

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**Fourth Session - Seventeenth Legislature**  
**65th Day**

Monday, May 6, 1974.

The Assembly met at 10:00 o'clock a.m.  
On the Orders of the Day.

**STATEMENT**

**WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICES BY NURSES**

**HON. W.E. SMISHEK** (Minister of Public Health): — I want to make a statement Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day. I have been advised by the Saskatchewan Hospital Association that certain hospitals have been affected by a withdrawal of service by the registered nurses. At this hour the exact number of hospitals affected is unknown. I deeply regret the action taken by the nurses and I want to assure this House and the people of Saskatchewan that the Government stands ready to assist the two parties in finding a mutually agreeable settlement to the dispute.

At the outset I want to point out that the collective bargaining in this case is between the Saskatchewan Hospital Association SHA and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses who appear to be bargaining on behalf of the nurses. The Government, while naturally interested in the negotiations, is not directly involved in the bargaining process. Other than having an observer sitting in on negotiations and the Department of Labour is assisting the two parties with conciliation services.

I am told that the SHA was advised by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses that hospitals individually would be given sufficient official notice of any contemplated strike action and that a sufficient number of nurses would remain on duty to provide adequate emergency hospital services. My information is that very few hospitals received more than 15 hours notice. In fact, some were notified after 3 p.m. yesterday afternoon that the strike action would take place.

There appears to be some confusion as to how many nurses are officially represented by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. I am told that the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses has certification at only one hospital, Rosthern Union, SUN has certification for twelve in scope positions at Rosthern. Eight hospitals are certified under the Staff Nurses Association, that is St. Joseph's General Hospital, Estevan; Maple Creek Union Hospital; St. Peter's Hospital at Melville; Regina General Hospital; Pasqua Hospital; Saskatoon City Hospital; St. Paul's Hospital, Saskatoon and Wilkie Union Hospital. These hospitals account for 1,049 in scope nursing positions. The Canadian Union of Public Employees has certification for registered nurses at Arborfield Union Hospital, St. Anthony's Hospital at Esterhazy and Uranium City Hospital. (Nurses belonging to CUPE have not withdrawn their services.) Thus, roughly 1,100 nurses out of 2,629 are represented by the Staff Nurses Association, Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and CUPE. The other, more than 1,500 are represented by informal associations which are not certified. Only twelve out of the 134 general hospitals in the

province are nurses represented by the SNA, SUN or CUPE.

However, I understand that at a meeting in Saskatoon early this year representatives from a number of staff nurses associations agreed that the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses bargain on their behalf with the Saskatchewan Hospital Association.

Negotiations began on December 10, 1973 with a six-hour session. The parties met on the following day for three hours, then there was a break in negotiations to January 3, 1974 when a one-hour meeting was held. More than a month passed before another one-hour meeting was held on February 5, 1974. Again, there was a long passage of time before another meeting was held on March 26, a four-hour meeting, followed by a two-hour meeting on March 27. On April 5, there was a three and a half hour meeting. A total of seven meetings, totalling only 20 1/2 hours of meeting time over a period of almost four months. Because so little progress had been made, the Saskatchewan Hospital Association negotiating committee called on the Department of Labour for conciliation services. This set in motion a series of meetings on and after April 25. Conciliation efforts are continuing.

Changing demands by the nurses appears to have been one factor in the slowness of negotiations. For example, the original proposal by the Nurses' Union called for a 41 per cent increase in wages, plus fringe benefits on a one year contract. I understand that the Union's latest official proposal as of April 5, demanded 30 per cent plus fringes on a one year agreement. The latest official increases offered by the SHA would increase the starting rate as of January 1, 1974 by 22 per cent and the top rate, as of July 1, 1974, by 20 per cent. And by January 1, 1975 (less than eight months away) the starting rate would increase by 33.6 per cent and the maximum rate by 35.4 per cent, based on a two year contract.

The last collective bargaining agreement between the SHA and the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association was settled amicably on a basis of a seven per cent increase in 1972 and six per cent increase in 1973. This agreement established a starting rate of \$580 per month, with \$615 after one year of service and \$650 after two years of service. The latest official offer made by the Saskatchewan Hospital Association on April 25, 1974 was as follows: Effective January 1, starting rate would be \$707; after one year of service, \$724; after two years of service \$747; on July 1 of this year, \$707 starting; \$724 after one year; \$747 after two; \$780 after three years of service. On January 1, 1975, \$775 starting rate; \$795 after one year of service; after two years \$820; after three years \$850; after four years of service \$875 per month.

The extension of ranges from a three-step range to a five-step range (that is the payment of top wages are two years of service to after four years of service) was a request of the nurses and has been granted by the Saskatchewan Hospital Association.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to wage increases a two per cent improvement in the fringe benefits has been offered, plus a cost of living increase of one per cent wage increase for each one per cent increase in the cost of living over nine per cent in the year 1974. That increase would apply as of January 1, 1975.

May 6, 1974

The fringe benefits offered in the last SHA proposal include increased overtime provision for double time after the first four hours overtime — it was one and half times for all hours worked. Secondly, double time for working on regular days off — it used to be one and a half times. Thirdly, increase in standby pay on days off from the present \$3 to \$4.50, effective January 1, 1974 to \$5 effective January 1, 1975. Fourthly, increased shift differential payment from the present 12.5 cents per hour to 16 cents per hour on January 1, 1974, 18 cents per hour effective July 1, 1974 and 20 cents per hour, January 1, 1975. The fringe benefits offered represent a further two per cent in increased benefits to nurses.

I should point out that nurses in certain government institutions represented by CUPE and nurses in government services represented by the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Association, have already signed a two year contract on the following package. Effective October 1, 1973, starting rate of \$640 and goes to \$779. Effective October 1, 1974, \$698 and goes up to \$849 per month. Nurses in the public service receive four weeks vacation after twelve years service. Next year they will have four weeks vacation after ten years of service. However, nurses in the general hospitals, now enjoy four weeks annual vacation after three years of services.

One of the issues that the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses has been most adamant about is that the rates of pay for certified nurses assistants has been sharply increased, narrowing the gap between what is paid to the CNAs and to registered nurses. SUN has insisted that there be a 25 per cent differential between the two. The latest SHA offer would re-establish this 25 per cent differential as of July 1, 1974, on the top rates and would increase it to 27 per cent as of January 1, 1975. The agreement reached with the SEIU provides a top rate of \$624 per month for CNAs in 1974 and \$689 in 1975. Top wages offered to the RNs would be \$780 and \$875 respectively.

The Union has asked for an hourly rate of \$5 per hour. The SHA has offered \$5.06 per hour as of January 1, 1975.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word about the relationship of the offer made to the nurses to the increase in the cost of living. As of January 1, 1972 when the last agreement was reached the cost of living index for Canada stood at 136.7. by March of this year the index climbed to 160.8, an increase of 17.6 per cent for Canada. The rate of increase for Saskatchewan was less. As of January 1, 1972 the Saskatchewan cost of living index stood at 126.3. By March of this year it had increased to 143.3, an increase of 13.5 per cent for Saskatchewan. The 1972-1973 collective agreement gave the nurses an increase of seven per cent for 1972 and six per cent for 1973, for a total of 13 per cent. Almost exactly matching the increase in the Saskatchewan cost of living.

The SHA wage offer for the coming two years represents a 35.4 increase and offers protection against the excessive cost of living increases, by building in a cost of living adjustment tied to increases in the Canadian cost of living index. An increase in the cost of living over nine per cent in 1974 will be matched by a percentage basis for 1975. I understand that the SHA has offered to refer the dispute to a mutually acceptable impartial mediator with the understanding that the parties could consider agreeing to the recommendation of the mediator on either a voluntary or binding basis. This offer

has been rejected by the union.

My investigations have satisfied me that the SHA bargaining committee has made every effort to bargain in good faith and to arrive at a mutually agreeable settlement. In spite of the walk-out which has occurred today, I understand that the SHA is ready to continue negotiations. I want to urge the nurses to instruct their negotiating committee to return to the bargaining table as soon as today's walk-out is over.

By the way, I'm led to believe that the walk-out is only for today and that the nurses will return to their jobs tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion it has come to my attention that some nurses have been told that there have been meetings held between some officials and myself along with other Cabinet Ministers. I want to assure the nurses and this House that no such meeting has taken place, nor has any request for such a meeting been made to me.

I believe that if the parties will get back to the bargaining table, the present impasse can be broken and a mutually satisfactory agreement can be reached. I urge both parties to return to collective bargaining processes.

**MR. D.F. MacDONALD** (Moose Jaw North): — Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most amazing announcements that I've heard in this House. That the Minister of Health comes into this House and makes a direct attack on the nursing profession of this province. An attack on the profession of nurses and an attack on their demands and an attack on their tactics, and an attack on their union, I've never witnessed anything like it in this House before.

The Minister of Labour did not come in this House and make the same kind of statements about the construction industry. I never heard any other Minister come into this House and talk about the many study sessions that have been held in Sask Tel or Sask Power or whatever. But in this instance the attack on the nursing profession that has just taken place is the most amazing thing I've seen.

This particular problem, the nurses going on strike, and the Minister started out by saying he has regretted the action taken by the nurses, and he made it very clear that he regretted it because he felt that they were absolutely at fault and this is not true. The nurses have a very serious grievance. The grievance was brought out today when they find that they are forced to come to loggerheads with this Government. The nurses had a very difficult time. Politics has been involved to keep them from having their union and their bargaining agent recognized. They went all the way to the Supreme Court. They've been fought all the way and now they have an attack on them again today and the Minister questions whether SUN even represents the nurses. There is absolutely no question that it's the Minister of Health that is responsible for the nurses going on strike.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

**MR. MacDONALD:** — He knows very well that SHA

bargains with the nurses, but he in fact as Minister of Health puts up every dollar to pay for those nurses. SHA, the Saskatchewan Hospital Association has been put in a straight jacket by the Minister opposite. We have mentioned this before, we mentioned it in Estimates the other day, that this Government is putting hospitals in a straight jacket, they are putting a squeeze on hospital spending and it's an impossible situation with the eventual losers being the nurses. They have a very legitimate grievance about differential and about pay rates.

**MR. SNYDER:** — . . . Sask Power inflationary!

**MR. MacDONALD:** — The Minister of Health has taken sides. If the Government opposite is willing to give 15 and 20 per cent and then expect the Nurses Association to accept this without question from the Saskatchewan Hospital Association, this is the most tragic situation that I've seen in this House. I just can't believe that the Minister would come in here and say the things that he has said about the nursing profession and all this is going to do is to create more problems in the days to come. The nurses are certainly going to be very saddened to hear that they have lost the support of government and the Government is against them in making these kinds of statements about them. I'm just very disappointed.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

### **INCREASE IN MILK PRICE**

**HON. E.L. TCHORZEWSKI** (Minister of Culture and Youth): — Mr. Speaker, as the Members of the House will be aware, Friday there was an announcement by the Saskatchewan Milk Control Board that there was a need for an increase in the price of milk by five cents a quart because of the increased cost to the producer and to the processor. The costs, particularly to the producer, have increased very significantly in the last year because of the increase in the price of feed supplements and so on. There has also, Mr. Speaker, been a very clear indication of a decrease in the milk production on a per month basis in the Province of Saskatchewan. For example, in the month of March the production of milk decreased by 11 per cent, which again leads to an indication that there is a need to encourage milk production in the province in order to assure an adequate supply.

Milk, Mr. Speaker, is one of the very important staples that are necessary in our diet in this country. Our Government recognizes that this five cent increase is a large increase to absorb in one sort of increase, and in light of that, effective midnight tonight, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan will be providing a subsidy of three cents per quart in order that the increase in the price of milk will not be increased by such a significant amount in one move. The subsidy of three cents per quart will be of great benefit to the consumer of milk, that is to all families in the Province of Saskatchewan. This will be a cushioning effect, Mr. Speaker, in order that the impact of the increase will not be so severe. There will be a further increase in the price of milk of one cent in July because the subsidy will then decrease. The purpose of the subsidy is to cushion the impact, as I have already said. At that time we have to consider the change in the cost of food, or

the increase in the cost of food, and reassess the situation at that time again.

So I am pleased to announce to this House at this time that as of midnight tonight the Government of Saskatchewan will be providing a subsidy of three cents a quart for milk to the customers in Saskatchewan.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

**MR. J.G. LANE** (Lumsden): — Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a day of surprises as the Government changes its tactics and makes an about face from one attacking the unions. It is a very surprising situation today, Mr. Speaker.

Months ago we had an announcement by the Government opposite that it was going to totally absorb the proposed beer price increase and now when we have a basic staple as the Minister has called it, a staple food for the people of Saskatchewan, he is not going to absorb all the increase. He is absorbing only 60 per cent of the increase, three cents out of five, and the two cents added to the cost of milk is going to hit the lower income people for the Province of Saskatchewan. It is going to hit, of course, those people who need milk as a basic supplement for their diet for nutritional purposes.

It is a very surprising position that the Government is taking as its priority that beer comes before milk and beer comes before bread. The Government opposite has refused in the past to . . .

**MR. COWLEY:** — Hogwash!

**MR. LANE:** — Will the Hon. Member please wait until we are finished. He has contributed nothing to the House, why should he add anything to these particular remarks.

Again, we are very, very shocked at the priorities, that the Government would put beer ahead of milk and beer ahead of bread. The very staple foods, the very staple necessities of life have not been assisted by the Government to any extent but they have gone on record where their priorities stand. Their priorities are shocking, their priorities are amazing and their priorities are stupid to say the least.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **NEW GRANT FORMULA FOR POLICE**

**MR. E.F. GARDNER** (Moosomin): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I should like to ask a question of the Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. Messer).

I have received this morning a copy of a letter addressed to the Hon. E.I. Wood, Minister, from the town of Moosomin and I have heard complaints of this from other areas, but apparently the new grant formula for the police equalization grant is going to be very difficult for a number of towns of this size in the province. The gist of this letter is that last year they got a \$3,538 grant for police equalization. They were notified

May 6, 1974

in the last few days that this year they will get \$17 and as the letter points out they will be losing about \$3,500.

I wonder if the Minister would have his officials investigate the equalization grant for towns of this size because there seems to be some serious drawbacks in the grant formula and they are apparently suffering quite severely from the new grant formula as far as police and equalization is concerned.

**HON. J.R. MESSER** (Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs): — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will.

### **LEADER-POST STORY RE FISHERMEN**

**MR. J.G. RICHARDS** (Saskatoon University): — Mr. Speaker, I have a question to direct to the Acting Minister of Northern Saskatchewan.

In the Leader-Post last Saturday there was a very deceptive story under the title "Fishermen to Receive More", which announced an increase of one to three cents per pound of fish from the Fish Marketing Corporation in 1974, relative to 1973. The question to the Minister is: is he prepared to reply to this kind of deceptive story which fails totally to take note of the fact that fish prices have declined since 1971, overall prices, and further, when can we expect from the Department of Northern Saskatchewan the report, which I understand is in preparation, following from the Minister's announcement, the actual Minister's, Mr. Bowerman, announcement on February 28th of the Provincial Government's fisheries program?

**HON. G. MacMURCHY** (Acting Minister of Northern Saskatchewan): — Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the story that appeared in the Leader-Post, nor am I aware of any changes in policy with respect to DNS. However, I will certainly run down the story and run down the question and see if I can supply an adequate answer.

**MR. RICHARDS:** — Mr. Speaker, I think that is quite satisfactory that the Minister do check into it. It was a story which appeared on page 3 of Saturday's Leader Post.

To repeat the question which I had also asked in connection with the first question — in a press release issued on February 28th the Minister of Northern Saskatchewan said that a study was being prepared on the Provincial Government's own fishing policy. Would the Minister also tell the House, either now or at a later time, when that report will be available to the public?

**MR. MacMURCHY:** — Mr. Speaker, I shall have to supply the information at a later time.

### **SECOND READINGS**

Hon. W.A. Robbins (Minister of Finance) moved second reading of Bill No. 131 — **An Act to amend The Department of Finance Act.**

He said: Mr. Speaker, just a few brief

comments with respect to Bill 131.

The proposed amendment to Section 39 of The Department of Finance Act specifies that every revenue officer will be required to account for all public moneys received by him. For a number of years concern has been expressed by the Provincial Auditor that there are insufficient safeguards to protect public revenues which are collected by motor licence issuers. Issuers are designated as revenue officers and as such are required to sign application forms stating that they must deposit all moneys collected in the performance of their duties. However, in instances where defalcation of funds has occurred some doubt has arisen concerning the adequacy of this form of contract.

The intent of this legislation is to make it clear to all concerned that revenue officers are under obligation to account for public moneys collected.

A further amendment increases the Provincial Auditor's salary as necessary because the amount of the salary is specified in The Finance Department Act, and thus, could only be altered by amendment to that Act.

With those brief comments, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 131.

**MR. K.R. MacLEOD** (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I only have a remark or two to this Bill.

First of all I am very pleased to note that there are some changes being made. This particular officer was appointed after the present Government came into power and we would be very pleased to notice that the Government is starting to pay attention to what he says. Each year he has recorded rather extensive deficiencies in the administration of the finances of the Province of Saskatchewan. These have been recorded each year in the Auditor's report.

We are very pleased to notice that this amendment appears to be in response to a suggestion by the Provincial Auditor. The only comment that I have to make is that this officer who is so important to the administration of the finances of the province, and is very important to let us, (that is the Opposition), and therefore the people of Saskatchewan, know really what is going on inside the workings of government. His office being so important should, I think, attract something of a higher salary. If the office of the Ombudsman is deserving of a salary of \$27,500 as proposed by another Bill before the House — and I am sure he is worth it, because he is a very worthwhile and dedicated individual — I am now speaking as to the individual involved, if he is worth \$27,500 certainly the Provincial Auditor is worth not one penny less than that because his duties are so significant to the operation of the Government of Saskatchewan, that a salary of less than that tends to indicate to us that his worth to the people of Saskatchewan is less. We don't think that that is correct. We, therefore, suggest that a salary of \$27,500, exactly the same as the Ombudsman, would be more than appropriate and we are pleased to see that the Government is starting to pay some attention to what he says.



May 6, 1974

**HON. A.E. BLAKENEY** (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, may I just add one word.

I think that it is interesting to have the Members opposite to tell us what they think that the Provincial Auditor should be paid, but I think that in this regard as in many others, I would advise the public to have regard not to what the Liberal Party says, but what they do. I think we all know what they paid the Provincial Auditor when they were in office. The increases have been very substantial. And I think we well know their assessment of the worth of the Provincial Auditor as they have recorded it in Statutes each year when they were in office. We well know that in fact they not only paid the Provincial Auditor a relatively smaller salary, but they also starved his office of staff. They failed to provide him with the staff which he continually asked for. And when we, in Opposition, suggested that they should provide more staff, or that the salary should be higher, these proposals were on all occasions, rejected.

I think it is all very well for the Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) to make these comments. I note very well that the finance critic didn't make them because he was in the House prior to 1971. Nor did the former Provincial Treasurer (Mr. Steuart). He didn't make them either, very wisely, because he was the one who proposed to this House the relatively small increases in salary which were habitually proposed during their term of office.

I think that I would simply suggest to all Hon. Members and particularly to the public that they have regard, not to what is now said by the Member for Albert Park, but what was in fact done by the Liberal Party under the financial leadership of the then Provincial Treasurer, now Leader of the Opposition, when they were in office.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

**MR. J.G. LANE** (Lumsden): — Mr. Speaker, it is something that the Premier surprisingly ignores that it is not until his Government took office that the Provincial Auditor's responsibilities and their existence increased dramatically and that he has now become probably the last bastion of government spending sanity in the Province of Saskatchewan.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

**MR. LANE:** — Certainly not necessary under the previous government. The necessity of the Provincial Auditor obviously has increased dramatically in light of the spending extravaganza brought to the public attention by the Provincial Auditor; the waste and mismanagement and incompetence of the Government opposite has been brought to the attention of the public by the Provincial Auditor, the extent of which is unparalleled in the history of this province. There is no doubt that because of the spending programs and policies of the Government and its lack of concern for good fiscal management, that perhaps the Provincial Auditor should be paid several hundred thousand dollars and give him a percentage of what he draws to the public's attention, because he would be well ahead for finding and probably be one of the wealthiest people in the Province of Saskatchewan.

There is no justification for paying the Provincial Auditor less than the Ombudsman and the Government opposite knows it. The responsibilities of the Provincial Auditor, in light of the actions of this Government, are considerably more onerous than they are for the Ombudsman. We strongly suggest that the Government opposite reconsider its placing a lower priority on the position of the Provincial Auditor than that of the Ombudsman.

**HON. J.E. BROCKELBANK** (Minister of Government Services): — Mr. Speaker, I have now heard the nonsensical speech from the Member for Lumsden about paying the Auditor several hundred thousand dollars a year as a salary.

I am appalled by the type of arguments put forward by the Members opposite in opposition to this Bill. I don't think there was any time when they were the administration of this province that they ever paid the Auditor a 20 per cent increase in his salary. I think that it has been clearly illustrated, Mr. Speaker, in the debates of this House that the Auditor's office has been starved by the Members who sit opposite, when they were the government. I think it is quite clear that this Government has met the requests of the Provincial Auditor for staff; that this Government has responded to the Public Accounts Committee's suggestions. Consequently I can see no justification for the remarks that are coming from across the floor.

**MR. ROBBINS:** — Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to hear the comments from the Members opposite.

The Auditor was paid \$19,000 a year when the Liberal administration was in power, the last year they were in power. I am surprised that the Member for Albert Park didn't criticize the Government for raising the salary this high — 20.7 per cent in his mind is inflationary, 15 per cent is inflationary for the Power Corporation group.

Therefore, if he were consistent at all he would be arguing that the increase was too large. That increase is \$4,198 and the increase equals the actual income of the minimum wage earner in this province per annum. I think it is a substantial increase and I think the Auditor will be pleased with it.

The argument that Northern Saskatchewan is involved here in a large measure — the Member for Lumsden brought this point out, he thought he brought it out anyway — a Task Force Report from the Department of Finance was made available to the Auditor long before he went up there for the audit with respect to the items that were raised. He was made well aware of them because of the study put on by the Department of Finance prior to the actual audit occurring.

Mr. Speaker, those are my final comments with respect to the Bill. It just shows how ridiculous the Opposition can be when they make comments such as they have made.

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

May 6, 1974

HON. A.E. BLAKENEY (Premier) moved second reading of Bill No. 130 — **An Act to amend The Ombudsman Act, 1972.**

He said: Mr. Speaker, this Bill is a fairly simple Bill designed to increase the salary of the Ombudsman from \$25,000 to \$27,500.

To put this in perspective, Mr. Speaker, I might mention a similar officer of the Crown, the Provincial Auditor, who in 1969 was paid \$17,000 per year and in 1970 was paid \$18,020 per year and in 1971 was paid \$19,100 per year. You will note that those increases are in each case \$1,000 per year. In the latter year it is \$1,100 per year.

Those, Mr. Speaker, I think will be regarded as relatively modest increases. I think we must remember that times have changed in the sense that costs of living have increased and professional people are able to command larger sums than these relatively small sums paid to this particular official in 1969, 1970 and 1971.

The Ombudsman was recruited from the Bench of the Magistrate's Court. He was paid initially a salary of \$25,000. It is anticipated that there will be increases in the salaries of magistrates. These decisions are under review. All of these decisions are under review. We are proposing for the Ombudsman an increase of \$2,500 per year, which under the circumstances is, I think, a reasonable increase. And with that in mind and having regard to the relative position of the Ombudsman and the magistrates, the figure of \$27,500 appears appropriate.

Accordingly I move second reading of Bill No. 130, an Act to amend The Ombudsman Act, 1972.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

**MR. D.G. STEUART** (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a word about this particular Bill. Let me go on record saying, as far as the individual is concerned, the Ombudsman, without a doubt he is a very fine individual and is approaching the task that he undertook in this regard with sincerity and with energy. I think he is doing as well as can be expected under the circumstances, under the terms of reference and under the power that he has been given in the Act. Again, I want to go on record as saying, in a province of less than one million people, with 60 well-paid MLAs and 18 extremely well-paid Cabinet Ministers and one very well-paid Premier, I think the office of the Ombudsman is absolutely and totally unnecessary. The Government, of course, uses it to hold up to show how democratic they are, how open to the public they are. Again, if you study this, you find that most of the complaints that the Ombudsman has to deal with, in fact I would say almost all of them, could be dealt with by government officials without the necessity of going through an Ombudsman or anyone else. Give the MLAs, and there has been some move by this Government, more staff, more back-up, more research on a year-round basis, so that they can perform their duties in a more practical and better way. I am talking about all MLAs now. If they do their job, and they are given the right, the same rights as an Ombudsman is, then the same privileges, the same responsibilities, this particular office, and this job is totally and absolutely unnecessary in this province.

It is, in fact, window dressing on one hand and on the other hand it is an admission by the Government opposite that they have developed such an insensitivity to the ordinary needs of the public and they have developed such a bureaucratic structure, so much red tape, that the only way an ordinary citizen can pierce this is by going to an individual like the Ombudsman. To me this is an admission of failure. It is also an admission by the Government opposite of the lack of esteem in which they hold ordinary MLAs. I again want to say that I don't think this position is necessary, I don't think this office is necessary. But having established the office, and having obtained the services of the individual to act as Ombudsman, then I have no objection. I would support the idea that he be given an increase. And in regard to the size of the increase being offered to the Ombudsman and the size of the increase being offered to the Provincial Auditor, they are in keeping with the general increases that the Government opposite is giving to its own staff. They are comparable as when we were the government. We gave increases if they were \$1,000 a year, that was comparable to increases that we were giving to other people in our services and comparable to increases that the private sector were giving.

Again, in passing, I find it strange that the first time this Government seems to become responsible in regard to handing out the funds of the public, it's when they are picking on the nurses in the Province of Saskatchewan. However, since I wouldn't want to stray from the contents of this Bill, I want to say that we will support the increase given to the Ombudsman. Again, I want to go on record, and I'll go on record every opportunity I get to say that this office is unnecessary, it is a waste of taxpayers' money and it could be and should be carried out by the elected representatives who receive \$12,000, \$13,000 or \$14,000 pay and other perquisites to do exactly, at least 90 per cent of what is reported in this book having been done or attempted to be done by the Ombudsman. When you look at a great many of these complaints and they are serious complaints, you will find that the Ombudsman doesn't have any jurisdiction, and the little complaints that he could handle, again should have been handled by the Members that sit opposite or the Members that sit on this side of the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

**MR. M. FEDUNIAK** (Turtleford): — Would the Hon. Member allow me a question.

**MR. STEUART:** — Certainly.

**MR. FEDUNIAK:** — Since you are saying that this position is unnecessary, what is your stand on the Senate?

**MR. STEUART:** — My stand on the Senate is that they should be put to work. They could do a great deal of work and they should be put to work, but they are not.

**MR. K.R. MacLEOD** (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I have a question that I would like the Hon. Premier to deal with in his response in closing debate on this Bill. That is the question of how we are going to deal with the report of the Ombudsman. According to the Statute

May 6, 1974

creating the office, he is to report to the Legislature, in fact he is appointed by the Legislature and he reports directly to us. But such are the rules of the House that I am finding it difficult in some cases and this is one, to determine where and how we are going to examine the office to determine whether or not it is doing the job and how it might be improved and so on. If we are allowed to do so only on item 1 of this particular Bill, it leads me to the conclusion that in each year in which the Ombudsman receives an increase in salary by Statute we will have the opportunity of examining his report. If the Government should decide in some year that no raise was justified for a variety of reasons, including a reduction in the cost of living, then I would think that that year we might well be deprived of the opportunity examine the reports of the Ombudsman.

The only other opportunity appears to be in the Estimates, but the difficulty with dealing with it under the Estimates, is whenever we come to a point under the Estimates which is Statutory, there seems to me to be some implied restriction on the examination we can make of that. If I am wrong, I hope the Hon. Premier will indicate that to me. But it seems to me that when we are talking about reports to this Legislature there should be some specific place where officers appointed by this Legislature are to be dealt with. In the case of the Provincial Auditor, that matter, which is a report directly to the Legislature, that is referred to a Select Standing Committee. The Committee then reports back to the Legislature and we debate the motion to accept or concur in or receive the report of the standing committee.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope the Premier will direct his attention to that particular matter so that if not now, certainly in the future we may have some appropriate method of receiving and discussing fully the reports of officers who report directly to this Legislature.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

**HON. A.E. BLAKENEY (Premier):** — Mr. Speaker, we have perhaps wandered a bit from the principle of this Bill — to nursing and to the appropriateness of the office of the Ombudsman and the manner in which we should report.

May I say that I understand the comments of the Leader of the Opposition. It may well be that the office of the Ombudsman is, at least in his conception of things, superfluous to our system of government in Saskatchewan. He seems to feel that it is an evidence of failure on the part of a government by appointing an Ombudsman. I would rather wish to phrase it not as evidence of failure, but as evidence of fallibility. I think that governments are fallible even a government headed by the New Democratic Party, strange as that seems. It is entirely possible for a government which has many thousands, indeed some tens of thousands of public servants, to have persons not conducting themselves in the manner in which they should and in a way which is rather difficult for an MLA to unearth.

Accordingly I see no particular objection to the idea of an Ombudsman, in fact I think that we will see over the years that the officer is performing a useful function.

I would think however, that we shall have no way of knowing just how useful this officer is unless he serves under governments of different stripes. I fancy that what the Leader of the Opposition is doing, in his frequent comments on the office of the Ombudsman, is laying the groundwork for the abolition of the office should the people of this province be unfortunate enough to elect a Liberal Government at some time in the future. I think that this would be a most unfortunate thing to happen in this province. It would be a second minor catastrophe following a major catastrophe. I am hopeful, therefore, that the Leader of the Opposition who represents Prince Albert West will simply not have any opportunity to foist upon the people of Saskatchewan his particular views as to the usefulness of the office of the Ombudsman. I am reasonably confident that that will be the case.

With respect to the points raised by the Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod), it is my understanding of the situation that the office of Ombudsman can be discussed under the Estimates of legislation. This, I think, is true of other people's services to this House, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly is paid out of that vote and if you wish to discuss his office and performance of his office, I think that's the place to do it. The Ombudsman is appointed and reports to this House and if you wish to discuss his office and his conduct of it, then I think that's the vote.

We have a number of people who are government employees in respect of whom it is sometimes difficult to find a place to discuss their affairs. One thinks of the Workmen's Compensation Board. The chairman of the Workmen's Compensation Board has the status of a superior court judge under the Statute and it is sometimes difficult to discuss the affairs of the Workmen's Compensation Board. It has traditionally been done under subvote 1 of the Department of Labour. We don't have well defined methods of discussing all of these matters. But such as they are, I would assume that the appropriate place to discuss the Ombudsman is the consideration of the Estimates on Legislation where in fact money is voted for the office.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I again move second reading.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

## INTRODUCTION OF CUBS

**MR. K.R. MacLEOD** (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of introducing to the House and to you, Mr. Speaker, members of the Broadway 48th Cub Pack who are here visiting us tonight, along with their leaders, Mr. Frank Baker, Mr. Lewis Creusot. We welcome them and we are sorry you can't stay longer. We hope you have enjoyed it, fellas.

**HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

May 6, 1974

### **THIRD READINGS**

**HON. J.R. MESSER** (Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs) moved that Bill No. 87 — **An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1970** be now read a third time.

**MR. K.R. MacLEOD** (Regina Albert Park): — Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to speak briefly on Bill 87 and express the regret that we have that the Government, with its majority, did not see fit to introduce into the legislation some sort of an amendment which would avoid the conflicts which exist with various levels of government when senior officials of one level of government are permitted to operate as senior officials or Members of the Legislature in another level of government. We note that the Parliament of Canada does not allow Members of the Legislature to run for election. We regret that the Government did not see fit to take up the proposal of the Opposition either that an amendment be made or that they meet together for the purpose of working out something reasonable to allow at least some flexibility in the Act. We regret that the Government was so rigid in dealing with the Opposition on what we think is a reasonable attempt to bring some common sense to this question of conflict of interest.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:**— Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to and Bill read a third time.

### **MESSAGE FROM LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR FOR FURTHER ESTIMATES**

**MR. SPEAKER:** — The Lieutenant-Governor transmits Further Estimates of certain sums required for the service of the Province for the twelve months ending March 31st, 1975, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

**HON. W.A. ROBBINS** (Minister of Finance): — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Hon. Mr. Thorson (Minister of Industry and Commerce): —

That His Honour's Message and the Further Estimates be referred to the Committee of Finance.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:08 o'clock p.m.