance. There is just nothing that we are doing that is of more public importance than the procedures of this House and the rights and duties of democratically elected Members of this Legislature. When it comes to a question of public importance, nothing is more publicly important than what we are doing in this Committee. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. the Attorney General has attempted too narrowly to interpret the rules.

**Mr. J. R. Messer** (Minister of Agriculture): — Mr. Speaker, before making a ruling I wonder if I could ask you to consider some remarks that you made November 30, 1973 when there was a request for priority of debate? You said, Sir, on page 10 of the Debates and Proceedings, the official report for the Session of 1973-74, and I quote you, Sir, Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, Fourth Edition, Citation 100, page 89. You say a Priority of Debate cannot take place on a grievance that is continuing. The fact that new information has been received regarding a matter that has been continuing for some time does not in itself make the matter one of urgency. A motion for Priority of Debate is also out of order if the matter can be debated in the ordinary manner with the proper notice or in a major debate such as the Address and Reply and the Budget Debate.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to say in regard to that quotation that you made from Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules that the Hon. Members of the Opposition have every right and opportunity now to put a Resolution or a Motion on the Order Paper which can and could be debated Tuesday next. I'm informed that there are no Crown Corporation meetings to be held until at least Wednesday of next week. This would give them the opportunity to debate the matter fully in an ordinary manner, before any other meetings of Crown Corporations were held which seems to be their primary concern. The fact that there may or may not be meetings that are held between Members of the Government and officials of those Crown Corporations and then how those meetings may influence the Crown Corporations meetings that follow with representatives from both Opposition and Government. So I suggest, in relation to the quotation that you and I have both referred to, that they are able to handle the matter in a normal fashion.

**Mr. G. B. Grant** (Regina Whitmore Park): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak to the point raised by the Attorney General. If I understand him correctly, now I many have misinterpreted what he said, but I think he said the Crown Corporation Committee is not an administrative arm of the Government. Really the subject matter of the Motion by the Member for Wilkie (Mr. McIsaac) is not referring really to the Crown Corporations Committee. It refers to actions by Crown Corporations personnel and it's my understanding that the actions of those people is certainly part of the administrative arm of the Government. When a Minister of a Crown Corporation brings in staff from that Crown Corporation to sit down with MLAs it seems to me that it's bordering on the administrative arm of government. The Member, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Messer) has suggested that this matter can wait. I present

that it can't wait. It is of public importance and these Crown Corporation Committee meetings are open to the public, the public are welcome to come and listen to anything that goes on, but the meeting that is in question as mentioned in the Leader-Post was not open to the public. These are meetings that are being held in private through actions of the Government and, therefore, I maintain, Mr. Speaker, that your ruling should be in favor of Priority of Debate and we should proceed with it.

**Mr. A. R. Guy** (Athabasca): — Mr. Speaker, on this Point of Order, in reply to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Messer). He says that there will be time to debate it, perhaps next Tuesday. Now, it's only the twelve or thirteen Members of the Crown Corporations Committee that perhaps know today when the next meeting will be held. Members of the Legislature as such, are not aware when the next meeting of the Crown Corporations will be held. It could be held on Monday for all that Members and members of the public are aware. Members of the Crown Corporations may have additional information that is not available to other Members of this Legislature. All we know is that the Crown Corporations are meeting at...

**Mr. Speaker:** — Adjourned debates. The subject matter of the Motion. I want to stay right to the rules.

**Mr. Guy:** — Yes, I'm just getting to that, Mr. Speaker. I'm replying to the Point of Order that the Minister of Agriculture raised and all that I'm saying is that it is a matter of urgency because we don't know when the next meeting of Crown Corporations will be held. We don't know when the next secret meeting will be held, in fact, it could well be scheduled for later this afternoon, prior to the next meeting of the Crown Corporations. We don't know that. All we're saying is, is that the public of Saskatchewan, now that they are aware that these private meetings are being held, have to have some concern and I think we have to debate this and get the facts before the public just as quickly as possible if the decorum of this Legislature is to be maintained.

**Mr. A. E. Blakeney** (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, I just want to add a couple of words to reinforce the points made and I think aptly made by Members of this side to the House.

Firstly, the rules make it perfectly clear that Priority of Debate resolutions can only be directed to matters which are the concern of the Government, the Government meaning the Premier and his Ministers. There's no question of that and I invite anyone to read Beauchesne or any other authority of that nature. That I think is perfectly clear. The fact that a Member of the Legislature may be meeting with someone is not relevant. The fact that a caucus may be meeting is not relevant. The fact that a caucus committee may be meeting, secret or otherwise, is not relevant. The fact, and before Hon. Members raise it, at least in my judgment, the fact that members of the public service meet with a caucus committee is not relevant, because it seems perfectly clear to me that unless the Premier in his administrative capacity should somehow have stopped this procedure or acted on it, then it's not within the administrative competence of the Government. It is clear I think that the

Government of the day is not in a position to stop meetings, secret, private, public of Members of either side of the House. If there is one thing that is clear, it's that Members of the Legislature meet when they want to and not when the Government of the day says they should meet. And if one thing is clear, it is that Members of the Legislature talk with whom they wish and not with whom the Government says they should. I personally have heard such statements in this Legislature and some will remember them. I think of the Member for Rosthern (Mr. Boldt) making it as pointed as he could that he would talk with any public servant any time he wished and that he wasn't about to have any Minister stopping him.

So I want to make a few of these points. These, I think, are well known customs of the House. Unless it's an action of the Government, then I think it's not an appropriate subject for debate. I suggest that one can read the article, read the statement or be aware of the facts and it will not be anything that is the responsibility of the Government. It is Members of the Legislature acting as they think they should act, wisely or unwisely.

Now it may be that this is a matter for the Committee on Privileges and Elections. This is the body we have set up to deal with the regulation of private Members' activities, and I don't for a moment suggest it is, but I am saying that if you don't like the way private Members are acting, you don't direct your complaints to the Government of the day. That, I think, is the argument and once again it is perfectly clear that the complaint is with respect to the meetings. You just have to read the statement to see that that is what they are complaining of, the secret meetings; so I think it's perfectly clear, on the basis of their statements, that the material complained of is not material, not actions that are the actions of the Government of the day. Accordingly, I think the comments of the Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) are sound and this is not an appropriate subject for Priority of Debate.

**Mr. McIsaac:** — This counter comment on, I have spoken earlier, I'm not sure of one point in your ruling.

**Mr. Speaker:** — You started debating the different comments back and forth.

**Mr. D. Boldt** (Rosthern): — Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to note that the Premier says only Members of the Legislature and not the Government. This article purely states as reported by Mr. Rolfes, Chairman of the Committee, the meetings are called by the Ministers and the Ministers are the Government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boldt:** — These meetings are called by the Ministers, not by Mr. Rolfes. Mr. Rolfes. Mr. Rolfes is forced, he is acting as Chairman and when you get the Crown Corporation people there, for instance SGIO. I don't know whether you have muzzled them in what kind of questions or answers they are supposed to give. It is apparent to me that when the facts are going to be known, the reason we want this debate is whether the Crown Corporations

Committee will want to call the other Crown Corporations back and discuss them again because of the secret meetings that have been held. I think it is a downright disgrace where 45 Members almost run this Government like Hitler did Germany. I think it's a shame, an outright shame.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, order! Let's stay to the rules.

**Mr. D. F. MacDonald** (Moose Jaw North): — Mr. Speaker, I should just like to comment on the comments of the Premier as he tried to wiggle his way out of this Priority of Debate. And he inferred that somehow this was a caucus committee and that it was not within the administrative competence of either himself or his Government to deal with. Well, Mr. Speaker, these meetings are called by the Premier or by the Premier's Ministers, one or the other. The Premier's Ministers are certainly within the administrative competence of this Government. It is the Ministers who have called this meeting. It is the Ministers who have ordered Crown Corporation employees to appear before a caucus committee, a committee of caucus. So that certainly is within the administrative competence of the Government when it is their Ministers who are ordering these meetings to be held and it clearly is of great public importance.

**Mr. J. G. Lane** (Lumsden): — Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps there are precedents which will answer a particular problem. I think we have to keep in mind, whether or not it is a matter of pressing public importance.

The Attorney General put great weight on the fact that this was not of public importance, that it dealt with the Members of the House and their activities. And he said, I believe, that for it to be a matter of public importance it had to be such things as freight rates and matters beyond the ken of the House if I am correct and he's nodding in agreement.

I'm going to cite Erskine May Parliamentary Practice, page 361 where rules governing subject matter of motions and it makes it quite clear at that page that the conduct of Members of the House, of judges, either House of Parliament and persons holding a position of a judge, the Speaker himself. It makes it quite clear that they are the subject matter of a debate and can be the subject matter of a debate. So when we are talking about matters of public importance, there is no doubt that the rules make it clear that that includes what happens within the Legislature and the Members themselves. So I'm saying quite simply, that the Attorney General's argument does not apply. What constitutes public importance by precedent includes the operations of Members of the House, Ministers of the Crown, etc. As to the matter of urgent public importance, I think that we have to keep in mind that if the allegations are true and I say 'if', then the next meeting of the Committee is Tuesday and surely if the allegations are correct, action should be taken prior to that meeting. I think it quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that this one is a situation where the Members should be given the opportunity to debate whether, first, are these allegations true; secondly, it is an urgent matter because the next meeting is Tuesday; thirdly, it is a matter of public importance by precedent and by the rules.

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**Mr. Speaker:** — Now I think we've had a good discussion from both sides and before I make a ruling I'd like to have a few minutes more to discuss with my Clerk.

Order! I think this is one of the most difficult tasks you kind people have given me to work on.

It is true that directly as he states it is not public importance, but it is of importance to Members and in turn the work that Members do is of importance to the public. Now the House can lay down the rules and regulations and when the House sets up its committees it lays down what the committees can or cannot do.

This question was never raised at that time, whether it could be taken to committee or not, but some Members feel grieved if this report, as given to me by the Member for Wilkie (Mr. McIsaac) is substantiated or if it is correct or not.

Now Section 7 of 17 says if objection is taken, Mr. Speaker request those Members who support the motion to rise in their place and if more than 15 Members rise accordingly, the Member who asked leave can then proceed. I think in this case it is a thing which affects the House and affects the Members. While I agree with the statements of the Premier that caucus meetings or committee meetings of caucus or others is not the business of this House, I think it is a thing that the House would like to decide on and make their own decision, whether they do agree with and are able to have that privilege of having caucus meetings and so forth. So objection has been taken so I'm going to ask the Members to rise and see if more than 15 rise. Those in favor that this shall be proceeded with, please rise.

Agreed to, by a vote of 17.

**Mr. McIsaac:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and I want to thank all Members of the Assembly for a very . . .

**Mr. Romanow:** — How about thanking Al?

**Mr. MacIsaac:** — Yes, I want to thank all Members, that certainly includes the Attorney General and the Premier.

For I suggest a very careful consideration of a very serious matter of urgent public importance. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, to you that nothing could be more important than the rules and the practices and the procedures of this Assembly insofar as they affect the rights of individual Members. And I would hope at the end of my remarks now, to make a Motion for the Priority of Debate be given to the reported private meetings of the Government Members of the Crown Corporations Committee and Members of the Executive Council with corporation officials. We can debate that and hopefully at the conclusion of that debate come up with a motion referring the entire question perhaps to the Committee on Privileges or Rules and Procedures.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the practice as reported in the Leader-Post today on page 14 under the byline of Fred Harrison of the Leader-Post, parts of an interview with the Member for Nutana South (Mr. Rolfes) admit of a practice that's

nothing short of a despicable practice.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McIsaac:** — It's the kind of action we've come to expect from that particular Member. It's also the kind of activity . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order! I've got to ask Members on this debate to make sure we don't get personal with one Member, so that I hope we can debate the matter so we don't get into a side track on it.

**Mr. McIsaac:** — Mr. Speaker, I assure you I don't intend to call him a liar, or anything like that. I don't wish to, but I do say that his actions in this regard typify the actions of this NDP since they have come to power with respect to dealing with this House. I only have to look at a small pamphlet that I have in my pocket, that came out dealing with a piece of legislation that hasn't even been given second reading yet. I am speaking about the pamphlet titled "Information About the Saskatchewan Foreign Ownership Act, 1974." If that isn't flaunting this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is. I suggest to you that is the kind of activity that we have seen too often, too repeatedly from the Government opposite.

The concern here, these private meetings are being held, first of all indicates that these Crown Corporations are not Crown Corporations and public corporations responsible to the Legislature, set up by and on behalf of the people of the province, responsible to the people of the province, but responsible to the Legislature. They are not the pawns of the NDP.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McIsaac:** — Mr. Speaker, for example, the seriousness of this practice and I would expect the Chairman of the Crown Corporations Committee, the Member for Nutana South (Mr. Rolfes) to rise in this debate and expand on the comments that he has made to the Press in this regard. Take for example, a Crown Corporation such as SEDCO, as an illustration.

What information may have been given this junior NDP addition of the Crown Corporations Committee in private that was, indeed, not given or refused to the sitting of the Committee, the Legislative Committee, where both parties from both sides of the House were represented. We don't know. We have not knowledge, no idea. We have no knowledge, for example what policies or what programs of any of these Crown Corporations may well have been discussed and elaborated on, in detail, in those private meetings, prior to the open public meeting.

I want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that all of those meetings held particularly where there were the four meetings referred to, are well out of order and should be considered again. They should come again before the Crown Corporations Committee. We don't know what material or what information may have been disclosed to NDP Members who attended those meetings, that, indeed, altered the course of the questioning or altered the



course of the meeting, or altered the conduct of the Minister or, indeed, his officials at those meetings.

Mr. Speaker, again, I suggest that this is a deplorable action on the part of the, not so much the chairman of the Crown Corporations Committee – who knows he may have been acting at the request of the NDP caucus, perhaps he was acting as he says in the report, at the request of individual Ministers, whether all the Ministers or not, we don't know. But I certainly say that this matter should be given the top priority at the next meeting of the Crown Corporations Committee. I want also to call for the resignation of the Chairman of that Committee and I want to call for disclosure from all Ministers who did, in fact, request private pre-meetings, to use the term employed by the Member for Nutana South, the Chairman of that Committee. Mr. Speaker, I would move that:

Priority of debate be given to the reported private meetings of the Government Members of the Crown Corporations Committee and members of the Executive Council, with corporations officials.

Seconded by Mr. Gardner, the Member for Moosomin.

**Mr. D. Boldt** (Rosthern): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words regarding this Motion.

During the discussion on the Motion itself a considerable degree of debate was given to what were the functions of the Crown Corporations Committee and it was suggested there was really no administration level at all from the Committee regarding the administration of certain Crown corporations, or I should say, all of the Crown corporations. But we do, at times, very often and the minutes will disclose, that we do make recommendations, suggestions, some individuals have some complaints to make about certain Crown corporations, particularly the Member for Redberry (Mr. Michayluk) who is very upset with some administrative policy of Sask Tel and he has every right to be. When you look at the Estimates for 1975, on page 88, Sask Telecommunications, this Legislature is going to vote \$28.5 million for the corporation. We are going to vote \$15 million for Saskoil; we are going to vote \$50 million for SEDCO; we are going to vote for the Saskatchewan Power Corporations, \$17 millions. If these corporations have had all their financial statements discussed within the Crown Corporations Committee, surely we have the responsibility as a committee, to examine their books, to make recommendations. There are many functions, and if we have no responsibilities, there is really no need for us to sit at all.

In reference to the statement that really bothers me is the headline itself, "NDP Members meet in Private to Question Corporation Officials." And the meetings are called at the Minister's request, according to the report given by the Member for Saskatoon Nutana (Mr. Rolfes).

**Mr. Romanow**: — No, No, not according to that report.

**Mr. Boldt**: — Well, he reported to the paper.

**An Hon. Member**: — You read the paper?

**Mr. Boldt:** — The meetings are called at the Ministers' requests.

Herman Rolfes, Saskatoon Nutana South, the Chairman, says he keeps order at the meetings, maintains the speaking order and informs Members when the meetings are to be held, but says he could not be called a full-fledged chairman of the meetings.

Now if the Minister of the Saskatchewan Government Insurance has called the Executive with the NDP Members, what kind of questions have you told your Members to ask, in the committee meetings? Have you muzzled them and told them not to give the kind of answers that we might seek? That is a very grey area. Then the Member for Nutana South goes on to say that he also claimed that the present committee proceedings marked a drastic change — that certainly is a drastic change, private meetings, secret meetings, from what the Liberal Government had. There were no such things as private meetings.

**Mr. Romanow:** — Read what he says about . . .

**Mr. Boldt:** — Yes, I want to.

Before that Liberal Members of the Committee simply sat and did nothing.

The member for Nutana has made a statement here and I don't want to refer to last night, but, boy he is stretching the truth. He is not telling the truth he knows it. He has nothing to back up what he said. He never was at one of those meetings. Liberal Members questioned the Ministers when we were the Government, maybe not as often, but Liberal Members asked, as the Premier said before. Every Member of the Legislature had the right to go privately to a Crown corporation and ask for information. Private Members, both Government and Opposition Members came to see me on certain individual cases and they had every right to. I believe that we served, and I don't want to suggest that you are not serving me properly now as I have no complaint on that level. The only area of complaint is the secret meetings that you have with Members of the Crown Corporations Committee aside from the main Committee.

I want to agree with the Member for Wilkie, who pointed out very clearly that in certain regards I have respect for the Member for Nutana, but I should like the Premier to reconvene the Crown Corporations Committee.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — I don't convene the Crown Corporations Committee.

**Mr. Boldt:** — Well, then the Legislative Assembly, reconvene the Legislative Members and let's re-elect a new Committee Chairman.

I think the Government, the Ministers, have overstepped their privileges. The present kind of Crown Corporations meetings that we have today is just a farce. I don't know if there is any value in continuing them. And if this should be done maybe we should have a little more confidence, we might recall some of the other Crown Corporation Committees, the Crown Corporation personnel back and question them some more.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** — Before we go any further, I should like to mention that under 17 10 (b) it says, “Not more than one matter can be discussed on the same Motion.” I don’t want to be too restrictive, but as to whether the Crown Corporations Committee as such should have another Chairman or they shouldn’t, that is not in the Motion given to me by the Member for Wilkie. I hope that we stay strictly to what is the reported matter on the so-called meetings. Any further discussion?

**Mr. D.G. Stuart** (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, I think to begin with all MLAs should remember in this debate or think about as a result of this debate, exactly what their responsibilities are.

The responsibilities of all elected MLAs are first, I believe, on a broad basis, to the people who elected them. We run as Party Members, one Party elects most of the Members and the leader of that Party is asked to form a government. He selects 12, 14 or 15, in this case, 18 people, and those people become the Cabinet and they become the Government. The Members on that side who are invited to become part of that Government are, in many ways, no different than the Members on this side, except that they happen to be supporters of the philosophy of the Government.

But surely in our democracy and if our parliamentary system is to work, they are not and never should be tied to body and soul and committed to every action of the Government, every action of every Cabinet Minister. Now, what has this got to do with this particular problem, this particular situation?

The Cabinet, and you can’t escape the responsibility, the Cabinet Ministers are also in charge of the Crown corporations. As one of the responsibilities of the Premier, he allocates the chairmanship of the Power Corporation, of SGIO and all the Crown Corporations, usually to a Cabinet Minister. Now I don’t know if this has to be done legally, if this is by legislation, it may well be, but it is either legally called for or certainly it has been the practice. So when these secret meetings take place, it means that the officials of the Crown Corporations have been ordered to appear by the Cabinet Ministers.

Certainly it is the tradition of the parliamentary system that the Cabinet Ministers don’t act independently. If the Premier didn’t know that this was going on then I suggest that he should have known it was going on. It is the Government’s responsibility because if it wasn’t for the Government, if it wasn’t for the Cabinet Ministers, those officials of the Crown Corporations would not appear and they would not answer questions.

This is a far cry from an ordinary MLA picking up the phone and phoning Dick Keith, the head of SPC, or phoning the head of SGIO and asking him a question. He may or may not give you the answer, he doesn’t have to. I have usually found that both in Opposition and in government that the people in the Crown Corporations are most co-operative. If they can give you information that is not privileged, that is not private, they will usually do it because they recognize the position of the MLA is, in fact, different than the position of an ordinary citizen and while, legally, they don’t have to give this information, I have always found them, and I am sure all Members

have, very co-operative.

They expect, in turn I imagine, a certain amount of responsibility from the MLAs if they happen to give them privileged information. And from time to time we get privileged information. We get a complaint from a citizen and we will phone or go and see an official of a Crown Corporation and they explain it and there is usually two sides to the story and very often the story which we have received from the individual is only half the story. We get the other half of the story from the Crown corporation official and we are able to make a decision and go back and say, we don't think you have a case, or yes, we will take your case a little further, or whatever. That is a totally different thing, than for a Minister of the Crown having his officials appear and sit down with Members of the NDP who also happen to be members of the Crown Corporations Committee, and having this question period back and forth and for what reason? Obviously for the reason that if there are any hot potatoes or embarrassing questions, let's clear them up first so they don't come out to the public and they don't embarrass the Government. That was stated in the article.

I am not going to say that this hasn't happened from time to time with all governments. Of course it has! A Member will come along who has a pet beef about a Crown Corporation – and I have done it myself as the chairman of a variety of Crown Corporations – I have gone to the individual member and said that I know that you have a complaint and let's try and get it settled before it is brought up before the public. I make no apologies for that.

This again, is a far different cry from an organized system where the Government is using its power to force these Crown corporation officials to come and be subjected to questioning by a certain group of people. This isn't the same thing as a little caucus meeting where you might meet with the Chamber of Commerce, or you might meet with the Farmer's Union or some other group, this is a group of people who are employed in Crown corporations and who have had the chairman of their board, the man who has a tremendous amount of power over their jobs, over their future, has said, 'you appear at 9:00 o'clock and meet with a group of people to answer questions'. And that group of people happens to be NDP and they happen to be Members of the Crown Corporations Committee.

Then at 10:00 o'clock the doors are open and in come the public, and in come the Members of the Crown Corporations from the Opposition. Okay, by that time what has happened? Who knows what information has passed back and forth? Who knows what legitimate questions have been answered? But one thing we do know is that legitimate information is being denied to Members on this side of the House. That is important but not nearly as important as the fact that that legitimate information is being denied to the public and this is serious. I think it is an arrogant and reprehensible breach of etiquette and of the spirit of the rules of why those Crown Corporations were set up.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Steuart:** — I think what this means, if it is carried on, and if it is allowed to continue, that we will have to examine our position in Crown Corporations. Now the Government might say, go ahead

and examine it, that is your problem. I am aware that the Crown Corporations Committee is set up by the Legislative Assembly. I am also aware that they are responsible to the Legislative Assembly, but I am also aware, when the chairman of the board of SPC tells the officials of SPC to show up at 9:00 o'clock and answer the questions of the NDP Members, they are going to do it. Of course, they are going to do it, because the chairman of the Board of SPC has a tremendous amount of power over them. He can say whether they will be promoted or demoted, or they will get a large increase in salary or a low increase in salary. He, in fact, even has the power of the officials outside of the union, to say that they might even lose their jobs. Of course, they are going to do what the Cabinet Ministers tell them to do. So let the Premier not stand up in this House and say that this is just an ordinary little meeting for information by the caucus group who have every right in the world to do this. They, of course, have every right to have that meeting. Where the immorality in this situation comes in – and it is an immoral situation, it is not proper – is when the Cabinet Ministers use their power actually, according to the report, to convene the meeting and then force the Crown Corporations employees to come and be subjected to this sort of private secret quizzing.

I think it should be stopped. One of the better things about our Legislative Assembly, when I say the Legislative Assembly I am talking about all of our practices, including our committee meetings, has been the Crown Corporations Committee meetings.

We have all kinds of committees set up and a great many of them never meet. And if they meet it might be every two or three years and not many people pay much attention to them.

One of the finer things about the committee work in connection with the Crown Corporations is, that, they are held accountable, that is the one time when the public through their elected MLAs on both sides of the House can get to the bottom of what is happening in every part of the Power Corporation, every part of the Telephones, every part of the SGIO. I will grant you that of all the questions asked, 60, 70 or 80 per cent don't mean a great deal and they may just be of a political nature. But the 25 or 30 per cent that are genuine and need asking and answers come, have been good. They have kept the Crown Corporations generally in this province, very high in the public's esteem. From time to time the Crown Corporations have been subject to very sharp and bitter political debate. They have been political footballs. We have opposed a great many of the Crown Corporations. But I can tell the House this, from my experience, and I will use the Saskatchewan Power Corporation as an example, the SPC used to be a terrible political football. The SPC would be in front of the Crown Corporations Committee for three or four days and political allegations would fly back and forth, when we were the Opposition before, when you people were the Opposition, and now again when we are the Opposition. But I have seen – all of us have seen – the SPC come up in the esteem of Members on both sides of the House and as a result, of the public, to where today it is not nearly the political football it was five or ten years ago.

I think all of us, if we are honest, will admit that that has been a good thing. Good, sharp questioning of the officials of a giant important corporation like the Power Corporation is sound and is necessary. But there have been times – and I have

been as guilty as anyone else when we have indeed embarked on questioning of the Power Corporation — that were strictly of a political nature and may even have done some harm. But over the years, because there has been that open public debate, sharp as it has been, sometimes irrelevant but because it has been open and honest and public, the reputation of the SPC has improved. And anything that will downgrade, anything that will undercut, anything that will literally make a farce of Crown Corporations hearings should be stopped. And the Premier has the power to stop it. And I call on him, not to get up and defend this practice because I think it is indefensible, but to just listen to this House and then go back and say, okay, we won't do it any more. Because if you don't then I say that the whole principle and the whole idea of accountability of the Crown Corporations to the public through that open public forum stands in jeopardy. We don't debate Crown Corporations in this House, but we do debate them in the Crown Corporations Committee. It has been a good exercise. I think that it stands in danger today of becoming a farce if these preconditioning meetings, these secret meetings are allowed to continue.

I was amazed and shocked when I read that this was happening. Because let no one try to delude anybody that this is just a practice that is being carried on, and boys will be boys, and it is not really any different than what the Liberals did or the old CCF did or maybe it is a little different but just organized better. It is much different, totally different, brand new. It is a distinct departure, it is a very bad practice and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the public pressure and the feeling of the Members on both sides of the House will see that it is stopped and stopped immediately.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. K.R. MacLeod** (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I just have a few remarks to address to this Motion.

The principal purpose of these meetings obviously is to give the Government Members a chance to raise matters and deal in private with something which they might not want to raise in public.

I suppose that is a question for the Members' own consciences and the responsibility to their own electors. If, in fact, they choose to discover things and keep it secret, things which they properly as MLAs ought to disclose to the public, that's their dereliction of duty and it's for their own consciences and something which I condemn, but go no farther.

The one thing that I consider most serious about this, is the fact that the public officials, the people who work for the Government of Saskatchewan and thus the people of Saskatchewan are put in an embarrassing and compromising position.

These meetings were held under the auspices or under the direction of a Minister. The public employees had really no choice but to present themselves to a Party caucus. They have no choice but to attend, not a committee of this House, not the Legislature, not to MLAs as such, but to a private group of

New Democrats (who happen to be elected to this House) for the purposes of having them questioned about affairs of the Government and about affairs which the Government may not wish to have made public.

These officials must certainly have been embarrassed and annoyed at having been ordered to attend before this private arrangement. There is just no reason as I see it, Mr. Speaker, why public officials are to be put in this position. They were expecting or they had the right to expect to be called before a committee of this Legislature. I am sure that they stand ready and willing at all times to appear before a properly constituted meeting of this Legislature to answer for their work of the past year. I am sure also, Mr. Speaker, that they are prepared to report to their Minister and answer for their conduct and take instructions. But it is inconceivable and it is contrary to the idea of a sound, responsible and loyal civil service that they should be required to attend and report to an individual party. Certainly the Liberal Party had never suggested that the civil service must report to us as a party. They must report to the Government. Consequently, I most seriously condemn, and what I consider urgent and public importance is, the problem that this can raise among our civil servants, if they are under the constant threat of being called to testify before the governing party as distinguished from the Government and the Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, there is another matter which concerns us. I am a member of a different Committee on a regular basis, but I have attended at the Crown Corporations meetings, although I do not do so as a regular member of that committee. I was struck, Mr. Speaker, at the singular absence of true and full information and I don't want the word true to be misconstrued, Mr. Speaker. I am not suggesting that anyone has lied to me, not in the least, but I am suggesting, however, that I was impressed at how difficult it was to extract full information from the Government with respect to its Crown corporations affairs. I am concerned that that will continue, and I now believe it may well be as a result of the influence of what are referred to as pre-meeting meetings. There is no question in my mind that the subject matter of the day was discussed in these pre-meetings – these secret meetings – and anything that might embarrass the Government was dealt with in such a manner that the answers would divulge the least amount of information to the Opposition and to the people of Saskatchewan and put the Government in the very best light regardless of how it should have been expressed to give the full and proper picture of what went on.

There is no doubt about it that any satisfactory results in the presentation of information fully and frankly has been seriously impeded by these secret meetings that occurred just before the regular meetings.

**Mr. Romanow:** — Nonsense!

**Mr. MacLeod:** — Well, the Hon. Attorney General says that it is nonsense. But I invite the Minister to join the debate, but I have no doubt that there were discussions on how the information has to be presented and matters which ought properly . . . .

**Mr. Romanow:** — Every Minister is coached.

**Mr. MacLeod:** — I am pleased to see that the Hon. Attorney General is willing to express himself on the point and I invite him to stand and participate in the debate fully and completely.

Mr. Speaker, this matter will undoubtedly come again to this Legislature, I am concerned about these two particular matters. One is that there is an obvious coaching of the Minister, if no one else, on what is to happen. Perhaps that is appropriate, perhaps it is not. All I know is that I had a lot of trouble getting appropriate information.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacLeod:** — Perhaps I should rephrase that but I shall plunge on.

Secondly, there is no question at all that the civil service must view these proceedings with considerable alarm. And of all the remarks I make, that is the one I should like to emphasize because I consider in the long term that one is the most serious for the people of Saskatchewan. I congratulate the Speaker for having struggled the way he did to come to what I think is a very fair decision and one that I recognize was more than a little difficult to the Hon. Mr. Speaker. I wish also to congratulate the Members of the Government who stood to see to it that we did get the opportunity to express ourselves on behalf of the Motion.

**Mr. E. F. Gardner** (Moosomin): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to join with my colleague for Albert Park in congratulating those two Members opposite out of some 40 odd who did see fit to support us.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gardner:** — We realize this is a rather small percentage that believe that this debate is of great public urgency and I suppose two out of 40 something is better than nothing. We didn't really expect that there would be a large number who believed in freedom of speech in this House. I was rather sorry to see that none of the Crown Corporations Committee members stood up.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — Order, Mr. Speaker . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, I will draw your attention to the fact that not more than one matter can be discussed on this same motion. The Motion is exactly what was placed by the Member for Wilkie, no more or no less.

**Mr. Gardner:** — I will stick to this and I am pleased to hear the Premier is a member of the Committee, I hadn't noticed him at the meetings.

The key question, then, Mr. Speaker, is certainly why did certain Ministers request these pre-meetings? I would think that this is really the nub of the whole debate. So far we don't know. Why do certain Ministers request secretly and privately to discuss certain operations of the Crown Corporations with NDP Members only? I would think that the Ministers



responsible in this regard should certainly rise in this debate and indicate why they have called these pre-meetings, why they have called their officials together. We are hoping that they will let us know in this debate.

What we are concerned about, of course, is why certain information would be presented to some members of the Committee. Why should information be given privately, for example, to the Member for Redberry or Gravelbourg and not to the MLA, the Member for Cannington or Moosomin? We should like to know what would be discussed that would not be available to all Members and, therefore, to the general public.

I want to emphasize again that the situation we are discussing is not in any way the same as a private MLA taking a specific problem to some official of a Crown corporation. I think other Members have brought this out, that this is a different situation.

I would again suggest that the Ministers who have requested these meetings and this is the information that we have, if it is not correct I hope they would say so. But the Ministers who have requested these meetings should indicate the reason for requesting them and clear the air in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that no more meetings certainly of the Crown Corporations Committee should be held until this matter is thoroughly investigated. I believe that the meetings that have been held are now under a cloud of suspicion because of the events that we have had referred to us. And the public will certainly suspect that full disclosure has not been possible because Crown Corporations officials and the Minister and NDP Members previously discussed, probably what should be emphasized or what should be brought out in the Committee. I agree that Opposition Members can attempt to question many other things, but certainly there must be some transactions that they agree that will not be brought up.

I would very strongly suggest that the Premier consider recommending that the Crown Corporations that we have examined so far, be recalled, so that full disclosure will not only be possible but that the public – and this is the important part – that the public will be satisfied that this has been done. I again should like to say, that as a Member I am concerned about the fact that pre-meetings have been held. Those of us who walked in there at ten o'clock to a Crown Corporation meeting certainly had no way of knowing that some secret and private meeting with these same officials had been going on for an hour or so prior to the time that we had to go in. We asked certain questions, they answered them. We don't know whether certain information was brought out in these pre-meetings that was not available to us. I would hope that a full investigation is made of this and that these particular actions be taken.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. T. L. Hanson** (Qu'Appelle-Wolseley): — Mr. Speaker, I think this debate is totally irrelevant.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hanson:** — I point out to the Members opposite that we are

Government Members. And we are going to be continuing meeting as caucus committee with departments, Crown Corporations, and unlike the Members opposite who operated under a two-man dictatorship, we are going to do this, when and if the Government of the Government Members feel that they want to.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hanson:** — We have a strong intelligent questioning backbench who are taking an active part in working with all branches of government. You are not part of the Government as such and you meet these people only under the privileges of this House, in most cases.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Are you a part of the Government?

**Mr. Hanson:** — Yes, I am.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — No, you are not.

**Mr. Hanson:** — I am not part of the recognized Government as such of this Assembly but I am part of the Government. I am not a member of the Crown Corporations Committee, but I feel perfectly entitled to meet with any Minister and his staff, whether it be departmental or Crown Corporations, at any time that it is convenient to either of the groups. I am part of this Government and take an active part in governing and developing policy and assessing performance of branches of government.

The Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) complained that he can't get the answers and I would suggest that he can't even keep a train of thought for more than three minutes. I suggest that possibly he is not capable of doing his job. I say, that we on this side of the House, are capable of managing our time and the time of our employees and their corporations wisely and I make no apologies for this.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. A. E. Blakeney** (Premier): — Minister I have another commitment, but I did want to add a few words to this debate, because it seems to me that we are hearing some very strange doctrine here today.

We are hearing some very strange doctrine when it is suggested that there is something wrong with a Minister taking his officials and meeting with some people, one person, or two persons, or three persons. I tell you this, Mr. Speaker, and all Members of this House, I propose to continue to ask officials for background information if somebody comes into my office wanting some information that I don't have. I propose to continue to ask officials to come in.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — And if two people come into my office I will do the same thing. And if there are any MLAs who want to do that, I will do the same thing.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — And if the Minister of Industry wants to meet with his officials, with a group of MLAs, I see nothing wrong with that. If Members opposite see something wrong with that, if they think it is wrong and inappropriate for a Minister with his officials, to meet with a group of MLAs, I want to know what is wrong with it, because I say that it is perfectly proper. It is a different style, I know, than when I was a Member of the Crown Corporations Committee, probably every year since I have been in this House. I have probably spent as much time in the Crown Corporations Committee as any Member opposite.

**An Hon. Member:** — Not this year.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — Not this year, I admit. I am in Government this year. When I was in Opposition I regarded as my job, as an Opposition MLA, to get the information out of that Committee.

Members opposite are in effect complaining because they don't know what questions to ask. They don't know how to get information and they are saying that the Government Members are somehow being given information that they would otherwise ask in the Committee. Therefore, they say that the Opposition is being cut off from information. I say to you, ask your questions. I say to you, read your reports and study your material and ask your questions.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — Because my report of the Committee this year shows two things: (1) that no questions have been asked which have not been reasonably answered in the Crown Corporations Committee, in accordance with past practice; (2) that Government Members as opposed to Opposition Members are asking more questions and moving more Motions than at any time in the history of the Committee.

**Mr. Lane:** — They are told what to do.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — The Member for Lumsden (Mr. Lane) says they are being told what to do. Well, I don't want to wash our dirty linen in public, but I say that a reasonable number of the Motions put forward by the Members behind me were not put there at the instance of a Minister of the Crown. I am afraid, in one sense of the word, but I am happy to say, in another sense of the word, that the Members behind me feel free to ask whatever questions they want and to move any Motions that they want. One short look at the minutes of the Committee, and I have read every single set of minutes this year, indicates that they are exercising that right in a way which Members opposite didn't do in their seven years.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — I attended virtually every meeting of the Crown Corporations Committee from 1964 to 1970 and I know that the function of the Members of the Government was to sit in silence and vote, to sit in silence and vote. There could have been any number of pre-meetings, or none, and it wouldn't have

affected the operations of the Committee one jot or tittle. Because they sat in silence and voted. Members opposite were here; Members behind were here. It is perfectly clear under those circumstances that the object of that Committee in informing their Members about the object of that Committee in informing their Members about the operations of Crown Corporations was not a very usefully performed favor, because they simply didn't ask questions.

Now Members on this side of the House are asking questions, lots of them, in the Crown Corporations Committee. They are moving Motions in the Crown Corporations Committee. They are asking questions privately too. I would suggest that when the Members opposite were in the government it would have been a good idea for them had they asked what was going on in their Government. They should have troubled themselves to meet with the Ministers. Perhaps they thought they shouldn't talk to the officials, but I say to them, as I say to all Members of this House, that Members should talk with Ministers. Furthermore, if they want to organize it in a way that the Minister has his officials there so that seven or eight of them can get all their questions on say, the Power Corporation asked at one time, there is nothing wrong with that. It seems to me a perfectly proper and appropriate function of caucus.

There is a suggestion that somehow public servants should not be asked with their Minister, and I underline that, with their Minister, to be at meetings with MLAs. If that is so, I say, that is bad doctrine. A Minister should certainly protect his officials. However, having said that, there is nothing wrong with the Minister and his officials meeting with a group of citizens, a group of MLAs, or a group of anybody else who wants information and has the legitimate right to get it.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lane:** — Coach, well coached.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — I don't mind what happens at one of these private meetings, whether the public servants coach the Minister or the Minister coaches the MLAs. The Opposition, I know, will dig out the facts and if they don't they are not going their job.

**Mr. Lane:** — Not if they are coached.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — It is remarkable for the Member for Lumsden to suggest that any amount of pre-work done by a Committee could in any way stop a well-informed, hard-driving Opposition from getting the facts that they should get for the benefit of the public. Maybe the Member for Albert Park is having a lot of trouble getting answers, but it may not be that the information isn't there; it may be that he is not asking for the information.

It seems perfectly clear to me that the idea of having the meetings, in the manner suggested, is proper and appropriate. There is nothing wrong with a Minister and his officials meeting with caucus Members.

**Mr. Steuart:** — You are lowering the morality of this House.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — All I can say is that the

Member for Prince Albert West will be informed as to what may lower the morality of this Legislature. But I say to him that the conduct of the Crown Corporations Committee this year, as a forum where all Members both Government and Opposition have asked questions, has been livelier (and I think if you are not too busy waving the article, you can see that it says that too), livelier than it has been for many years. It is livelier because the Government Members were asking questions; livelier because the Government people were informed; livelier because they are asking questions; livelier because they are making Motions. Read the minutes and you will see Government Members moving Motions; many of them the Minister asks Committee Members to vote against. Now I know that perhaps would not have happened in your well disciplined days.

I say to all Members that if that is the result of hard-digging by Government Members before a Crown Corporations Committee, that is a positively beneficial result.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — And to suggest that there is anything wrong with a Minister and officials meeting with people that, I say, is bad doctrine. I say it is destructive of the right of MLAs to get information, all the information they can, before they go into a committee meeting.

I say that MLAs have an obligation to get information by asking public officials, by asking Ministers with public officials, in private, at private meetings, in public, at public meetings. An MLA must inform himself by whatever route he can use. To suggest that this is somehow wrong or inappropriate is simply to indicate that Members opposite, when they were in government, made a practice of muzzling their MLAs. I invite anyone to look at the minutes for those seven years and see how many Motions were moved by Members of the Government side, how many new proposals were put forward by the Government side. Those are a matter of public record. I say their role was to be silent and to vote and I think that is an inappropriate role for MLAs. I think that lowered the morale of this House and I think the idea of having a committee where people go well-informed and ask questions and challenge the Minister, as they do, is a role which adds stature and lustre to this House.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Blakeney:** — I say . . .

**Mr. Lane:** — . . . they know the answers.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — It is obvious the Member for Lumsden has not been in attendance at the Committee meetings, because he would know that, in fact, the debate has been lively as the report indicated.

**Mr. Lane:** — So is the Ed Sullivan Show very lively.

**Mr. Blakeney:** — Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I will allow the Member for Lumsden to direct his remarks when he is on his feet. He obviously has difficulty keeping his mouth closed when he is sitting down or

his mouth open when he is standing up.

In short, I say to this House that the activities of the MLAs who have met with corporation officials, with their Minister, are perfectly proper activities; that they represent a proper and appropriate function of an MLA in discharging his obligations; that there is not a shred of evidence that this work has made them more silent in the committee meetings. There is not a shred of evidence that the committee meetings have in any way been less lively, less controversial, or that fewer questions have been asked; not a shred of evidence! I say that on the record the meetings have been better and the MLAs are better informed. That is what they are elected to do and they have done it. I call that good government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. C. P. MacDonald** (Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Members of the House that this is not the first time we have had secret meetings by the NDP. I remember the last time we had a controversial bill introduced in this House, it was on the Ward System.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, order!

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Mr. Speaker, I am talking about secret meetings.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Yes, but we are talking about what the Member for Wilkie raised on the Motion, the meetings prior to the Crown Corporations. We can't just move all over the ballfield.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier talked about all the meetings that officials come into his office, he talked about meetings that individuals come in to see him, I am talking about the same kind of a meeting, no other.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP called a secret meeting in this building to subvert the public of the city of Saskatoon and Regina to force and blackmail the hotline, to organize the public meetings so that they would force the public of Saskatchewan to accept the Ward System. That is the kind of secret meeting and this is the second time.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order! The Hon. Member should realize that the Ward System is not mentioned here. When a Member brings it in it precipitates the answers back to it and the first thing we know we are on an open rink.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier tried to stand up here and tell us that the purpose of the secret pre-meeting is to inform the Members of the Legislature, to inform the Members of their caucus, to give them information. That is not what Mr. Rolfes says. Let me tell you what Mr. Rolfes says:

This meeting was called, Mr. Rolfes defended, what has become known to Government MLAs as pre-meetings on ground that they did not mean a Government Member may

not later make his criticism public. It is not that we want to prevent any Member from bringing up anything, but if we can avoid the embarrassing of the Government then I think we have an obligation not to embarrass the Government.

And that is the purpose of those secret meetings.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacDonald:** — There is no other reason. The Premier stood up and tried to say, why back in those seven years of government, that those Crown corporations weren't as lively. I attended those meetings for seven years. And to suggest that Matt Brecker and George Leith and some of the other Members, Dave Boldt and other Members of the Crown Corporation Committee from the Liberal Government, didn't put forth more arguments and more ideas and more debates – I sat in three Crown Corporations meetings this year, one of the SGIO, and the only mention or the only words that the NDP said was when Mike Feduniak stood up to argue and debate something that one of the Liberals said. They never put forward one idea or never expressed one opinion, and don't suggest they are any more efficient because I know they are not. In fact I think they are rubber stamps, and the biggest rubber stamps I have ever seen.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Mr. Speaker, there are two real issues here. When you go into Crown Corporations it has been the tradition of the elected Members to treat officials very, very delicately. In fact, the official is not even permitted or supposed to speak in a Crown Corporation. The only time he speaks is with the permission of the Minister when he asks the permission of the Crown Corporations Committee and then asks the official if he will speak. And the reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is because we respect and defend as Members of this House, the right of privacy and the privilege of confidentiality and not to embarrass those officials of any Crown Corporation.

When a Minister has Estimates in this House, he brings his officials in. Those officials are here for one purpose and that is to act as a resource to provide him with information that may not be on his fingertips, not to be subject to an inquisition by Members of this House, whether they be Opposition or Government. And these pre-meetings to have the Minister order his officials to come to a meeting and then have an inquisition by a pre-meeting of the NDP caucus, is to me despicable. It is a despicable practice, and there is no way that they can justify it.

I am disappointed that the Premier is trying to make an analogy or comparison of the MLA seeking information from a Crown Corporation and comparing this meeting, like a dress rehearsal, and that is what it is, a dress rehearsal. Just like the play that is going to be put on tomorrow night, so we get together with the costumes, the makeup, the background, the hypocrisy, and setting the stage and setting the background. In other words, the dress rehearsal for what's to proceed in a public meeting of a public corporation which is to provide public information. That's the difference between this meeting and the meeting that the Premier is trying to talk about and I'm ashamed to have any Member stand up there and defend that

practice. And I'm disappointed in the Premier because I thought the Premier would stand up and say, I regret this. I don't think the Members had any intention of doing wrong. But I regret this and I will see that it will not happen again.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just think of the treatment by that Government of civil servants. They have acted as if they only had a prerogative in questioning civil servants. I don't want to stray too far from the subject, Mr. Speaker, or you will call me back to order. But I question whether a Member in this House should use them to bring in votes. Another member of the civil service was helping a campaign manager, thus bringing them in to be the exclusive prerogative of a political party. This is against the very rights and the very principles of an independent public service.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what a businessman must think, who is negotiating with SEDCO or has made a loan from SEDCO, a man who perhaps may not be sympathetic to the NDP. I wonder what kind of a cloud is over SEDCO today? I wonder what kind of suspicions that that particular businessman has, that here before the public discussion a staged, dress rehearsal, a secret pre-meeting of the Crown Corporations Committee is held where Members of the NDP caucus are able to enquire into the business of that corporation, not the business that's made public, not the business according to the Members themselves' statements, not the business of the corporation that is to be made public, but any business of the corporation. I wonder how many of those businessmen really today, have confidence in the confidentiality of the officials of SEDCO? I wonder how many men made a loan from SEDCO and are wondering what collateral and what his assets and what the terms and conditions of that loan have been revealed to Members of the NDP Government. And it may be nothing. But any time you hold a secret meeting, prior to a public meeting to set the stage and indoctrinate a portion of the Government Members, then surely every businessman in Saskatchewan must have some serious reservations about the confidentiality of such proceedings. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't blame them. And I'm going to say that I am disappointed that the Premier would make an analogy or a comparison of this dress rehearsal with a meeting of MLAs with Government officials attempting to get legitimate information and legitimate briefing. And the Members themselves, including the Chairman of the Crown Corporations, has said that that was not the purpose of the meeting. I invite all Members of the NDP to read the statement made by the Chairman of Crown Corporations. He did not say it was an education program, he did not say it was an information program, it was deliberately called to prevent embarrassment for the Government in the public discussions. And, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to Government Members that no matter whether or not you support this Resolution or vote it down, that you've done irreparable harm to the system of Crown Corporations in the Province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacDonald:** — Irreparable harm. I suggest to you that there will be many, many questions asked about your method of government, about your treatment of civil servants and that there will be a cloud and a suspicion on the Crown Corporations in the Province of Saskatchewan unless you cease and desist from this practice. I urge you in all honesty, outside of the ranks of politics, outside the ranks of this particular Legislature. And I say that



honestly, that you turn around and evaluate honestly that kind of policy. And I suggest to you that every Member on that side of the House knows that he is wrong. I suggest to you that every Member on that side of the House knows that that policy is wrong and I urge you to examine carefully the wisdom of your decision when you stand up to vote in this particular Motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. K. Thorson** (Minister of Industry and Commerce): — Mr. Speaker, this debate reveals three characteristics of the Liberal Party. One is, Mr. Speaker, that they do not respect civil servants.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Thorson:** — They suggest that somehow civil servants are weak-kneed, cowering people who have no integrity. The Member for Milestone (Mr. MacDonald) who has just sat down, inferred that somehow the civil servants would reveal confidentialities that they should not reveal. That's the attitude towards civil servants, that they should be weak-kneed and cowering people in the face of Ministers.

**Mr. MacDonald:** — On a Point of Order, Mr. Speaker. I said that the people of Saskatchewan would be suspicious whether they did or not and they will be suspicious.

**Mr. Speaker:** — This is a debating point and the Minister is debating the statements made.

**Mr. Thorson:** — Mr. Speaker, it's debates of this kind, as I say, that reveal some of the fundamental philosophy of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan and that's one, that civil servants should not have integrity or independence or pride in their work. They should bow and cower to a Minister of the Crown.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that you just ask any civil servant who has worked in Saskatchewan whether he would prefer the kind of conditions and atmosphere that prevailed while this Government was in office or while the previous Liberal Government was in office.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Thorson:** — And I say further, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the public servants in the Crown Corporations that they do have integrity, that they do not reveal information which is given to them in confidence.

A second characteristic, Mr. Speaker, revealed by this debate which is held dearly, apparently by the Liberal Party, is that they really don't want people to have freedom of speech, they really don't want people to be able to move freely and communicate freely one with another. That somehow or other if a Member of the Legislature and a Minister of the Crown and public servants meet together they shouldn't talk to each other,

shouldn't exchange information. That somehow that is wrong.

The third characteristic, Mr. Speaker, is that the Liberal Party is opposed to freedom of association. Somehow or other it is wrong, if I judge by what they have said this afternoon, it's wrong for Ministers of the Crown, public servants in Crown Corporations, Members of the Legislature, to meet together. Somehow that's wrong. There is something sinister about that. That there is somehow, because they meet there's a secrecy about it, some kind of conspiracy to subvert the public interest, because they meet together.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's consider the implications of that attitude. What does it mean for public servants and for Members of the Legislature and for Minister of the Crown? Does it mean that we cannot meet together except with the permission of the Leader of the Opposition or the Speaker of the House or the Premier of the province? Does that mean a Member of the Legislature or a group of Members of the Legislature can't meet with the Minister or can't meet with a public servant, except by first getting permission from some other source, some other official? Surely not, Mr. Speaker. Yet that's the clear implication of what they're saying. Does it mean, Mr. Speaker, that if a Member of the Legislature or a group of the Members of the Legislature ask me as a Minister of the Crown for information which I know is available, say from the General Manager of the Power Corporation, and I call the General Manager of the Power Corporation and say I have a group of MLAs who would like to meet to get some information from you, does it mean that can't take place? Can't happen? Or if I phone up the General Manager of a Crown Corporation and invite him to come to my office and say there is a group of MLAs here who want to meet, who want to get information that they feel you will have, does it mean that he can't come or he shouldn't come? Surely not, Mr. Speaker.

I take it, Mr. Speaker, that what is really sticking in the throats of the Members of the Opposition is that they are not working as hard as the Members of the Government. They are not working to prepare themselves for sessions of the Crown Corporations Committee. And I know that the Members on this side of the House are working hard. I know that they are asking me for information. I know they are asking me for information. I know they are asking to get information which they know is within the knowledge of the General Manager of the Power Corporation and the Managing Director of SEDCO and I freely invited them and the officials to meet together with me to exchange information. And, Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to extend that invitation to all Members of the Legislature on either side of the House, if they wish to get that information, in that particular way or if they wish to prepare themselves for Crown Corporations meetings. Whether they meet in private or whether they meet on the street or whether they meet in a meeting room that's open to the public, I think is of little concern, one way or the other. The question is: are the Members of the Legislature free and uninhibited in their right to associate with other Members and Ministers and public servants? Are they free to ask questions and get information and to prepare themselves for the duties that they must discharge in a Crown Corporations Committee or in any other committee?

Mr. Speaker, we can ask ourselves three questions. One I have already dealt with. Is it wrong for meetings to be held between a Minister and officials and an MLA or a group of MLAs? Surely it would be wrong if that could not be done. Surely it would be wrong if the Members of the Legislature or the public

service did not have that freedom to meet and to talk and to exchange information.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a second question is: is any Member of the Legislature being restricted or inhibited from discharging his duties as a member of the Crown Corporations Committee?

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, order!

**Mr. Thorson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) made a little confession. He indicated that he was labouring under some restrictions and inhibitions, but I take it it was nothing to do with any Member on this side of the House or any public servant or any Minister of the Crown. It was a difficulty of his own.

I heard the Member for Lumsden (Mr. Lane) shout out that people in the Crown Corporations Committee are asking questions when they already know the answers. Well, now that's a strange exclamation of surprise from a member of the learned profession. All of the lawyers are taught not to ask questions unless you do know the answer, and I'm surprised that he hasn't learned that lesson. What surely, is more commendable to a Member of the Legislature and the Crown Corporations Committee that he has done his homework so well that he knows what facts he is trying to solicit from officials. That he knows what answers have to be given because he knows what the facts are.

**Mr. Lane:** — He knows they are going to be embarrassed.

**Mr. Thorson:** — I take it, Mr. Speaker, that what's really bothering them is that if the members of the Crown Corporations Committee will not go into the meetings and embarrass the Government that somehow that's wrong and they are not doing their job.

I think it's quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that no Member of this Assembly and certainly no member of the Crown Corporations Committee is being restricted in any way from discharging his full duties as a member of the Crown Corporations Committee regardless of what any other members are doing, regardless of what they are reading, regardless of what they are being told by other people. All of the members of the Crown Corporations Committee are perfectly free to discharge their duties as they see best.

Mr. Speaker, the third question is: does the Crown Corporations Committee function with less effectiveness because some Members of the Legislature have taken the trouble to inform themselves about certain aspects of the annual reports being considered or the activities of a Crown Corporation being considered? Surely the answer is, not at all! And if they undertake to inform themselves by attending meetings with the Minister before the Crown Corporations Committee meets or attending meetings with the Minister and officials before the Crown Corporations Committee meets and thereby informing themselves in that way, surely that does not restrict the effectiveness of the Crown Corporations Committee. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the evidence this year is that those Members of the Assembly who have been working hard and attending meetings and informing themselves have been very, very vigorous, very, very

effective, in the Crown Corporations Committee. And the Committee is functioning, I think, as well as in any of the years that I have known it and perhaps better than in a good many years, because of the vigorous activities of the members of that Committee, particularly the Members who support the Government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Thorson:** — Mr. Speaker, I could not and I ask all Members not to support the position taken by the Opposition in this debate: to suggest that Members should be restricted in their associations; that civil servants should be restricted in their associations; to suggest that people should be restricted in their freedom of speech and exchange of information at meetings in offices behind closed doors or outside, in public, or wherever they may meet and wherever they may speak; and worst of all, Mr. Speaker, to suggest as Members of the Opposition clearly do, that civil servants should somehow be cowering, weak-kneed people who are at the beck and call and who are prepared to subvert the public interest and undermine their own integrity because they are attending a meeting which is not attended by other Members of the Legislature. Mr. Speaker, that's wrong. We should say to the people of Saskatchewan that we do not accept this position of the Liberal Party, in their campaign against freedom of association, freedom of speech and further in their campaign to undermine the integrity of the public service.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. E. C. Malone** (Regina Lakeview): — Mr. Speaker, I wasn't intending on getting involved in this debate, because I'm not a member of Crown Corporations and I haven't had much experience with the procedure of the House in that regard. However, after listening to the Minister of Industry and Commerce (Mr. Thorson) speak I was moved to get on my feet because I've never heard such drivel in all my life. As well the emotional outburst of the Premier a few moments ago makes me only think that he protests too much and that the Government is very sensitive about this particular newspaper article.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it might be of some assistance to everybody if we got the debate back on to how it started and that is the newspaper article. The newspaper article dealt with secret meetings by Government Members, Government MLAs, with Crown Corporation officials to avoid embarrassing questions being asked at public meetings. That's what the article has dealt with and that is what this debate is about. I should like just to quote two or three passages from this article, Mr. Speaker, and see if the Government is going to dispute them. The Committee's Chairman said in interviews Wednesday and Thursday, "The meetings have been held to allow Government Members a chance to ask questions which they might not want to raise in public." Well, of course, the purpose of the Crown Corporation meetings is to raise these questions in public so that there is a public investigation.

Further, Mr. Speaker, he also claimed, that is the Member for Saskatoon Nutana (Mr. Rolfes), he also claimed the present Committee's proceedings marked a drastic change — I am sorry, wrong paragraph. "It is not that we want to prevent any Member

from bringing up anything but if we can avoid embarrassing the Government, then I think we have an obligation not to embarrass the Government.” Further, asked whether prior consultation might be construed as an attempt to limit embarrassing questions by Government Members, Mr. Rolfes replied, “Certainly, there is no doubt about that.”

Now let’s look at some of the things that the Minister of Industry (Mr. Thorson) has said. He has talked about freedom of speech. Well, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, where do you have freedom of speech more, in a public meeting or in a private meeting held with a Government Member and a Government Minister? I suggest in the public forum. Secondly, we have the Minister’s comments about freedom of association. Well surely freedom of association is best dealt with in a public meeting, not where a chairman or an official of one of these Crown Corporations is directed by the Minister in charge to appear in his office and meet with Government MLAs – some freedom of association, Mr. Speaker.

Further, there is a suggestion that we on this side have described civil servants as being weak-kneed and so on. That is just complete nonsense, Mr. Speaker, and does not even deserve to be commented on.

Mr. Speaker, if the Members opposite were truly performing the functions that they have been elected to do they would join with us and vote in favor of this Resolution.

**Mr. McIsaac:** — Mr. Speaker, I was amazed first of all earlier today when I read this particular article on page 14 outlining the thinking and the comments of the present chairman of the Crown Corporations Committee. I was amazed also in the course of this debate that that Member didn’t see fit to get up and expand on some of the comments that he made in that particular report. Mr. Speaker, I was also amazed to listen to some of the comments, very brief, made by some of the Members opposite. The Premier in particular and the Member for Estevan (Mr. Thorson) who just took his seat.

Mr. Speaker, I have no quarrel, neither has any Member on this side with any member of the public or any Member of the Legislative Assembly or any combination thereof, seeking a meeting at any time with Crown Corporation officials for the purpose of discussing policy or for the purpose of seeking information relative to a problem or a request from their constituency or dealing with their constituents, or really any subject they wish. There is no question about that. That is so primary, Mr. Speaker, and so obvious that I think this is the kind of argument that the Premier has tried to make in this debate. This is the kind of argument that the Member for Estevan tried to make that we are arguing against the freedom of association. But to compare that kind of information seeking, Mr. Speaker, that kind of expansion on policy to the kind of dress rehearsal as was so well stated by my seatmate here, is nonsense. If that meeting were for information or was for policy clarification, or for a constituency problem, why in the world were they held just before the Committee meeting? Don’t tell this House, Mr. Speaker, that that is a coincidence. No doubt it isn’t a coincidence and I would hope the Attorney General and the Premier instead of treating this entire breach of privilege of the members of that Committee and of the Members of this House in such a cavalier fashion that they

should immediately order their fellow Cabinet Ministers to cease and desist from that practice.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McIsaac:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, I am very serious when I say this is a smear, as far as I am concerned, on this Legislature. It is a smear on their Party, it's a smear on the political system. It's a smear on the political system. Surely at a time when Watergate has demeaned the political process in the eyes of a lot of people in the States and in Canada, all we don't need is a kind of move, a kind of activity that's going on with these pre-meetings, these prep sessions, these dress rehearsals for Committee members, these secret meetings conducted by this Party and this Government and these Members opposite. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker! I say to you that we are all jeopardized and the integrity of that of the Attorney General and his objectivity is open to question by him allowing that Chairman of that Committee to hold a secret meeting prior to the regular meeting of that Committee. I suggest it is a cheap, chintzy, rotten practice and I would hope that they will stop it just as soon as we are through with this debate.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

Priority of Debate negated on the following recorded division:

# **YEAS – 11**

Messieurs

Steuart	MacDonald (Milestone)	MacDonald (Moose Jaw North)
Coupland	McIsaac	Wiebe
Guy	Gardner	Malone
Grant	Lane	

# **NAYS – 29**

Messieurs

Blakeney	Pepper	Mostoway
Dyck	Michayluk	Gross
Meakes	Thorson	Comer
Smishek	Whelan	Rolfes
Romanow	Carlson	Lange
Messer	Robbins	Hanson
Snyder	Tchorzewski	Oliver
Thibault	Matsalla	Kaeding
Baker	Faris	Flasch
Brockelbank	Owens	Mostoway

# **QUESTIONS**

## **Secret Meetings Re SEDCO**

**Mr. A. R. Guy** (Athabasca): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I should like to direct a question to the Minister in charge of SEDCO (Mr. Thorson). I wish to ask the Minister if he held one of the secret meetings with the Government Members prior to the

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legitimate meeting of Crown Corporations with the intention of providing confidential information not available to the whole Committee?

**Hon. K. Thorson** (Minister of Industry): — Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer is 'No'.

**Mr. Guy:** — Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. It was reported by the Chairman of the Committee that such a meeting was held. I was wondering what the information was that was provided.

**Mr. Thorson:** — Mr. Speaker, the question was whether I had any meeting in which I undertook to give information or intended to give information to other Members that I wouldn't give to the Committee and the answer to that question is 'No'.

**Mr. Guy:** — My supplementary question is: did the Minister provide financial statements of all the companies in which SEDCO has equity? Did he provide the names of the companies which received loans and guarantees from SEDCO? Did he supply information given to the Government in confidence about the financial position of any company in Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Thorson:** — Mr. Speaker, the answer is 'No'.

## MOTIONS FOR RETURN

### Return No. 171

Mr. D. G. Steuart (Leader of the Opposition) moved that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 171 showing:

As of March 26, 1974, the amount of money that was paid by Government Departments, Boards, Commissions, Agencies and Crown Corporations to Ad Sask Agencies.

**Hon. R. Romanow** (Attorney General): — I couldn't quite figure out why the usually eloquent Leader of the Opposition was so tongue-tied on this particular motion. I came to the quick conclusion that it had to be because of the numerals 171, which in the minds of the Liberals opposite are bad numerals. But having said that I think that there is only one thing wrong with the motion to which I should like to propose an amendment to correct and that is there is no timetable for the request for information to Ad Sask Agencies. Presumably it is for the duration of the Government. I don't think it has been in operation that long. What I would propose to do, seconded by the Hon. Mr. Smishek, is amend it as follows:

That the following words be added after the word 'Agencies' in the last line: 'since January 1, 1971'.

Amendment agreed to.

The debate continues on the motion as amended.

**Hon. J. E. Brockelbank** (Minister of Government Services): — Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a couple of words on

the amendment and the motion. I think this amendment to the motion which has now been carried is a clear illustration of the point that we have been attempting to make today, that in order to get information you have to know how to ask a question. It is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition is unable to frame his questions in order to get the information. He has to depend on us to amend so that he can get the appropriate information.

Mr. Steuart: — Mr. Speaker, these questions are agreed upon and are made up by people in our office and I wasn't aware that the date wasn't on it. I appreciate the Attorney General putting forward this amendment and putting the question in order so that the information can be given to us. This happens often, it happened when we were the Government, and you would go across the table and the Clerk many times would hand back questions to people as illustrious as your own father when he was in the Opposition.

Now a criticism of this kind coming from that particular Member and Minister is odd when I recall us putting him through the questions for his own Department. In all the time I have been in the House I have never seen a Minister who showed so much ignorance about his Department and had so much difficulty as that particular Minister. If I were he I wouldn't point the finger at anybody on this side of the House or his side of the House suggesting that they do not know what they are doing, because I guarantee when your Estimates come up this time, you'll have a chance to show your stuff.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

Motion as amended agreed to.

### **Return No. 172**

Mr. G. B. Grant (Regina Whitmore Park) moved that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 172 showing:

A copy of the Feasibility Study done by R. M. and R. H. Scrivener Ltd., relating to the proposed Choceland Iron Ore Development.

**Hon. K. Thorson** (Minister of Industry): — Ordinarily studies done for the Government, unless it is contemplated at the time that the study is undertaken, are not made public. There are many such studies going on from time to time which the Government commissions have done. On that ground, Mr. Speaker, I would think it would not be a good precedent to follow to pass this motion. But in this case I may inform the House that the Government has not commissioned any such study by R. M. and R. H. Scrivener Ltd., referred to in the motion and so far as I am aware no Crown agency has commissioned such a study. So for that reason particularly in this case the motion should be defeated.

**Mr. C. P. MacDonald** (Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a word on this particular motion. It is unfortunate that the Government hasn't done a feasibility study because a few months ago the Province of Alberta announced that they were going to proceed with the development of the Peace River Iron Development. By doing so



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they may have cancelled once and for all the Choiceland iron deposit. They may well have put this aside for 10, 20, 30, 40 years, a major iron development for the Province of Saskatchewan. The Minister is well aware, as I was, that in a feasibility study when I was the Minister of Industry, by Kaisers Limited of Toronto, that the market availability for an iron ore deposit in western Canada, there was only room for one. The first one that has the opportunity to develop will be the only one developed perhaps for a long period of time and by cancelling that particular project two or three years ago may well have left that iron deposited in the ground for many, many years to come. I think it is regrettable if the Minister hasn't commissioned a feasibility study and I urge the Government to proceed with one at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Mr. G. B. Grant** (Regina Whitmore Park): — Minister the Scrivener Company have an interest in Choiceland Iron Mines and their feasibility study has indicated certain favourable features. I am a little surprised that the Government hasn't taken enough interest in Choiceland Iron Mines to avail themselves of this report.

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**Mr. Grant:** — The only report they have is one they commissioned themselves, which suited themselves and didn't paint too good a picture which is exactly what they wanted, then they flushed the Choiceland Iron Mines down the drain. In the meantime Alberta is gearing up and we all know that there is only room for one iron ore mine in western Canada to keep the steel industry going and if we don't get off our nether regions or parts we are going to find that the iron ore mine is up in the Peace River country and not in Choiceland. I know there is an argument in favor of disregarding the boundaries in corporations such as a steel plant but after all Alberta hasn't done too badly in the last few years and I don't think we should feel sorry for them if they lose the iron ore mine and I think it is up to us to beat our own drums and I would hope that the Minister would show some more interest in Choiceland, because every day, and every way, it is becoming more and more feasible. The only thing that has been against it in the past, is the economics, the costs of getting that ore up and refining it. With ore prices escalating like everything else that day is going to come. And if we don't get busy we are going to find that it is going to come in Alberta and not in Saskatchewan.

I would strongly urge the Minister to get busy and have one of his departmental officials communicate with Scrivener and Company and get a copy of the report.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

Motion negatived.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:14 o'clock p.m.