

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Second Session — Eighteenth Legislature
12th Day

Monday, March 29, 1976

The Assembly met at 2:30 o'clock p.m.

On the Orders of the Day

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. J. A. PEPPER (Weyburn): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce to you and through you a group of 50 junior high school students from Weyburn who are sitting in the west gallery. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Jim Nedalcov and Mr. Sid. Trepoff and their bus driver, Mr. Carl Borshaw.

I am sure I am expressing the wishes of all Members when I welcome these students and wish them an interesting and educational afternoon. I am looking forward to meeting them later this afternoon as well.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. G. MacMURCHY (Last Mountain-Touchwood): — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislature 30 students from the Cupar High School. Accompanying them are Mrs. Carroll, Helen Kazzar and Arthur Schwartz.

I am sure that we welcome them here. We hope they all have an educational day in the city of Regina and here in the Legislature. I will be pleased to spend a few minutes with you just a little bit later on.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. R. KATZMAN (Rosthern): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce you to 31 students from Hepburn High School and teacher Mr. Sawyer and their bus driver Mr. Fehr. I hope you have a good time guys and I'll see you back in Hepburn.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

Former Chairman of Public Service Commission

MR. E. C. MALONE (Regina Lakeview): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Smishek) in his capacity of Minister in Charge of the Public Service Commission. It has come to my attention, Mr. Speaker, that the former chairman of this Commission, Mr. Dowdell, has had his employment terminated either by himself or by the actions of the Government. I would like the Minister, if he can explain the

circumstances surrounding the termination of the employment, why this happened and why there has not been a public announcement of it?

HON. W. E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance): — Mr. Speaker, the former chairman of the Commission resigned and he has employment with the Government of Canada.

MR. MALONE: — Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. My question to the Minister was, the circumstances surrounding the termination of his employment. Would he be good enough to give us that answer as to why he has resigned?

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Speaker, people have the right to resign and Mr. Dowdell, the former chairman, resigned and that's a matter which is his own right to resign.

MR. MALONE: — Does the Minister have any knowledge as to why he resigned?

MR. SMISHEK: — I have already indicated that he found employment with the Government of Canada.

MR. MALONE: — A supplementary and I have a brief preface to my next question. I think it is apparent that the chairman of the Public Service Commission is a civil servant of very high standing in this province. Indeed, at one time he could not be fired without the consent of this House. I think when a man like this leaves the employment of the Government that the Minister should give an explanation as to the circumstances as to why he left and my question to the Minister is: do you know why he left and if so what were the circumstances of him leaving?

MR. SMISHEK: — I don't think I have any further comment. The man has a right to resign and that is what he did. We didn't issue any statements both by his choice and the Government's understanding of his desire to resign and I don't think it is within the public interest to be debating the matter in public.

MR. MALONE: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Are you saying to this House that the only reason that Mr. Dowdell left the service of the Province of Saskatchewan was to get another job in Ottawa?

MR. SPEAKER: — Next question.

MR. MALONE: — Surely I am entitled to some response from the Minister.

MR. SMISHEK: — I have given a response.

MR. SPEAKER: — Next question.

Tenders for Poplar River Project

MR. W. C. THATCHER (Thunder Creek): — Mr. Speaker, through you I should like to direct a question to the Minister in charge of Sask Power Corporation. I

would like to ask the Minister if it is the policy of Sask Power on the Poplar River Project to use the low bidder on a tender where that bidder is qualified?

HON. J. R. MESSER (Minister of Industry and Commerce): — Generally speaking the answer to that is yes. Sometimes there are other circumstances that have to be taken into consideration when bids are submitted. Certainly the ability of the contractor to finish the job in the period of time that is stated in the tender, the availability of manpower whether it would be Saskatchewan manpower or manpower that may be imported from outside of the province. These are some variables that are considered when tenders are let, but generally speaking the policy is to accept the lowest bid.

MR. THATCHER: — Supplementary. Today Sask Power announced the letting of a contract on the spillway at the Poplar River Power Project to Peter Leach of Winnipeg. Leach was low by \$12,000 with the Government providing a camp. Graham Construction of Moose Jaw was low.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! I will give the Member a chance to rephrase the question. I think the Member is giving information rather than putting the question.

MR. THATCHER: — In view of the fact then that Graham Construction was \$25,000 low when they provided the camp, this is a net gain of \$13,000. Therefore, I should like to ask the Minister in view of his previous answer why an out of province contractor would be given this contract when in fact a Saskatchewan contract was \$13,000 low and the option was there on the contract as to how they bid it?

MR. MESSER: — Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the contract that the Member is making reference to. I am not aware that a final decision has been made on that contract and if there has been a public announcement without my authority. With all due respect to the Member, I am not questioning his source of information, I haven't had the opportunity to look at the media to see whether or not a premature announcement has taken place. We were aware of a very close contract, there were some conditions of that contract which, even though there was a low bidder involved, may have changed the circumstances, and that was under review. A final decision has not yet been made by myself in regard to that contract.

Equalization Payments to the Provinces

MR. R. L. COLLVER (Leader of Progressive Conservatives): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Finance. In light of recent information that has come to the attention of the Deputy Ministers of Finance from the Government of Canada with regard to the calculation of equalization payments in Canada where the Premier of Manitoba estimates a \$300 million loss to the provinces, what allowances have been made in your budget for this loss?

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Speaker, our estimates on the equalization are based on experience, based on the calculations made by the Government of Canada, based also, to a degree, on the estimates that have been tabled, plus adjustments that may be taking place, we know there are always adjustments that do take place in the equalization as well as other payments from the Government of Canada. Perhaps the Hon. Member might try and inform himself of how the whole system works.

MR. COLLVER: — A supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. It appears that the Manitoba Government has allowed in its estimates a \$20 million adjustment because they estimate, if you want, that the amount of equalization

payments were going to go down because they suspected that something was going to happen. My supplementary question to you is: did you take into account the recalculation that Mr. Macdonald announced last week that is going to take place between the Federal Government and the provinces with regard to equalization payments?

MR. SMISHEK: — I am wondering whether the Hon. Member is talking about equalization payments or revenue guarantee. Those are two separate items. Perhaps the Hon. Member is not aware of that. I understand that in the case of Premier Schreyer his reference was to the revenue guarantee and not to the equalization payments.

MR. COLLVER: — Well I will rephrase the supplementary then. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the revenue guarantees, has the Government of Saskatchewan recalculated its receipts from the Government of Canada in the light of Mr. Macdonald's announcement that the revenue guarantees were going to be recalculated downward for the provinces?

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not precisely certain what date the Hon. Federal Minister of Finance might have made this statement, but as the Hon. Member is aware, our Budget came down last Wednesday and if there were any announcements made following last Wednesday, then certainly that couldn't have been taken into consideration, except to say in case of whether it is equalization payments or revenue guarantee there are always adjustments, I think that our figures are as precise as they could be at this time, but there may be adjustments upwards or in some cases downwards.

MR. COLLVER: — Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary. As I understand what the Minister is saying, he's saying that no adjustment has been made in the light of this announcement to the people of Canada and the Minister made no adjustment as the Minister of Finance in Manitoba did. Is that correct?

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Speaker, if the Premier of Manitoba made the statement today, based on what might be their situation, then perhaps the Hon. Member might want to contact the Premier of Manitoba, if he wants to know the Manitoba calculations. We are dealing with Saskatchewan. Our figures are as precise as can be determined at this time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Brief — Saskatchewan Trucking Association

MR. D. M. HAM (Swift Current): — A question for the Minister of Transport (Mr. Kramer). In light of the brief received by the Minister from the Saskatchewan Trucking Association respecting load limits, how does the Minister hope to alleviate the price of transporting goods to smaller centres, alleviate the price of the increase in the cost of these goods, alleviate the decline of population from rural Saskatchewan as a result of these price increases or is it the Government's intention to take over business to small communities as mentioned on page 15 of the Budget Speech?

HON. G. MacMURCHY (Minister of Municipal Affairs): — Mr. Speaker, in response to

the Member for Swift Current, I've not had an opportunity to review the brief from the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, however, I would make a general comment that in terms of providing . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! I think the Member was asking the Minister to comment on the brief and that's what the Minister, I think, is doing.

MR. MacMURCHY: — In response to his comments on the brief from the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, I might say that the communities across the province will not be affected by the load limits on municipal roads. There may be a very, very few communities who don't come under the highways programs, Highway Program, Meaning Highways, Open Roads, the 300 series and so on. I don't think there are many who just have access by municipal system and, therefore, the load limits would not apply to the communities as we laid out the 50,000 pound maximum, but the 74,000 pound maximum would apply to those communities in Saskatchewan.

Coronach Poplar River Reservoir

MR. R. E. NELSON (Assiniboia-Gravelbourg): — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Industry and Commerce (Mr. Messer). What does the Minister intend to do in the Coronach Popular River reservoir where the barbed wire fence, the buildings and other obstacles are being left under the water and are creating dangerous and hazardous obstacles for swimmers, water skiers, boaters or fishing?

HON. J. R. MESSER (Minister of Industry and Commerce): — Mr. Speaker, I will take the observation as notice and undertake to convey to my officials that it may well be a problem.

Municipal Road Load Limits

MR. R. A. LARTER (Estevan): — To the Minister of Municipal Affairs or Minister of Transport. I wonder if the Minister has had a chance to review the question that I put to the Premier, as the Minister was absent on Friday?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, yes, before the question period was over I was intending to answer the Member for Estevan whose question on Friday was as follows: would the Government be prepared to consider placing the kind of load limit restrictions which they have envisaged on a provincial province-wide basis, but only during those periods of time when excessive damage is done to the municipal roads? In other words, you'd only apply them in the spring and the summer time and in the winter time, the limits need not apply.

I think the answer to your question is, no. You will note that the load limits on the highways are the same all year

around except for the spring bans. There are reasons for this. Highways reports that bridges and culverts are always weak points and they need the same kind of limits all year around and additionally in a winter like this past winter, there is a fair problem because you've got the thaws and the warm spells and this presents some problem for the surface and therefore they need to maintain the limits all year around.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: — Does the Member have a supplementary?

Reduction in Funds for Senior Citizens Home Repair

MR. W. H. STODALKA (Maple Creek): — To the Minister in charge of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. In view of the fact that the funds available for the senior citizens' home repair assistance are going to be reduced from 4.5 million to \$688,000, I wonder if the Minister would care to comment as to why this drastic reduction in the funds available under this particular program?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — I think we can have this debate during the Estimates because it's part of the budgetary item. I think if the Member doesn't mind we can debate it then.

MR. SPEAKER: — Supplementary?

MR. MALONE: — I wonder if the Minister would give us those simple responses now? I think we could probably understand them.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! I was trying to grasp the urgency of the matter and I haven't as yet, so I'll take the next question.

Boundary Dam Water Level

MR. LARTER: — Mr. Speaker, to the Minister in charge of Sask Power or possibly as well the Environment Minister. I wonder if the Minister can assure the people of the Souris River area that the Boundary Dam water level is being taken down to the lowest possible level and insuring safety to our water cooling for our power supply? Is it being taken down as low as it can in order to get as much input from Long Creek as possible?

HON. N. E. BYERS (Minister of Environment): — Mr. Speaker, in response to the Hon. Member's question, well in advance of the spring runoff we did start to draw down Boundary Dam. Its full elevation is 1,840 and attempts were made to get it down to 1,820. Boundary reservoir has been drawn down to 13.5 feet, below the full supply level, but it has started to refill at this time because inflows from Long Creek are very high. I think that every effort has been made to draw Boundary Dam down to about the lowest possible level because it can act to a point as storage on Long Creek.

MR. LARTER: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of the Environment tell me through his EMO, are there enough sandbags in the province to take care of possible emergencies in that area?

MR. BYERS: — Well, I am not the Minister in charge of EMO, Mr. Speaker, but the report I had from the Director of EMO late last week indicated that there were hundreds of thousands of sandbags placed in strategic places in the province.

MR. LARTER: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister in charge of EMO, and could he assure us that those sandbags will be in place, because as you know these emergencies develop in just a matter of a few hours.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! I think the Minister has already said he is not in charge of EMO and the Member has asked the Minister in charge of EMO to assure him.

Increased Grants to Municipalities

MR. G. H. PENNER (Saskatoon Eastview): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, seeing he is so anxious to be on his feet.

Last Wednesday in the Budget Speech there was an indication that there will be no increased grants to municipalities. Since that time there has been a substantial reaction and I wonder if the Minister would comment about any plans that he may have to increase grants during Estimates?

HON. G. MacMURCHY (Minister of Municipal Affairs): — Mr. Speaker, I think all the grants to municipalities are up within the Budget except the unconditional operating grants, the per capita unconditional grants. I think it is \$20 now per capita and that is the only one that is not up. It is true that there has been representation made to me by SUMA, asking that they go up. I don't think it is a good policy to increase them now that the Budget is down.

MR. PENNER: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The only grant that is of any real substantial effect on the mill rate in municipalities of course is that unconditional grant and I wonder since in past years the Government has undertaken to increase the unconditional grant, after Estimates have begun, if it wouldn't be in order that this happen again this year?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — I indicated, Mr. Speaker, that there are significant increases in grants — police grants, library grants and so on. I think there is no question about that. I indicated in my previous answer that I didn't think the policy that was practised one year ago, is a good policy to practise on a

continuing basis, particularly when we are looking at an issue such as inflation and we are asking the municipalities to apply restraints to their budgets as we have done as a provincial Government.

MR. PENNER: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — I don't want to let this subtle attempt to move the Budget Debate up into the Question Period, to continue, therefore I will take the next question.

RCMP in Northern Saskatchewan

MR. W. H. STODALKA (Maple Creek): — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Attorney General. It is my understanding that at the invitation of the RCMP, you made a recent visit to some of the communities in northern Saskatchewan. Would you please tell us what the purpose of those meetings was and what your finds were?

HON. R. ROMANOW (Attorney General): — Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the trip basically was to review with the members of the RCMP and local people, local leaders, where possible, some of the policing conditions that are present in the North. The findings, I can't really say in terms of specific findings because it was not that type of a trip. It was more, in effect, of an informational trip for me, an orientation trip, if I may put it in those terms, with respect to police. I have a lot of impressions, personal impressions, but there are no findings.

Liquor Outlets in Northern Saskatchewan

MR. STODALKA: — A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I believe one of the comments was that the Government might be considering opening new liquor outlets in some of the northern areas in order to alleviate some of the problems. Is this a possibility?

MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this question refers directly to the community of La Loche where there is no liquor outlet. During the course of the visit to La Loche it was pointed out to me by some people that a liquor outlet might, in the logic as displayed by them, alleviate the problem with respect to violence and alcohol as it appears to have taken place in La Loche.

There were contrary views as well, namely, that La Loche should not have a liquor outlet. It is an argument which stuck in my mind and something which I will, when I am writing the summary of the report for my Cabinet colleagues, be mentioning.

I don't anticipate any decision for quite some time in this case.

MR. E. C. MALONE (Regina Lakeview): — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. What did the residents of La Loche request with a view to a liquor outlet. Did you receive

any direct request from them?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, there was no way to ascertain what the residents' collective view would be in this area because the representation from individual residents in La Loche, putting it frankly, was spotty. We did see two or three of the residents of La Loche. It was not in terms of the community input, the highlight of the trip. In some of the other communities, we had excellent community response, but in La Loche it wasn't.

I want to emphasize to the Member that this was but merely one of the problems, alcohol, and the related difficulties surrounding alcohol, which were discussed in La Loche. Not the question of whether or not there is to be a beer parlour or a liquor vendor or not. That was a peripheral issue to what in my mind impressed me as one of the most difficult problems in the North that we have, that is the question of alcohol and its abuse.

MR. MALONE: — A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. How do you expect to solve the problem of alcohol by providing more ready access to alcohol by putting a liquor store in La Loche?

MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the situation is one that might at first blush appear to be contradictory, but the fact is I am advised that a great deal of the policing problems in La Loche relate to the illicit transport and consumption of alcohol from Alberta and other parts of Saskatchewan. And the related activities with respect to bootlegging, there is some violence and fights and other arguments that relate to that particular question. The RCMP were of the view that if there was a liquor outlet, one that had to follow the policing guidelines and one that the police could go to on a regular basis, that indeed, this might take away some of the more negative aspects of the illicit trade in alcohol. I quite candidly say that I think it is an argument from my observations that should be considered.

MR. SPEAKER: — The Member for Swift Current.

Potash Brochures Passed Out in Saskatchewan High Schools

MR. D. M. HAM (Swift Current): — Mr. Speaker, a question directed to the Premier.

Is it true, Mr. Premier, that a brochure sponsored by the Government of Saskatchewan, specifically this brochure, is presently being passed out among high school students in Saskatchewan?

HON. A. E. BLAKENEY (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, a brochure entitled 'Potash' or words to that effect, a cream-colored brochure, was prepared in large numbers. I have no idea to whom it is being passed out, but I am sure that all who have the opportunity to have access to it and to read it, will leave the subject better informed and I certainly hope it is being widely distributed.

MR. HAM: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier is assuring us that this brochure is not being passed out in high schools in Saskatchewan?

MR. BLAKENEY: — No, I am assuring him nothing of the kind. I have no idea where it is being passed out. Please understand that the Government of Saskatchewan does not dictate what is passed out in high schools and accordingly I cannot, in any way, indicate whether or not it is being passed out. I do hope that it is receiving a wide distribution because I think it is a good brochure.

MR. COLLVER: — Mr. Speaker, a question if I may to the Premier.

The Premier mentioned that the public would go away better informed from this brochure and I make just one quotation, and you are talking about the debt of Sask Tel and Sask Power, is the Premier aware that this statement is in this brochure.

This debt has taken nothing from taxpayers' pockets, but has benefited them in better services, reduced rates and increased returns to the province.

Is the Premier aware that this is what this statement says?

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! I am going to rule that one out on urgency, or lack of urgency.

MR. STODALKA: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. What Department was responsible for the production of the brochure and its distribution?

MR. SPEAKER: — I am going to rule that one out on the same basis.

Drug Prescription Plan

MR. S. J. CAMERON (Regina South): — A question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker.

In view of the report in Friday's Leader-Post that the Minister of Health is reported to have indicated that he personally didn't agree with the Drug Prescription Plan, I want to ask the Premier whether he considers it appropriate that the Minister of Health, who is responsible for the administration of that plan, should express the personal view that he was against it?

MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I think it not inappropriate for the Minister of Public Health, or any other Minister to be able to express a personal preference. I think it is well understood that when a Minister does make an off-hand comment like that by way of a preference it indicates not a statement of Government policy, but a statement of his personal position. I note that in the Government of Canada the Minister of Agriculture is frequently making statements which are vigorously disputed by his colleagues. It seems to be part of the custom there

and I think that while it's important that Ministers not make statements which can be misconstrued as Government policy, I think there was no doubt that this was pretty clear that the Minister of Health was making a merely personal comment.

ADJOURNED DEBATE

Budget Debate

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. W. E. Smishek (Minister of Finance) that this Assembly do now resolve itself into a Committee of Finance and the proposed amendment by Mr. C. P. MacDonald (Indian Head-Wolseley)

MR. R. L. COLLVER (Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party): — Mr. Speaker, due to the 52 minute time constraint imposed on our caucus by the radio time rule, and in order to save some radio time for one of my colleagues, it is not possible for me today to examine the statistical details about the Budget in any great depth, as others have been able to do, and as I would prefer to do. However, during the next couple of weeks, outside of radio time, my colleagues will be presenting further statistical evidence to verify our contention that this Budget is neither reasonable nor responsible. And if it is restrained, which we doubt, it is on the backs of municipal governments, on the backs of local school boards and on the backs of local hospital boards, and on the backs of future taxpayers, who will have to pay the huge deficit that will probably ensue. And for those of you who doubt that a deficit is in the offing from this Budget, I say come and see me in late 1977 or early 1978 when the Public Accounts for this period are tabled, we'll see then how responsible this Government has been in this Budget.

On Friday, before adjournment, I pointed out a number of areas where the Budget presentation did not coincide with facts. Let me summarize:

1. There has been no reduction of 75 civil servants in this Budget, money has been allocated for an increase of anywhere from 250 to 350 more civil service employees this year than last.
2. Questionable Budget practices brought about an overestimate of revenue, an underestimate of expense, which if not given effect would produce a budget deficit of between \$50 and \$100 million.
3. Percentage comparisons have been used, by juggling the supplementary estimates to produce faulty percentage increases purposefully to make the Budget appear better than it is.

Therefore, the Government is guilty, guilty of presenting a Budget to the people of Saskatchewan which is not based on fact. A budget should be the best possible guess at what the next year will bring. This Government has given us the best looking guess at what next year will bring and that's not levelling with the people of Saskatchewan. People in Saskatchewan today, and indeed, all of Canada, are looking for a new approach to

politics, a frank and honest view of government and its function. Thus, legislators are being more closely scrutinized in every way, as individuals, as representatives and as controllers of the public purse. Legislators are being called upon to illustrate leadership and integrity in the affairs of the province, and in the affairs of government.

In the past several years there have been in our neighboring country to the south, and to a lesser extent in our own, blatant examples of the misuse of power. Corruption in government brought to the attention of the general public Watergate, skyshops, the judges affair, and so on. But these deplorable instances, while they have served the lessening of faith of citizens in elected officials, are not the only reasons for the arousal of public scrutiny in government.

More and more people are beginning to feel that each issue or program is to be examined on its own merits. They sense that because of the interacting complexity of modern society, no simplistic philosophy can solve all our problems. They know for example that neither a socialist creed written by the light of the coal-oil lamp a hundred years ago, nor a laissez-faire economics theory from a similar era can solve all our problems. And most of all, they know that no government and no politician has all the answers either. The world around us is changing at such a rapid pace that it is increasingly apparent . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. COLLVER: — . . . that modern governments must carefully examine and evaluate each issue and program, not on the basis of political doctrine or theory, but rather on the basis of the specific effect each government action will have on the individual living in society and the society as a whole.

Thus, convenient political labels become meaningless. Socialist versus free enterprise, left versus right, more and more people want specifics, a rational approach to government, based on reason rather than theory, on programs based on the merits of effects rather than doctrine. I humbly submit to this Legislature that one of the main reasons for the stunning growth of the Progressive Conservative Party in the last provincial election was for this reason. People in this province looked at the two old line parties in this Assembly and saw a distinct lack of common sense and too much political theory. They saw that one is and the other isn't. Each could do no right in the eyes of the other, each could do no wrong themselves. And they saw from the results of successive NDP, Liberal governments, that neither had all the answers, that neither economic theory was perfect, that a fresh approach, a modern approach to government was needed in our province. One hundred and twenty-four thousand voters chose a party which offered, not a neat package of political theory, but promised social and economic progress. They saw the needs, they chose the Progressive Conservative Party which had never claimed to have all the answers, but it offered common sense instead; a party which had never claimed to be able to solve all of everyone's problems, nor were they power crazed to try to.

This leads us to the second reason why the people are

taking a closer look at government and demanding a more honest and modern approach. The more the governments attempt to solve every conceivable problem, the more money they spend. The more they infringe on personal freedoms, the less choices our citizens are free to make. We must find the precise and correct balance on each issue.

The gun control legislation before the House of Commons is a perfect example. How much freedom should we give up in order to attain peace and security. Is there a big enough problem with firearms in this part of Canada to warrant restrictive measures? Every day we as politicians must attempt to use common sense to find the proper balance between individual freedoms and the needs of society as a whole. Common sense, not political theory.

People are looking at the potash industry and saying there must be another alternative. Their common sense dictates that between the wild talk of a total government takeover on the one hand and total blind allegiance to the potash corporations on the other hand, there must be a reasonable alternative.

The Government's involvement in competitive industry is wrong. We're not talking here about areas like Sask Power, SGIO, Sask Tel, where the Government can achieve a monopoly over the service, we are talking about areas where government organizations are in competition with private sector organizations. Its participation in potash business, the oil business, the timber and lumber business, and through SEDCO, that marvel of inefficiency, a myriad of other competitive businesses, is not in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

It is wrong for many reasons. It is wrong because it limits the amount of government capital available for roads, for bridges, for hospitals, for the needs of our citizens. It is wrong because it creates a climate of investment in the private sector which is not conducive to expansion — who wants to compete with the government — who wants to take risks in competition with the referee? No one in their right mind. So private sector investment goes down. We are not able to encourage new capital sources to our province in the private sector unless we give them cushy give-aways. It is wrong because those individuals in Saskatchewan whose savings could be put to work right here at home come to prefer other areas, such as Alberta, to invest their money. It is wrong because governments and government organizations are not required to account for themselves in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and practice, and therefore, they can juggle their books. And whenever you can juggle your books, you're going to be inefficient. Modern technology would allow a very efficient accounting system to be introduced in our province which would enable us to know precisely where we make our mistakes — yet how many people know that the Province of Saskatchewan is unable to verify such basic information as: how many residences does the Government of Saskatchewan own? How many typewriters, adding machines, desks, chairs, road graders, earth movers, does the Government of Saskatchewan own? Nobody knows — the Provincial Auditor, least of all. How many people believe that the Government bookkeeping system is the most modern and up-to-date? Yet how many people know that many Government departments, agencies and corporations still operate on a manual, quill pen-type basis? Not very many.

Yet the Government insists that it can be as efficient and competitive as the private sector — with all its ponderous bureaucratic red tape, and operating its reporting and bookkeeping system as though it were in the dark ages. The NDP still believe that they can compete.

It's wrong because who checks the Government's figures and efficiencies? Private organizations, co-ops and individuals are subjected to rigid inspection rules by the securities exchange commission, the income tax auditors, sales tax auditors, minority shareholder's rights and very specific rules of financial reporting that are not required of government organizations. It is wrong because it puts too much power in the hands of the Premier and his Cabinet.

It is wrong for a great many reasons in addition to those I've outlined. But I thought that a recent meeting of the Crown corporations committee where we were studying the Sask. Mining and Development Company more or less summed up why the Government shouldn't be involved in competitive business. Here we were, the elected representatives of the people — presumably there to investigate whether the owners of the resource, the people of Saskatchewan, were getting full value for their money — that's our job, whether we sit in the Government benches or in the Opposition benches — because otherwise, how do the people who own the resources find out the facts, if not through their elected representatives.

We were told by the Minister in charge that this company had investigated about nine potential mining ventures and had entered into four or five contracts with mining companies. The Liberals asked to see the contracts and were refused — and with some considerable justification. How can the NDP Government release these contracts to the elected representatives of the people and still remain competitive?

If the competition gets to see all the secrets of Sask. Mining and Development Corporation, but Sask. Mining and Development Corporation doesn't have access to all the secrets of the mining companies, they'll have an unfair advantage, and be able to out compete for mining areas. This information can't become public and the NDP were right in refusing to divulge it.

But, how can the NDP say that these potash mines, oil companies, or any other competitive business that they are getting into, are being run by the people of Saskatchewan? We, the elected representatives of the people, cannot see the most basic information needed to make a reasonable judgment of the affairs we were elected to operate and control. We, the representatives of the people, get no say whatsoever in running these ventures — only the Premier and his Cabinet have any say whatsoever — and that's not good enough — that's neither democratic nor efficient. Resources to the people — nonsense — resources to the Premier is closer to the truth. Where will the NDP theory take us? How far will you go? What's next? Who's next? That this Government is bent on the total domination and control of every individual and organization in the province cannot now be in question. Centralization of powers is their goal — make no mistake about it.

Every single area in which the Provincial Government dominates, continues to grow and expand — the Crown corporations providing service to the people of Saskatchewan such as Sask Tel,

Sask Power, SGIO, and so on, dominated and controlled by the Premier and his Cabinet, have had their rates more than increased to meet inflation, even though they are budgeting for a profit.

New Crown corporations, such as Sask Potash, Sask Oil, Sask Mining and Development Corporation, again dominated and controlled by the Premier and his Cabinet, have all the money they need to expand their operations, hire more employees, buy up Consumers Gas, Atlantic Richfield, potash mines and the like.

The Department of Northern Saskatchewan, Department of Social Services and the direct employees of government continue to receive an ever-increasing slice of the provincial budget, and to receive more than their fair share to cover increasing costs related to inflation — except highways — that is the one area of government that people expect government to do well — its share has fallen drastically. Yet those areas over which the Premier and his Cabinet do not exercise direct domination and control do not receive the same kind of treatment.

Local municipal governments, local school boards and local hospital boards are told — meet the problem of inflation yourselves — increase local taxes to meet your needs — cut back local services — or both. These locally controlled organizations are being phased out in Saskatchewan and only those who are blind to reality will fail to see the handwriting on the wall. And if we lose locally elected government, if the Premier and his Cabinet dominate that area of our lives, as well as everything else, we lose our freedom — and that's not good enough.

You say government should own the potash mines because the potash belongs to the people; government should own all the resource industry because natural resources belong to the people. Following that, you will say government should own all the farms because the land belongs to the people.

Let the farmers take note. In the last legislature, and the NDP conventions over the past five years, the potash industry was warned — the public will was softened — resolutions were passed to nationalize the industry. Several introductory regulations were passed by the NDP Government. Ministers gave speeches about the nationalization, the pros and cons. The reserve tax was increased to strangulation levels. And now in this Legislature the nationalization of the potash industry.

What's next? Who's next? The NDP have given their answer. What do we see today? Land Bank and Natural Products Marketing Act introduced to soften the public will. The Minister of Transport introducing policies for uniform load limits on municipal roads with the express purpose of preventing some farmers from getting their product to market economically.

The Minister of Agriculture further stirred up the pot by saying in his speech to SARM that the present Government is considering limiting the size of farms. And even total government ownership of all land. Forewarned, but not forearmed. I notice the Premier looks quizzically at me. Perhaps you would like a copy of the Minister of Agriculture's speech that he gave to the SARM where he outlined this policy where the Government should own all of the farms. Forewarned, but not forearmed unless the farmers act quickly. What's next? Who's next? The farmers, that is who. And after that the individual homeowner. Will you say government should own and control all

housing? Because housing is a right which belongs to the people. Should the government own everything because everything belongs to the people? I suggest to you that where the government owns and controls everything the people are left with nothing. Your theory does not propose to take people off the welfare rolls, its goal is to put every one on it.

More and more, every day in this province we see the results of your political theory and lack of common sense. More and more people become dependent upon government for their livelihood as government exercises more and more control on their daily lives.

What happens to our freedom of choice, our freedom of speech, our freedom of political choice when one party in government owns and controls everyone's daily livelihood? What happens to free collective bargaining when every one has to negotiate with the government? What happens to collective bargaining when you destroy the free market system by state ownership and control? Free collective bargaining and other individual freedoms are being jeopardized by mindless political theory and people are saying there must be a proper balance. There are some things we can better do ourselves as individuals than by government.

People are taking a much closer look at government and the control it exerts on their lives, at legislation and programs which affect them. They are demanding that legislatures act with more common sense and reason.

Inflation is the third factor which is causing our citizens to scrutinize government more closely. In the manner in which their tax moneys are being spent. People have become more conscious about the purchasing power of their dollars. Wage and price controls have been introduced to combat inflation. The effect has been that more people are beginning to exercise thrift and restraint in their personal spending. They are demanding that governments do the same.

Working people in Canada and here in Saskatchewan have been asked to make a huge sacrifice. They expect their government to show leadership and restraint in the same manner. Why then, Mr. Speaker, has this Government introduced in this House a Budget which shows over a 16 per cent increase in budgetary spending over last year? A rate, Mr. Speaker, much higher than this same Government has asked, indeed, forced most of the working people of Saskatchewan to accept, except of course, those strong unions that support their party. A prime example of the kind of arrogance in government that will lead to mistrust and failure in the fight against inflation.

In presenting this Budget last Wednesday, the Minister of Finance gave us a document based on delusion and political survival, while calling it a Budget of restraint. Since this Government took office government spending has increased by over 300 per cent. Compare the figures. The Government which can in its Budget for the year ending March 31, 1977, plan to spend more than 300 per cent more than was spent for the year ending March of 1972. While telling the public and telling the people that it is practising restraint is blasphemous. Over \$3,000 of government spending for every family in our province. Do we get \$3,000 per year worth out of our Provincial Government? I think not. Where is the restraint?

Yet only last year the former Minister of Finance from Saskatoon Nutana (Mr. Robbins) said that this province was too poor to adequately increase senior citizens' pensions. Now, a year later the new Finance Minister (Mr. Smishek) says that the Saskatchewan Government is working to full capacity and continuing to expand. No wonder people are losing face in this Government. This Government, Mr. Speaker, in the presentation of its Budget speech is fortunate that there are no other levels of government in Canada to which it can shift the blame and the responsibility.

They review the unhappy performance of the Federal Government, and I must admit that this performance has not inspired my confidence either. The Minister refers to an about-face by the Federal Government, and indeed it was. Instituting long-term controls after campaigning against a 90-day freeze in 1974, was exactly that, an about-face.

But what about this Government's about-face? Before the election this Government was dead against wage and price controls. Following the election the same NDP Government instituted its own wage and price control mechanism. Mr. Speaker, I suggest to this Government that they share in the responsibility and the blame for inflation with the Federal Government. The buck stops here. I suggest that like the Liberals in Ottawa, this Government has refused to show leadership or restraint in the battle against inflation. And that both governments are turning this into a phoney war, in which only the working people of Canada will be required to sacrifice, while their governments refuse to even be inconvenienced. Had these governments acted with courage and common sense during the last few years, we would not be faced with long-term controls, a huge new bureaucracy and more government control over our day to day lives.

There is no question that this Government's economic recklessness will result in huge increases in the mill rates throughout the Province of Saskatchewan. This Government will refuse to accept the responsibility for them.

Mr. Speaker, in order to make this cosmetic masterpiece appear more palatable and while fully realizing the cost squeeze that most municipalities are faced with, this Government has reduced the percentage of total budget revenues directed to municipalities and locally elected boards. At a time when increased revenues from resources should be used to lessen the tax burdens on our citizens, our citizens will watch their property taxes skyrocket.

Let's examine the priorities of this Government as it affects local government. In 1972, Municipal Affairs accounted for seven per cent of the budget expenditures. In this Budget six per cent. In 1972 education was over 31 per cent of the government spending. Now it is less than 24 per cent. In 1972 highways and grid roads accounted for 16 per cent, now these are down to 12 per cent. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this Government is no friend of local governments, the locally elected officials closest to the people. It shows the NDP attitude of centralization of power and disdain for our community affairs and community conditions.

In the Budget speech, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance brags about the decrease of welfare cases in the northern part of Saskatchewan. But he makes no mention of the fact that

welfare costs in the rest of the province have grown at an alarming rate. Indeed, over five per cent more of the total government expenditures must now be spent on welfare than in 1972. This is nothing to brag about, Mr. Speaker, and hence was not even mentioned in the Budget speech.

Mr. Speaker, with increased revenues from resources, income tax, education and health tax coming to the Government, it is wrong that our citizens should now be faced with increases in income tax in the form of a surtax. And make no mistake this surtax is not only an attack on professional people, most of the farmers in Saskatchewan and a lot of the teachers are going to feel the bite of this extra tax. It is sad that we are faced with additional taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel. Why add to the gasoline tax now when you know that the price of gasoline is going up even further, later on in the year. You, yourselves are pressing the Government of Canada for just such an increase.

Mr. Speaker, it is deplorable that even with these increased Government revenues, our citizens will see no improvements in the distasteful and deteriorating conditions of our roads and of our highways. It is deplorable that they will face reductions in hospital and medical services and educational progress.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are seriously questioning this Government's priorities. The Government, which talks of a new deal for people while its spending priorities ignore essential services for people, is a dishonest government. It is no wonder then that people are beginning to take a closer look at this Government and all governments whose role as the keeper of the public purse has been so mishandled.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the future holds more increased taxes for the people of Saskatchewan because of the deficits that this Budget will create. Revenues are estimated to the maximum, expenditures are estimated far below what the Government already knows it will spend.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget is nothing short of fraudulent accounting.

I am sure the Department of Finance employees, many capable people, properly trained in accounting principles and practices, I am sure that these people are fully aware and have made this Government fully aware of this type of dishonest budgeting. Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, the politicians have the final say. In their political gamesmanship, this Government was determined to present to the people of this province a sheet of numbers which balanced, accurate or not, honest or not. I remind this Government that this type of fiscal phoniness has serious consequences for the future of our province. I remind this Government that three years of this type of phoney NDP budgeting, so-called balanced budgets, did produce for the Province of British Columbia an estimated \$541 million deficit only discovered after that government was thrown out of office and a proper and independent audit prepared. It will take that province many years to recover from NDP fiscal follies. Is this where we are headed?

Mr. Speaker, we in the Progressive Conservative Party believe that Saskatchewan has a bright and a prosperous future. Our province is blessed with natural wealth, the likes of which most countries would not imagine. We believe that with proper government administration and guidance Saskatchewan could rise

to its proper place in Confederation. We are rich in productive farm land, timber, potash, oil, uranium and almost every type of mineral or resource. Mr. Speaker, we envision the day when this province stands out like a sparkling jewel in the rest of Canada. It is possible, Mr. Speaker, a government dedicated to the social and economic progress of our citizens. A government which really puts people ahead of political theory. A government which displays real economic leadership could direct this province to its proper destiny, to the benefit of all of its citizens. But a government with a big brother attitude of all power unto itself cannot. And so while in Opposition, Mr. Speaker, we intend to continue to press for the protection of the individual, and the protection of our future. As this Budget debate continues we will press this Government to act more responsibly with the resources at its disposal. And to be honest and fair with the people of this province. We will be quick to criticize the negative actions and quick to support the positive programs of the Government as they relate to the future of our province. In the following debates and proceedings we will always carry in our hearts the future of Saskatchewan and its people.

Mr. Speaker, when the election of a Progressive Conservative Government brings the dawn of a new Saskatchewan, we will provide the catalyst to bring our province to its proper place in Confederation. Needless to say, I cannot support the motion, I will be supporting the amendment.

MR. J. A. PEPPER (Weyburn): — Mr. Speaker, in rising to participate in this very important Budget debate, I wish to congratulate this Government for the responsible course it is following with respect to this document.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — In addition, Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance for the excellent manner in which he outlined the fiscal policies which the province will be guided by during the next twelve-month period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — I am learning to accept disappointment from Members opposite, and their position during this debate reflects their common position respecting almost everything initiated by this New Democratic Party Government.

I am sincere when I say that I had honestly expected Members opposite to depart from their traditional course of criticism and condemnation, but yet, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that both parties to your left are trying to outdo each other in this opposition to these proposals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — On one hand, the financial critic for the official Opposition somehow rationalizes that we are not proposing restraint, but in fact our budgetary proposals reflect a 16 to 20 per cent increase. And he calls this disgraceful. But,

Mr. Speaker, his Leader then turns around and says that we are only allowing hospital boards a 15 per cent increase and that is disgraceful because we should be providing more financial assistance.

Mr. Speaker, not only is their arithmetic lacking credibility but their party's position lacks credibility because they can't even seem to agree on how to disagree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — As for the Member for Nipawin, I am afraid that we will just have to excuse the difficulties he is having in being responsible for the comments he has made about this Budget. Like the Members to his right, he too is finding it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be accurate in his projections respecting this very responsible Budget. I would like to remind the Hon. Member that out of the last 20 years, Saskatchewan has had 18 balanced budgets — a record which I feel any province can be justly proud of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — No, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I am having a very difficult time accepting the arguments of Members opposite when it comes to debating the issues involved with this Budget. As the Minister of Finance pointed out Members opposite are continually putting resolutions on the Order Paper, calling for more Government spending on more Government programs. Then comes budget time and they say we should cut back. They say we are proposing too large spending estimates. They say we are not doing enough to combat inflation. Sometimes their attitude really puzzles me, Mr. Speaker. We can all recall the last federal election campaign and the position of the Conservative Party and Mr. Stanfield. I think the poor showing at the polls can be directly attributed, Mr. Speaker, to their policies respecting wage and price controls. Then the Federal Liberal Government, despite the glaring inequities in their program, follow basically the same direction. Because of the official position of their federal counterparts, one I would say, can reasonably assume that Provincial Liberals and Conservatives would align themselves with this position, but what do they do? This provincial Government co-operates with the national fight against inflation, and in fact it proposes measures which go beyond federal guidelines and what happens in this Legislature?

AN HON. MEMBER: — NDP . . .

MR. PEPPER: — We'll come to that later. Rather than abandoning narrow political ideals and joining Members on this side of the House in approving these restraint measures, they bring out the same old tired arguments and heap scorn and criticism at our efforts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — Their position is unfortunate. However, I am confident that the people of Saskatchewan are watching very closely and when the times comes, Mr. Speaker, Members opposite will receive their just reward the next time the ballots are counted in the next

time the ballots are counted in the next provincial election. I agree, Mr. Speaker, that the term 'responsible restraint' is most appropriate in summing up the intent of this Budget. The 11 per cent increase in spending proposed for the coming fiscal year is about equal to the increase in the consumer price index during the last year.

Certain cuts have been made. We have succeeded in 'holding the line', yet the real encouraging aspect of this document is found in the fact that we have been able to hold the overall Budget increases to 11 per cent while increasing such things as school grants 20 per cent, increase the health budget — 25 per cent and grants to universities by 14 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — In addition, we have been able to ensure an acceptable level of service in other key areas by increasing capital grants to schools by 41 per cent, increasing the highways budget by 20 per cent and increasing capital grants to universities by an incredible 165 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this has all been made possible, not due to any devious juggling as suggested by Members opposite, but rather due to the responsible approach that this Government has adopted during the last five years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — Our economy has completely turned around in the past few years. And much of the credit is attributed to the policies and programs of this Government. Remember, Mr. Speaker, I know you remember well, those seven long Liberal years when things went from boom to bust. One year the Government would reduce taxes, the next year they would return the same ones and a few more added.

It is no wonder that Saskatchewan was racked by instability when you stop to consider the fact that the Government, faced with the opportunity to do something to stabilize the economy did very little, and when they did act, for the most part their efforts were regressive and their fiscal policies in relationship to taxation were oppressive to say the least.

Mr. Speaker, I should now like to say a few words in relationship to this Government's position over resource development. I can think of no other single issue that divides the parties represented in this Assembly so clearly as our party stands on resources. During the potash debate and the debate on Bill 42 before that, it became obvious that our party stands alone over this issue. The old line parties do have a common ground, despite their individual claims to the contrary.

Nobody in this province needs reminding about what we inherited when we formed the Government in 1971. The resource policies of the former Liberal Government did nothing, Mr. Speaker, but permit corporations to move in and enjoy the benefits to be derived from the exploitation of our renewable and non-renewable resources. It has been said many times in the past, but it obviously needs repeating again, Mr. Speaker,

"God did not enrich this province with valuable resources so that foreign corporations could move in and make their huge profits and then leave." These resources are our birthright, Mr. Speaker. They belong to the people of this province. They belonged to our forefathers and they equally belong to our children and to their children.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — Now, Mr. Speaker, any government which claims itself responsible has the responsibility to ensure that development is responsible and that the benefits which are derived are distributed equitably to those who own the resource. The issue to me is straightforward. This New Democratic Party Government has alienated Members opposite because we have brought in policies which ensure that Saskatchewan people enjoy the majority of benefits from the exploitation of these resources.

In four short years we have been able to increase our share of the revenues to the point where we have been able to bring in new programs and to expand others. None of this would have been made possible financially had we not changed the rules. Our efforts are reflected in very visible terms. The lowest unemployment rate in Canada, the best housing record in Canada, unprecedented population growth, the second best credit rating in Canada, and the list goes on and on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — Yet, Mr. Speaker, Members opposite try to convince the public that we have our priorities all mixed up. They say we are not doing our job properly. They claim we are messing it all up. They say they can do it better.

Well, Mr. Speaker, their record speaks for itself. We, on this side of the House make no apology for the stand that we have taken and I have taken along with it, and I have every confidence that our determination will be rewarded by the electorate the next time we go to the polls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to a number of specifics in relation to this Budget. My colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Smishek) raised a very valid point in bringing down the Budget in relation to the need for following a line of restraint. Inflation is a serious problem in Canada today. Last year was the worst, in terms of economic growth, in 20 years. Inflation does not choose favorites. It affects all of us. How government chooses to direct its attack against it determines the success or lack of success in dealing with this very problem.

The Federal Government to date has been rather ineffectual in dealing with it. This Budget attempts to honestly correct some of the glaring inequities. Provincial governments are somewhat restricted in what they can do individually, however, this Budget shows clearly that we are prepared to do everything in our power to minimize the negative aspects which present themselves in relationship to the social and economic development

of this province.

This Government sat down and took a broad look at where we stood in relation to the issues involved. Restraint was needed, yet we wanted to be sure that any restraint which was needed would be developed in such a way as to minimize the backlash which would undoubtedly be felt. We have succeeded in not only holding the line, but in key areas we have been able to provide additional moneys to ensure that the level of service in question is not jeopardized. Each individual Member undoubtedly has his own views on where the cuts should have been made and where exceptions should have been made. However, I firmly believe that this Government has done its best in ensuring that the priorities have been justly determined.

Personally, I should like to have seen more Budget moneys channelled to our number one industry, agriculture. Yet when I stop to study the facts and the realities of the industry, my anxieties are relieved. In 1975, the net farm income exceeded \$17,000 per farm, up from the 1970 level of just over \$3,000. Mr. Speaker, a 550 per cent jump in five years. Obviously there is no other profession which can claim a comparable jump, yet I do not think anyone begrudges the fact that farming is finally enjoying a reasonable standard of living and the quality of life for those involved. Yet, despite the positive economics that have been developed in recent years, Saskatchewan farmers continue to be threatened with income instability.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that this Budget provides \$1 million to be used to develop income stabilization programs for the future. This Government's agriculture record is unequalled. Programs such as the Land Bank, Farmstart, the Cow Calf Cash Advance Program and others, have individually combined to offer the incentive needed to improve this fundamentally important way of life.

Another area which merits mention is in the field of health. You know, Mr. Speaker, I really found it very difficult to contain myself when the Member for Indian Head-Wolseley (Mr. MacDonald) claimed that this Budget was unfair to "the sick and to the unfortunate." Mr. Speaker, Members opposite are the last people in Saskatchewan who should dare to talk about health programs. Their record, strewn with such monuments as deterrent fees and massive hospital closures, will never be forgotten. Their record was so consistently negative that one almost got the feeling that there was some general strategy employed by the former Liberal Government when it came time to deal with the sick and the unfortunate.

The Budget also notes with concern the Federal Government's proposed cutbacks in medical and hospital funding. Many provinces are already being forced to close hospitals and reduce available hospital beds. Mr. Speaker, not only does this Budget minimize the negative implications of the Federal position, but in some cases, we, through responsible planning, are able to extend further assistance in key areas, such as the University Hospital in Saskatoon. In addition, we will be able to expand health services for senior citizens in Saskatchewan.

That's our record, Mr. Speaker, and when Members opposite claim this Budget will be particularly hard on the sick and the unfortunate, the facts just do not support these political charges that they have made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — Now, Mr. Speaker, why don't the Members opposite talk about the increases which we are proposing for Level II and III care? What about the success story associated with the Family Income Plan? Why don't they offer us their rationale for the positive reductions in social assistance payments in the North, where more people are working at more new jobs than at any other time in the history of this province? Why don't they mention some of these things?

No, Mr. Speaker, I usually do not dwell in any length on the negative aspects of Members opposite, however, I honestly feel that in fairness, both the Liberal and Conservative caucuses owe the people of Saskatchewan an explanation in relation to the issues just raised.

This is a good Budget. We have been able to head into the next fiscal year without inflicting any significant jolt on the people of this province. The people of Saskatchewan can be assured that with a New Democratic Party Government at the helm, they never have to fear any more 'Black Friday' budgets.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — I say it again though, Mr. Speaker, because of our responsible position respecting resources, we have been able to minimize the adverse effects of inflation and despite what Members opposite claim, a balanced Budget which proposes an 11 per cent increase in spending, is a responsible response to the economic realities we face today in Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think from what I have stated that quite obviously you will realize I will be forwarding my fullest support in relationship to the Budget and will certainly be opposing the amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. N. VICKAR (Melfort): — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to enter the debate on the 1976 Budget brought down on March 24th. Before I do I should like to congratulate the Minister, first, on his subject material and secondly, on the manner in which the delivery was made in this House on that date.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Speaker, no matter what was inscribed within the Budget, it takes a great deal of time, not only time from the Minister in charge, but from all departments of government. The Minister in charge and his staff are responsible to put all the pieces together and for all government business, and for the work involved and the manner in which it was done, I should like to congratulate the Minister and his staff.

Mr. Speaker, it is being said and only in this House to any extent, that the Budget is a do-nothing document and it does not do anything for the people of Saskatchewan. I think, Mr. Speaker, that it is the Opposition's duty to criticize and

to pressure debate on the subject and, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that for that reason alone they are directing their debate and criticizing the Government. It is their duty and I think, we on this side of the House would be very surprised if the Opposition would take any different stand. The only difference being that we would like an honest approach because criticism is good for even the best of people and those people we have on this side of the House.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is a hold-the-line Budget. It is a Budget of restraint but not enough to deter the effective growth of our communities in the province and the people in it. We see many areas in government that will not expand but it is only natural at this time during the inflationary period. But, also we see no cutbacks in any of our programs. It is true that the municipalities and the urban governments will no doubt, in some instances, be pressed only because moneys allowed them were not enriched. But I am quite sure that every government, rural or urban, after looking at the various programs available to them and adding the increases allowed in a good number of them, will accept the fact that they too have to hold the line as much as possible in these times of inflation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that local governments have more money now than ever before for the expansion of their government programs. I know it is not enough, but when is enough — enough? Some day, somebody, somewhere has to hold the line. Mr. Speaker, we are all in this together. The Budget calls for an increase in police grants by \$1 million, not necessarily the best increase, but an increase that will reflect the rising costs to urban centres.

The Main Street Improvement Program to help communities on a cost sharing basis, to modernize and uplift their business affairs will, no doubt, be a help, Mr. Speaker. In towns with a population of less than 2,000 the need for this type of assistance is very important. It has been many years since most of these places have had the opportunity to have the modern necessities equal to those of the larger urban areas.

These problems were brought about by the large shift of population to the large urban areas and now a visible move to the smaller communities with the help of many of these government programs.

The Property Improvement Grant will be continued with an estimated cost of \$45 million.

One million dollars has been set aside to cover loans to industrial towns to help them cope with the demands of their expansion growths.

Our Government has long advocated its concerns for the smaller businessman. The newly established Rural Community Business Retention Program will assist small community rural areas. Operated through the Department of Industry and Commerce and supported by SEDCO, it will assist in transferring owner-managed business to new owners, a new program that has long been desired by many of our smaller communities.

March 29, 1976

The Neighbourhood Improvement Program will receive over \$1 million for its entrance into the upgrading of rural areas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — Along with the government policy of decentralization and building government buildings in urban areas, this will assist these areas in their beautification programs.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think any urban area in the province was not delighted when the Government announced its \$20 per capita unconditional grants last year; the \$75 per capita community fund program, all of which is tied in with the equalization grants. Greater water and sewer programs. Major new housing programs. All these will be continued in 1975, with no cutbacks. Another indication of a hold-the-line Budget that was brought into this House on the 24th of March.

Mr. Speaker, to cite a few examples. Just recently on March 1, our Government authorized payment of a cheque in the amount of \$13,139 to the RM of St. Peter for the hamlet of Annaheim for the assistance to expand the water supply. This cheque, along with another cheque of \$13,669 which was sent to them earlier under the Winter Works Incentive Program, gave the hamlet a lift of \$26,808.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — The hamlet of Fairy Glen, with a population of no more than 100, in the rural municipality of Willow Creek on March 16 received a cheque for \$6,787 to help them cover their water works installation program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — The town of Naicam was allocated grants of \$5,730 in January of this year on their capital fund program. The village of Spalding was allocated \$4,000 towards their capital fund program. The village of Ridgedale in the riding of Nipawin just recently received a grant of \$6,600, enabling them to complete their curling rink. I mention this one to you to prove, Mr. Speaker, that the policy of this Government is to treat everybody equally, no matter who their representative may be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — Of course, I say that because a good number of my constituents use that particular area and will no doubt benefit by it.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on citing various government grants that were given to different communities that could not, in any other way possible, upgrade themselves if it were not for these generous government programs. Mr. Speaker, these programs I am glad to note are being continued to help further these communities and others to enjoy the life similar to that of their larger urban brothers.

It is true, Mr. Speaker, that this is not an expansionary

Budget, but it is also not a Budget of cutbacks. A Budget of restraint, yes, but not an austerity program.

Mr. Speaker, in the field of housing I am glad to note that since 1973 when this Government introduced its housing program under the Housing Corporation, most urban areas are expanding their housing facilities faster than at any time in history, faster than any province in Canada and now three new housing programs are being introduced.

Over \$12 million will be allocated for the expansion of a land development fund to help towns and cities acquire and develop new housing projects and a further \$23 million will be committed to help towns and cities buy and service land for their housing programs.

The Co-operatives Housing Program will be a boost to our family dwelling problems and the rural and native programs which will expand to 250 units under the grant structure for the rehabilitation, for existing housing will, no doubt, have an impact on our housing program.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but repeat that which has been said time and time again, in 1970 this province had no housing program and construction was in its most serious slump. Mr. Speaker, in the last five years this Government has established the most effective and successful housing program in Canada from 1,700 homes in 1970 to a record last year of 10,250 starts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Speaker, I can and will verify this by using my own town of Melfort as an example. In 1970 we built in the neighborhood of 40 homes and that increased from year to year and in 1973 we built 80. In 1974 we reached 120 and in 1975, Mr. Speaker, with a population of over 5,000 we built 150 homes, a record for any town and any province to admire.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Speaker, all indications in Melfort since the first of the year point to another overwhelming housing program and I say, Mr. Speaker, that only through our housing policy could this have happened. It takes the combined effort of the federal, provincial and local governments to make these things happen and this Government has taken the initiative to make things happen and are doing just that for the people of the Province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on talking about other programs in the Budget, but I will leave these to my colleagues who have and no doubt will elaborate on some of them.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I should like to commend the Minister and the Government on the Budget for the people, brought to this House on the 24th of March.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. G.T. SNYDER (Moose Jaw South): — Mr. Speaker, I am especially pleased to have this opportunity to contribute a few remarks to this debate, some of them of a general nature and others more specifically devoted to the operation of the Department of Labour and the Department of Government Services. I want particularly to congratulate the Minister of Finance on the delivery of the Budget last Wednesday, also on the contents of the Budget. A budget which is in keeping with the reality of the times, Mr. Speaker, which continues to acknowledge a fitting order of priorities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — I think, Mr. Speaker, that all Members in this House waited with bated breath again today to hear some message of substance from the Leader of the Conservatives just a little earlier in this debate today. Once again, he engaged in that wild arm waving, the delivery of generalities, Mr. Speaker, and he finally took his seat once again having contributed nothing of substance to this debate, indicating clearly that the Tories have learned nothing from the 12 days of this current Session or the 40 odd days of the last session. During 60 days, Mr. Speaker, this group of Tories has not yet learned how properly to frame a question.

Mr. Speaker, I don't like to hark back to days gone by, but sitting in this House, sitting to the left of Mr. Speaker, at that one point in time when the Conservatives had a lone Member in Martin Pederson, we saw more thoughtful, more profound thought, more objective politics, more statesmanlike attitudes from one single Member of the Conservatives during the Martin Pederson era than has emerged from this group that sits opposite, sitting on the Tory benches over the last 60 odd days, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — One would hope that some time this group would begin to get their feet under them and act as though they had some respect for the parliamentary process and had some part to play while sitting in this Legislature, drawing their pay as MLAs.

Mr. Speaker, I suppose it's obvious at this point to suggest that the time is moving along and that this 1976 Budget has appeared at a later date than has been the case in previous years. Accordingly I don't intend to delay the proceedings unnecessarily, but there are a few remarks that I should like to pass on to the Legislature.

With the resumption of the proceedings of this House, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that in spite of that eight week performance by the Liberal Opposition Members particularly during the last session, that there are still a few Members opposite who have not yet clearly perceived what a comprehensive progressive resource policy is all about.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that there should no longer be any need to point out that this province owns its resources and legitimately seeks to gain the highest

returns from the use of those resources. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the wealth generated in this way, belongs to the citizens of this province and a reasonable government is obliged to insure that a reasonable portion of this wealth stays where it belongs, right here in Saskatchewan, so as to provide the economic and social benefits to which the citizens of this province are entitled.

The era of exploited resources policy is over, Mr. Speaker, because our citizens are no longer willing to accept such treatment. I am firmly convinced that they are not prepared to forfeit their rights to the profits generated from their own resources.

Believing this to be so, Mr. Speaker, the present Government is developing a resource policy which will benefit our people now and in the future as well. We want to create a balance and practical set of approaches, Mr. Speaker. In developing these we have sought constantly assurance that those chosen means of developing our resources, whether renewable or non-renewable, would result in the greatest benefit over the greatest length of time.

Because there is no simple answer to the various and complex facets of a resource policy, I cannot accept the doctrinaire approach such as is being set forth by Members who sit to your left in the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. Large corporations are not the only agencies capable of developing our natural resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — Those, Mr. Speaker, who are embalmed in that narrow and stifling casket of thought are by now relics of a bygone era, at least as far as the so-called developed nations of this world are concerned.

I think it's an especially important feature that we, as Saskatchewan people and citizens of Canada must not forget. More and more we are becoming captives of foreign investment, until we are no longer masters in our own house. The people in my own constituency, Mr. Speaker, the people in Moose Jaw need not be reminded of the hazards of having one's fortunes rest in the board room of a foreign nation. Moose Jaw people recall very vividly a decision made in Minneapolis a few years ago which effectively closed Robin Hood Flour Mills in Moose Jaw, dislocating several hundred people. This arbitrary decision, Mr. Speaker, has resulted in the export of top grade, high protein wheat from Saskatchewan to eastern Canada, with the finished product returned to us for our own consumption.

Of all foreign investment in Canada, Mr. Speaker, approximately 82 per cent is American. The extent of foreign ownership in Canadian industry is reaching, what I believe has to be described as, crisis proportions. Manufacturing, to give an example, 63 per cent foreign owned; oil and gas, 91 per cent; the aircraft industry, 92 per cent foreign owned; computers, 91 per cent; machines, 76 per cent; petroleum, 91.9 per cent; mining, 67 per cent; rubber, 93 per cent; foreign owned automobiles, 97; chemical and chemical products, 89 per cent foreign owned; mineral fuels, 81 per cent; primary metal, 85 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the outflow of Canadian dollars to the United States in interest payments, in service charges and dividends alone is approximately \$5 million a day. Over \$200,000 every hour of every day, and becoming more acute with each passing year.

Our citizens are aware, Mr. Speaker, that as foreign ownership of our country increases, the flow of capital out of our country also increases. We know too that with foreign ownership, vital decisions affecting our economy are being made elsewhere and needless to say, those decisions are not always based on our priorities.

We have to take notice, for example, when the National Energy Board of Canada cannot get straight answers from the petroleum industry about our known oil and gas reserves. The petroleum industry in this country is mostly foreign owned, Mr. Speaker, and the answers about Canadian energy reserves which they have provided have been tragically misleading to say the very least.

Where Saskatchewan potash is concerned, we felt there was considerable evidence that the priorities of the companies and their shareholders was not the same as were the objectives of ours on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

In developing our resources we have dealt with many private corporations and we're encouraged and we have assisted them in the past. The timber industry is a classic example. Uranium is another. Through traditional means of regulation and taxation we've been able to negotiate reasonable returns on behalf of the people of this province.

In dealing with the potash companies, however, we found ourselves unable to proceed with established policy by following the usual routes, and when we found that we could get no guarantees of orderly expansion of the industry at a time when world demand was growing, we saw that this was a special case that had to be handled in another way.

We have an obligation, Mr. Speaker, I believe, to ensure that all of our resources are used carefully and wisely in accordance to the priorities of the people who own them. The people who own them, Mr. Speaker, are the people of Saskatchewan, and we intend to keep it that way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — It's obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the champions of free enterprise who sit opposite are unaware of the mood of Canadian people. More and more, as the situation is being properly understood, our people are demanding that we move in the direction of self-determination, particularly in the ownership of our non-renewable resources.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me then to turn from a topic which is certainly of vital importance to all of the good people of this province, I'd like to say a few words about some especially good citizens, those who live in the city of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Now only does this third largest city of Saskatchewan have

a fine climate compared to Regina and some other places in Saskatchewan it's also had a pretty fine year in 1975. It was a year of prosperity and a year of growth according to all of the major indicators.

One of them is the figure of the value of new construction, both residential and commercial, Mr. Speaker. New construction for the city of Moose Jaw reached a record high of just under \$20 million in 1975.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — Twelve new manufacturing concerns, processing plants and service businesses have made a significant contribution to the economic life of that city. Canada Packers opened its new \$4 million beef processing plant in September. Mastercraft Industries Plastic and Aluminum Sash and Door Plant was another major development. Canasphere Industries and Fairford Industries also contributing to the healthy growth of our city.

The record number of new housing starts in 1975 was undoubtedly encouraged by the availability of provincial government house building assistance programs.

A provincial government office building was opened in May, 1975, and I'll have a little to say about that a little later.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — In December, I was pleased to be part of the official opening of the new radio and television section of the Saskatchewan Technical Institute in Moose Jaw. This addition to a school which is already very highly regarded throughout Canada could only enhance its reputation for producing competent technicians whose services are very much in demand everywhere and especially high right here in Saskatchewan.

The Western Development Museum, Mr. Speaker, has captured the imagination of many citizens and continues to grow and I expect will be ready for its official opening in June of this year with the additional funding being provided in addition to the \$1 million which was provided in the initial stages.

As of September, 1975, the Wild Animal Park in Moose Jaw has been administered by the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources and will be developed as a provincial zoo which is designed to be a major tourist attraction for the city and for the province as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to take a few minutes of time to review some of the activities and programs of the departments for which I have a degree of responsibility and I should like to first say something about the Labour portfolio.

I think first of all, Mr. Speaker, it has to be said that in terms of the social and the economic life of this province the Department of Labour carries considerably more impact than the relatively small size of its staff and small budget would indicate. I am particularly pleased to see that the

Department of Labour's budget has finally gone over the \$5 million this year indicating the esteem with which the Government regards the programs which have been developed by the Department. These programs profoundly affect, I believe, in a very major way and a direct way all of the members of the labor force and their families which comprise the major part of the population. The premise behind the activities of the Department then is that the promotion of the welfare of the labor force is essential to the achievement of numerous other economic and social goals long since accepted as reasonable and necessary in a progressive and in a civilized society. For this reason we carry out comprehensive legislative programs related to labor standards, covering a full range of minimum acceptable levels of both wages and working conditions. We have an industrial relations program designed to facilitate collective bargaining and promote industrial peace. I shall have more to say on that subject a little later.

We supervise apprenticeship programs and tradesmen qualifications in order to utilize our manpower resources efficiently. We provide an occupational health and safety program, Mr. Speaker, which is second to none and we administer legislation designed to ensure that the employee's financial interest in private pension plans are protected.

It is almost impossible, Mr. Speaker, to exaggerate the importance and the contribution made by the working people of this province to the prosperity of Saskatchewan. Certainly it doesn't require the imagination to realize that the absence of an equitable healthy and productive work setting many of the other programs of this Government would lose a great deal of their significance.

Speaking of equitable work conditions, Mr. Speaker, I should like to describe to this Assembly some of our innovative programs insofar as the creation of equity between working men and women of this province are concerned.

As you know back in 1964 we established a Women's Bureau as part of the Department of Labour. Later that year, it will be recalled, an unfortunate event took place for every working woman in this province and between 1964 and 1971, under a Liberal Government, the Women's Bureau was never properly utilized. Indeed, it was allowed the magnificent total of one staff member and even that person was assigned other duties in order to guarantee that she couldn't expend her whole time carrying out programs which would affect close to one-third of the working people of this province, some 80,000 women even at that time, Mr. Speaker. Such a dismal record of performance defies comprehension, but we were aware of the full extent of the neglect and we were determined to end the injustice as soon as possible.

In 1973, specific, enforceable, equal pay legislation was passed in this House and the Women's Bureau was given a mandate, plus the staff to enforce it. Also in 1973, the maternity leave provisions of The Labour Standards Act were amended to provide up to 18 weeks leave, plus a guarantee of no loss of status to a woman upon her return to work. The Women's Bureau also became responsible for enforcing these maternity leave regulations. Since that time, Mr. Speaker, equal pay wage settlements have been made totalling something in excess of

\$78,000 bringing equal pay for similar work to 241 women and one man.

The Women's Bureau has always carried out an extremely important educational role, even in the bad old days when it was a one-person operation. That program of providing guidance and career planning to students and others new to the work force is becoming more important every year and we are seeing women entering the world of work in even greater numbers and staying there for most of their adult years.

Here are a few facts based upon the latest census figures, which might be of interest to the House.

One in every three workers in Saskatchewan is a woman. Approximately 75 per cent of working women are on the job 30 hours per week or more. The average working woman in Saskatchewan is 36 years old and married. More than one-third of this province's female labor force is over the age of 45. And finally, Mr. Speaker, on a somewhat sobering note, Canadian working women, according to the latest figures available, earned on the average about \$3,200 less per year than men, even though they are at least as well educated.

I think Members will agree that our concern with the welfare of this segment of our work force is clearly justified and as I have said before in this House, it would be very short-sighted indeed, if we did not take every possible step to ensure genuine equality for women in the work place as well as elsewhere.

"Positive Action Programs" was the phrase that was used earlier during the last session, I believe, Mr. Speaker. One extremely important Positive Action Program emerged in January of this year when the New Career Development Office was announced, whose main function is the improvement of the status of women in the public service and in Saskatchewan Crown corporations.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I should like to take a moment or two to describe a further initiative which has been taken within the Department of Labour. I refer to an expansion of the present Women's Bureau into a full-fledged Women's Division, adequately staffed and adequately funded, to carry out many programs which will seek to eliminate discrimination against working women; but more than that will help create conditions where truly equal opportunities are available for those who in this province work whether they be male or female.

The former Women's Bureau, Mr. Speaker, will continue as the new investigations branch of the Division. As such, its field investigation officers will continue to identify and investigate violations of the equal pay and maternity leave provisions of The Labour Standards Act.

In addition to this, there will be a resource branch which will combine the research and education functions which are a vital part of affirmative action programs which we envisage. The research people will identify the current status of women in the Saskatchewan work force and monitor any progress made. The education and information staff will work closely with our educational institutions as well as with the general public to promote recognition of the changing role of

women in our society and the often subtle forms of discrimination which have, in the past, been accepted as normal behavior.

We knew, Mr. Speaker, that our equal opportunity legislation was not going to magically transform society and elevate women to equal status as soon as the ink was dry on the paper. However, we did see this as a necessary first step. Now, in 1976, we are moving ahead into a phase of what might be called active non-discrimination. Rather than depend only on the more passive steps like passing anti-discrimination laws, we are attempting to move forward with the new career development office for the civil service and with the expanded women's division in the Department of Labour. We aim to change outdated attitudes and guarantee that the brains and skills of a large segment of our work force are neither undervalued nor under-utilized. Let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, women are an important part of the working world and are going to continue to participate to an even greater extent in the foreseeable future.

Through the Women's Division of the Department of Labour, their contributions will be recognized and encouraged and their right to equal opportunity will be protected.

My Department has been looking, also, closely at another set of problems and I alluded to it earlier when I mentioned our industrial relations program, Mr. Speaker. As everyone knows, this Provincial Government, like others, is groping for solutions to current industrial relations difficulties. Organizations as diverse as the Canadian Labour Congress and the National Chamber of Commerce have all indicated that they believe that the free collective bargaining process is still the one best suited to Canada's mixed type of economy in determining wages and working conditions. However, stresses in these unsettled times have caused refinements of collective bargaining to be considered.

The problems are becoming more complex every year and while there are many innovations being put forth, it is extremely difficult to forecast which of them holds the most promise. These days I sometimes get the impression, Mr. Speaker, that the general public wants to hear only simplistic answers and I suggest to you that there are none.

I am concerned that all of us, labor, management and government, should look very carefully at a number of new ideas which seem to be emerging as our industrial relation systems evolve into more and more complex and inter-related patterns.

The concept of industrial democracy is one idea which has been used with a certain amount of success in some western European nations. In this country, with its adversary system having become something of a tradition, there are certainly some real barriers to the acceptance of the concept of industrial democracy. Management is inclined to resist the idea of greater participation by workers since this would undoubtedly impinge upon what are regarded as management rights. On the other hand unions express concern because they fear that employees involved in decision-making process may conceivably be swallowed up by the management side and left with no identity at all.

Another relatively new idea is fixed position arbitration where, by prior agreement, the arbitrator is bound to choose either management's proposal in total or labour's package. While this method of solving problems is frequently referred to as a form of Russian roulette and can only solve monetary issues in any event, it may make bargaining more realistic when the parties know that only one total package is going to be accepted.

In the past few years, Mr. Speaker, we have heard calls for tribunals or labor peace commissions, whereby joint committees could be permanently appointed to represent unions, employers and governments. They would exist to monitor working agreements in essential industries and fill an adjudicator's role in each set of negotiations. Behind these types of proposals lies the conviction that the pressure of public opinion, given guidance from a non-political prestigious commission, would likely encourage voluntary settlements and avoid compulsory arbitration and/or strikes. Not everyone is inclined to agree but it is a concept which is worth some consideration.

Another idea we hear about is the concept of continuous bargaining, where contentious issues are solved as they occur. This is certainly much less crisis-oriented than our adversary approach where two sides sit across the table from each other every twenty-four months or so and release all their pent up tensions and arguments at one time.

It has been used with some success in the Scandinavian countries and it may be that we are going to see a system like this evolving here. If we do, it will be partly because of our raging inflation which has forced the parties to look at shorter and shorter contracts which, in practical terms has meant bargaining more often until sometimes even at this point, it seems to be almost continuous. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that there are many more facets of this program and I don't intend to attempt to deal with them all today. Nevertheless, I want to say that all provincial jurisdictions are searching diligently for solutions. Saskatchewan has time and again indicated that it is prepared to co-operate fully in any proposed industrial relations initiatives designed to evaluate the effectiveness of innovative dispute settlement techniques.

In the same spirit, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Labour has recently taken a major step forward in streamlining its system of support services to both labor and management.

I think I need not tell the Members of this Assembly, that inflation has been causing unprecedented labor unrest and therefore the demand for conciliation services has been skyrocketing over the last number of months. The industrial relations officers of my Department have contributed greatly in reducing potential labor-management difficulties in this province and I have received numerous letters and numerous telephone calls from both sides, from both labor and management, assuring me of this fact and expressing their thanks for services being provided.

Recognizing the importance of such work, we have created a new industrial relations division, Mr. Speaker, which is made up of the former conciliation services unit, the Workers' Advocate office and the support staff of the Labour Relations Board. This new division will continue to

rationalize and improve services to all parties at all times where industrial relations are concerned.

Progress has also been considerable through our upgraded research programs, Mr. Speaker, and I think this is particularly important in terms of our attempts to provide up-to-date information to the parties to the collective bargaining agreement. We have provided much up-to-date information to assist the parties. Our research work and publications have had a sizeable impact insofar as providing information to both the public and those directly involved in the collective bargaining approach. I refer specifically to periodicals such as the Saskatchewan Labour Report which is released every month and contains current information on the labor force, on consumer price index and the various other labour related topics and the collective bargaining analysis reports and wage survey reports.

The Department of Labour has also, Mr. Speaker, provided through the Minimum Wage Board on its recommendations, an increase in the minimum wage five times since 1971, the latest increase being January 1 of this year, keeping Saskatchewan among the leaders in this most important respect.

In 1971, in terms of labor standards, we introduced legislation calling for the universal 40-hour week, the first in Canada. In Saskatchewan working people also get three weeks annual vacation after one year and by 1978 will be receiving four weeks annual vacation after ten years of service, which is the best legislation in Canada.

Employees, Mr. Speaker, in terms of labor standards are entitled to take leave of absence in order that they may stand for public office. This also was the first in Canada. An employee has the right to refuse to perform dangerous work until an occupational health investigation has been done. This, too, was a first in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Women are now entitled, as I indicated earlier, to 18 weeks maternity leave so that they no longer have to quit their job in order to bear a child. In addition, they are protected by equal pay legislation which is also second to none. Provisions have been made to protect all employees from loss of wages in the event of bankruptcy. Provision has also been made to protect an employee from lay-off merely because of the fact of a garnishee proceedings have been placed on his or her wages.

In 1975, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Day, the first Monday in August became a provincial statutory holiday giving our citizens a chance to enjoy a long weekend in mid-summer when our weather is usually at its best.

So, Mr. Speaker, having provided all of these improvements plus others, which I haven't taken the time to enumerate, we haven't stopped seeking further progress.

During 1975 we held public hearings to encourage as much input as possible to enable us to continue to improve the working conditions in this province. From the many discussions and from the briefs which have been presented to us, several needs have been clearly expressed time and time again.

Our Occupational Health and Safety Program, Mr. Speaker, has continued to lead the way since it began to play an important part in the Saskatchewan scene in 1972. It has provided leadership, Mr. Speaker, for all other provinces in Canada and indeed on this continent improving the health and safety conditions of people at work. Our committee approach has been widely accepted and widely studied for the very good reason, Mr. Speaker, that it works. We now have about 3,000 occupational health committees representing over 100,000 workers. They themselves, the members of these committees deserve much credit for making the concept the success that it is. These committees working along with the inspection and testing resources of the Department of Labour have been able to identify and take constructive action to rectify many kinds of hazardous and potentially hazardous working conditions. Examples include cases involving overcrowding, thermal environment, lighting, ventilation, noise levels and so on.

I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, that a great deal still remains to be done. There are still work accidents taking place in Saskatchewan and deaths occurring in this province which are definitely the result of inadequate concern for safety. Under the terms of this Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Division has a responsibility to investigate these tragedies and take steps to remedy inadequacy or neglect of safety measures. Upon occasion, it is necessary to go so far as to prosecute offending employers and where this is required, we do not hesitate to follow through.

Another responsibility which is part of the occupational health program in this province is the definition of clear, workable regulations to promote safe working conditions in all operations which come under provincial jurisdiction.

In the spring of 1975 the Department announced a most important set of regulations governing the use of asbestos in the work place. These new regulations are designed to prevent damage to the health of workers who may be exposed to dust from materials containing asbestos. Where asbestos-free materials cannot be substituted or effective exhaust mechanisms installed, the new rules require that workers use approved respirators and protective clothing.

Annual medical examinations are now mandatory for all those who work with asbestos and stringent labelling and warning notices are also stipulated. In addition to this, we have banned the use of the most dangerous form of this mineral known as crocidilite or "blue" asbestos.

I have recently received a communication, Mr. Speaker, from the Minister of National Health and Welfare and it indicated that Ottawa has also decided to follow our lead in proposing to ban crocidilite and setting out some new regulations which would protect workers who fall under federal jurisdiction. While I feel these regulations leave much to be desired in view of the abundant evidence of asbestos caused health damage, nevertheless, I am pleased to see some indication that the hazard is finally being recognized.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told by people from the Federal Government and from other provinces in Canada that this province is looked upon as the leader in the occupational health field and we, of this Government, are particularly

proud of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — Some of the Members of this Assembly have stated on a good many occasions that some of us in these Chambers do not take our jobs seriously enough, that we fritter away our time and get nothing done and occasionally chew gum in the Assembly, etc.

I am here to say, Mr. Speaker, that this Government has succeeded in a great many ways in getting things done and I think The Occupational Health and Safety Act is an excellent example. In Conservative provinces like Alberta and Ontario, both much more highly industrialized than we are, very much less has been done to promote health and safety in the work place. Some of the Hon. Members opposite would have us believe that Conservatives have never been guilty of joking during the session but rather they maintain a sober and industrious attitude all day, every day. I think I can accept that, Mr. Speaker, even if you believe that all Conservatives are colored steel grey and never laugh or even smile, there is little evidence that they get much done either.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — Another example of solid progress where the present Government is concerned, Mr. Speaker, I think is in the field of Workers' Compensation. Following the completion of the Task Force Report on this subject in 1973, we enacted a new act which took place in 1974. This was one of several positive steps we took to bring the Saskatchewan system up out of a morass of inefficiency, neglect and downright injustice where the Liberals had left it for many years. To this end, we substantially increased the benefits payable to injured workers and their dependents. We extended coverage to many industries that were formerly excluded. We made administrative changes to streamline the operation. We appointed worker's advocates to provide advice and assistance to workers who have difficult claims before the Workers' Compensation Board.

We do not claim to have devised the perfect system by any means, Mr. Speaker. There are still a great many problems yet unsolved and we are diligently searching for answers.

I am referring mainly in the search for better answers to complex problems related to the concept of a universal sickness and accident program which was recommended by a Task Force in 1973. As most people are aware, we have appointed a special committee which has been holding public hearings during the past few months and we are expecting that the report will be in our hands very shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a few moments before I resume my seat, discussing several of the many achievements of the Department of Government Services. While you, Mr. Speaker, obviously will find yourself quite familiar with most of these projects, I still feel it would be unwise to neglect to inform some of the other Members opposite of this Assembly who have a genuine need to be assured of progress being made.

The Member for Indian Head-Wolseley during his response to the Budget on Friday last, heaped a good deal of scorn upon the Provincial Government and the Department of Government Services for what he termed to be a costly government building to house civil servants.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — Mr. Speaker, this Member again made it clear that Liberals learned very little from their failure while they were in office. During that 1964-1971 era, when the construction industry was faltering and skilled tradesmen were leaving our province, they sat on their hands and they hardly put up a brick or a piece of mortar during the entire seven year period of the Thatcher administration. They almost totally abrogated a legitimate role, that of providing adequate facilities for the public and for the civil servants and they also abrogated a responsibility to stimulate the construction industry at a time of high unemployment.

The Liberal financial critic restated his party's archaic views when he spoke last Friday. And it appears from the noise opposite, Mr. Speaker, this appears to be the official Liberal view.

It was the Member for Saskatoon Eastview (Mr. Penner) who is particularly vociferous this afternoon, on a free time public affairs program, who had a few words to say in typical Liberal style. The Member attempted to mislead the people of Saskatchewan about their Provincial Government and he too suggested that the Government is wasting taxpayers' money on expensive office buildings in Yorkton, Saskatoon and Regina.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — Now he further suggests that the Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation will build a \$10 million office building in Prince Albert to house some 29 staff. I just wish he would be a little careful when he uses those figures so loosely. I believe it is incumbent upon me to set the record straight with respect to these comments. I must admit that it is not easy to respond to the Member for Saskatoon Eastview because it is not at all clear what point he is really attempting to make.

Let me deal first, if I may, with the announcement of the Saskatchewan Forest Products new building in Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, a news release was issued through Information Services by my colleague the Hon. Mr. Bowerman and he clearly states this and I quote:

The \$8 to \$9 million structure will house provincial government departments as well as the Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation and is designed to cover an extended ground floor that will be made available to business and commercial enterprises for lease.

Mr. Speaker, this news release was clearly available to all Members of this House, including the Member for Saskatoon Eastview. He either didn't recall the facts contained in the release or his research officer, or speech writer or ad agency

didn't have the experience or the expertise to check on the accuracy of the material before they prepared the speech for the Member to give on a free time telecast.

I have to also question, Mr. Speaker, on whose behalf the Hon. Member believes he speaks. It is my understanding that the Mayor of Prince Albert welcomed the announcement of the new building. Nor have I heard my colleague the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Feschuk) claim that it should not be built. I wonder just what position the Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Steuart) takes with respect to the building of Sask Forest Products office building in Prince Albert. If he objects to it I think he should let us know.

I should like to give a little advice to the Hon. Member for Prince Albert, that he should possibly consult with his Member of Parliament to find out what happened to John Diefenbaker. I wouldn't like to see anything happen to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition in his final days. I wouldn't like to see him turned on as the Conservatives turned on their leader a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker, as I said the Prince Albert City Council didn't object to the Saskatchewan Forest Products building in Prince Albert and I want to place on record of this House that this Government has not received a single request from any of the city councils of Regina, Saskatoon or Prince Albert to abandon the projects in their constituencies. I ask again, who is it that the Member for Saskatoon Eastview speaks for? It is apparently not the citizens of any of those communities?

I also want to advise the House, Mr. Speaker, that my Department has not received any requests not to proceed with the building in Swift Current, the one under construction in Swift Current, nor in Melfort, nor did we receive any indication from the communities of Tisdale or Kindersley that they didn't wish to have a provincial office located in their town. Further, I don't believe that I am revealing any secrets when I say to this House that the city councils of Weyburn and Estevan have each indicated their very profound desire to have provincial office buildings located in their communities so that they may properly meet the needs of their employees and the public whom they serve.

On whose behalf then does the Member for Indian Head-Wolseley and the Member for Saskatoon Eastview speak? Is he suggesting that instead of owning public buildings that they should be built by private entrepreneurs and rented by the Government? Is he speaking on behalf of the real estate developers? That is a question that needs to be answered. The Member is obviously aware that buildings are expensive regardless of who it is that builds them, whether it is the Government or the real estate developer. This is surely at least part of the reason why the cost of rented space has increased significantly for all lessees, government business or nonprofit organizations.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Member for Saskatoon Eastview is suggesting that this Government is guilty of locating too many offices of various departments and agencies outside of Regina. Perhaps this is what he is getting at when he states that the Government's public works program is wasteful.

I ask the Member which offices he wishes to see removed from the city of Saskatoon that have appeared there in recent times? The business assistance office of the Department of Industry and Commerce? Would you like to see that one removed? Or perhaps the Saskatoon office of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. Another attempt to decentralize the Government's operation. Or perhaps he would suggest the Saskatoon residents would be better served by having the rent control legislation which he voted for in this House, have it administered out of Regina rather than a branch office in his home town of Saskatoon.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the kind of trouble the Members would encounter if he proposed any of these steps to his colleagues in city council is fairly profound. And yet the Member suggests to the people of this province and the Government that we should remove provincial offices from communities around the province, eliminating the need for so-called extensive wasteful government business. This in the face of pure neglect for seven long years when you hardly applied mortar or brick to any building in the whole of the province.

The Liberals talk about decentralizing government but they are the first to be critical when it occurs. To me this is a classic example of how a Liberal tries to be all things to all people, to advocate every side of every argument if he thinks it will be popular, a truly amazing disregard for consistency or common-sense.

It is no secret to the people of Saskatchewan when I say that this Government will continue with all dispatch and with every opportunity to decentralize the delivery of provincial services across the province wherever possible and to undertake needed public works projects as circumstances and available funds permit.

Mr. Speaker, I have already mentioned several office buildings which have recently been constructed or renovated by the Department of Government Services and I refer also of course to the building in Moose Jaw.

And to the good people of Moose Jaw, you will recall they saw a purchase of land back in 1964 and a preliminary design put on paper. Then the dark years began and the promise was withdrawn, the plans were shelved by the Liberals and the lot lay vacant without any municipal taxes accruing to the city and without any action being taken that we would have every right to expect from an incoming government. This became something of a symbol to the people of Moose Jaw. When they see that provincial office building they recall Liberal neglect and the despair the people suffered when the Liberals were in power for those seven long years.

It was a special pleasure for me to take part in the official opening in May of 1975, along with my former colleague from Moose Jaw, the former Minister of Public Works, Mr. Davies, who was originally responsible for the preparation of the site and for the acquiring of the land.

During this past fall we had the pleasure of opening a renovation in North Battleford, a new provincial office building in Tisdale and in Kindersley. These last two were required primarily due to expanded programs of the Department

of Agriculture and our declared policy, Mr. Speaker, of decentralizing the delivery of services to rural Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — Go out in the country, go to Tisdale and Melfort and Swift Current. Go to these communities that have received these new services, Mr. Speaker, and tell them that the Liberal Party objects.

I would like Members of this House to know that all three buildings — the one in North Battleford as well as those in Kindersley and Tisdale, have been specifically designed to be accessible to handicapped people. This policy was first established in 1973 and I think a particular vote of thanks goes to you, Mr. Speaker, as former Minister of Government Services for the foresight and the humanitarian instinct which brought this program to the fore.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SNYDER: — I think it is a progressive step which deserves the recognition of all of us.

Presently under construction are the new office buildings in Melfort, Swift Current, Saskatoon and Regina. There might be some advantage in hearing again from the Member for Saskatoon Eastview as to whether he believes that that office building in Saskatoon should be discontinued before it begins to rise too far above the ground. These buildings will enable the Government to consolidate its staff which is now scattered across the city in rented space and under very uneconomic circumstances and very inefficient operations in some instances.

The Department of Government Services has been continuing its policy of upgrading and improving the vocational institutes in this province also. I have already mentioned the new radio — TV space of the Saskatchewan Technical Institute in Moose Jaw.

I should inform the Member for Saskatoon Eastview that I expect the official opening of the new 50 meter pool will be held in mid-April in Saskatoon. The question arises, whether the Member for Saskatoon Eastview would like to attend and express his point of view as to whether this is a waste of government money in terms of the 50 meter pool to be opened in mid-April. The city of Saskatoon as you know, Mr. Speaker, will operate the facility which not only serves the needs of the students at Kelsey but the citizens of Saskatoon and surrounding district. I trust the Member will make his position clear prior to the day of the opening.

In Regina, Mr. Speaker, the renovations to the Regina General Hospital nurses' residence which has become the dental division of the Wascana Institute, have been completed and was officially opened on February 23. And this is a tremendously impressive program, Mr. Speaker, established to meet the staff requirements of the Saskatchewan Dental Plan as most of the Members here are aware. Some Members may not be aware, Mr. Speaker, that this training program has been recognized as

one of national significance by the Federal Government which has therefore shared in the renovation costs.

In the field of special education, work on upgrading the School for the Deaf in Saskatoon has progressed to the point where this past fall of 1975 saw the school operating entirely in newly expanded and newly renovated quarters. In total, more than \$2 million has been spent on upgrading this School for the Deaf in the city of Saskatoon. Once again, I would like to ask the Member for Saskatoon Eastview whether he regards \$2 million which was spent on that particular facility another example of wasteful government expenditure?

Northern Saskatoon hasn't been neglected by the Department either, Mr. Speaker. A fine new gymnasium and health centre was opened at Buffalo Narrows this past June. A 7,200 square foot auditorium-gymnasium has been constructed in Sandy Bay. The school at Sandy Bay had no such facility before, nor did the surrounding community, Mr. Speaker.

We also have a project under way at the school in Ile-a-la-Crosse. This is due to the loss of part of the existing school by fire, along with the increasing school enrolment. Plus, Mr. Speaker, the fact space standards equivalent to those used in the South are now being applied in the North.

In connection with our expanding services in the North, we have purchased six tracker aircraft for use in fire control as part of our forest protection program.

I'd like to remind these Members once again, that these planes, as some Hon. Members know, were originally part of the great federal fiasco when the Liberal Government refurbished the aircraft carrier Bonaventure and then scrapped the vessel and its contents. I am glad that the people of Saskatchewan can at least gain a little from that historical case of federal bungling.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, and with particular respect to the 1976-77 Budget document, I think any reasonable person would have to say that this Budget is an eminently realistic one. It takes into account current needs while at the same time it recognizes inflationary pressures. Clearly this government, Mr. Speaker, has been circumspect in implementing its priorities. It has not cut back services, but it has made economies. Certainly this reflects the responsibility of government to provide for the needs of its people, the people who we are elected to serve.

Where the Department of Labour is concerned, I believe it is fair to say that since 1971 we have come a very long way towards making Saskatchewan a leader insofar as progressive labor legislation is concerned. I have no hesitation whatsoever in stating that the programs of the Department of Labour have been instrumental in developing the framework within much of our recent social and economic advancement that has occurred. The Department of Government Services has provided the framework for government in another, perhaps, more mundane yet essential way. It has provided support services of a very high calibre which has enabled other departments to carry out many programs. It has provided the nuts and bolts that enabled the government to do its job. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that these two departments for which I am presently responsible

continue to serve the people of Saskatchewan in helping the wheels of government operate more smoothly where the Department of Government Services is concerned and in ensuring that the working conditions of some 370,000 citizens continue to be among the most progressive in the nation. I would be most pleased, Mr. Speaker, to support the Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. G. H. PENNER (Saskatoon Eastview): — Mr. Speaker, I remember the remarks that you made a little earlier this afternoon in response to a question that I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and you were suggesting that I was getting involved in the Budget Debate in a rather subtle manner. Because you said that, and because the Minister of Labour made the remarks that he did a moment ago, and sort of wakened me up, I've decided, Mr. Speaker, that I should like to get involved in this debate for just a few minutes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — The Minister of Labour asked me a couple of questions, while he was speaking, and I suggested it would be well for him to sit down and give me a chance to answer them.

He made some comment about a statement that I am alleged to have made on television a week or ten days ago, in which I suggested that the priorities of this Government were wrong. And I not only said it then, and believed it then, but having seen the Budget, Mr. Speaker, I say it now and believe it all the more firmly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — I suggested that when the Government, Mr. Speaker, can have office buildings built all around the province, springing up like weeds, when they can squander hundreds of millions of dollars on buying an industry which already works well and which provides no new jobs, no new development for this province; when they can take millions and millions of dollars and pay it out to Atlantic Richfield, one of those nasty multinational corporations, that provides no new development for this province, no new jobs for this province and then turn around and have the audacity to bring in a Budget which in effect is going to cut back services in education, in health, in care for senior citizens, then I say the priorities of the Government opposite are wrong.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — With specific reference to that so-called office building that is going up in Saskatoon and the office buildings that are going up all around the province, on the basis of decentralizing decision-making. I suggest that it is more likely to be decentralizing bureaucratic control on the people of Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — If those decentralized offices don't work any better than they have in the field of education then they are a complete and absolute disaster and ought to be wiped out right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that the Government opposite received from Saskatoon City Council after it was announced that that building was going in, and I think you were the Minister at the time, was a suggestion that the plans be looked at again. It was suggested that the building was a monster, a battleship, in the heart of Saskatoon, questioning, in fact whether it was necessary to go ahead with an office building of that size and cost. And, of course, at that time, Mr. Speaker, without the information and without the knowledge, and without the priorities that the Budget speech delivered by the Minister of Finance showed us last Wednesday.

Now I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I am rather pleased that we are involved in the Budget Debate finally. It's nice after having begun on March 12, to finally have something of substance that we can talk about.

The Leader of the Conservative Party (Mr. Collver) in the time between January 28 and March 12, made one of the most unimaginable political blunders that this province has ever seen. An agreement that had been signed among all three parties on January 28 was said by the Leader of the Conservative Party to be worth nothing. You know it's amazing when one listens to the kind of things the Leader of the Conservative Party has done. To understand it in any respect, we have to admit he is a slow learner. At least in educational jargon that would be the kind of terminology we would have to use. He came in here in November and suggested that it was wrong to read a speech. But finally got up today on March. whatever it is.

MR. MESSER: — 29th.

MR. PENNER: — 29th, thank you, and read a speech. A slow learner, but he is learning and I think that if he were to spend a little more time occupying his seat that he might learn just a little bit more quickly.

I think it's fair to say that we in the House and the people in Saskatchewan can be thankful for one thing in the whole matter, Mr. Speaker, and that is that the Member for Nipawin is the Leader of the smallest political party in Saskatchewan and judging from the reading I've had from people commenting on the events of the first week of this Session, it's a party that's likely to get a good deal smaller.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — The Leader of the Conservative Party has indicated in effect that he doesn't trust the judgment of Members of his own caucus; he's indicated that he is prepared to put political expediency ahead of what is best for the people of Saskatchewan, and that when he makes a mistake, as clear a mistake as he made in this instance, that he is unprepared to make the necessary

apologies and take the necessary steps to see that it is rectified. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have a good deal of sympathy for the Member for Estevan, for the Member for Rosetown-Elrose whose integrity was compromised by the actions of the Member for Nipawin. I found it difficult to understand what the Leader of the Conservative Party had in mind when I heard in the press that he was breaking the agreement that had been signed on the 28th of January. And I really didn't come to understand it until I heard him comment that nobody in his caucus was aware that local governments had a deadline by which they were to have indicated their mill rates to the taxing authorities. When he said that I realized that he was playing political games, attempting to blackmail the Government into giving him something that back in November he had indicated he really didn't want anyway, that is, third party status. Because clearly the Member for Rosetown-Elrose did know what the deadlines were, if there was any superintendent in the Province of Saskatchewan who would know what they were he would be the man. For the Leader of the Conservative Party to use that as the reason as to why he had made the blunder that he did, by publicly breaking the agreement, is clearly nothing but an excuse and a poor one at that.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say as well that I was extremely disappointed in the attitude that the Government took in the whole matter. I had no difficulty sympathizing with the Premier in the remark when he addressed the Assembly on March 12. Indeed, I have indicated to him that he may have been just a little too mild in what he had to say. The Leader of our party, the Hon. Member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake (Mr. Steuart) had some extremely cogent remarks to make in the matter . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — .indicating to the Leader of the Conservative Party the kind of blunder that he had made. But in also asking the Government to react to the matter in a more responsible manner than in a fit of anger and I wish that the Government had done that.

I realize that the Government was in some difficulty when it discovered that gentlemen's agreements, indeed signed agreements, meant very little. I also believe that if the Government had really wanted to it could have brought down the Budget earlier than it has and made the information that was released on Wednesday last available at an earlier date.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few general remarks with regard to this Budget, before I get into some specific matters that arise from it.

I want to first of all say that in my view priorities of this Government are wrong and I made that statement a few moments ago. I believe that the priorities of this Government do not represent accurately the priorities of the people of the province and I would like to give some examples of why I believe that.

This Government has been prepared to squander, as I said a few moments ago, hundreds of millions of dollars of the taxpayers' money to purchase potash. To spend hundreds of millions of dollars to create no new jobs and no new development. You spent money buying oil, you've spent money building office buildings to house a bureaucracy that is growing at astronomical rates. At the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been presented with a Budget which calls for significant cutbacks in services available to people. And I didn't say cutbacks in spending, but I think it's important and I think all Members of the House realize that while there had been some increases in spending that there have been proposed significant decreases in services. Saskatchewan has never known more buoyant times and yet this Budget indicates that the province is not in a good financial position.

Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that I don't believe the buoyant times this province has enjoyed are any thanks to this Government. Buoyant times have been enjoyed in spite of the Members opposite, because of the hard work of our agricultural community, because of high international wheat sales, and weather that produced bountiful crops. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, this Government is guilty of having wasted one of the greatest opportunities this province has ever known to place itself in an extremely advantageous financial position.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — Instead, this Government is asking the taxpayers of this province to shell out more and by so doing is admitting to the taxpayers that it has not had the financial stewardship required during buoyant times in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents now pay one of the highest rates of provincial income tax of any province in Canada. This Budget asks them to pay more. It's my view that this Government is guilty of mismanagement of its fiscal responsibilities and guilty of misrepresenting the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan. This Government is great, Mr. Speaker, at trotting out its slogans about free drug plans, about free dental plans, free this and free that. There's a statement in the Budget that talks about \$18.5 million having been saved because of hospital and medical premiums not being charged. A direct saving to the taxpayer, the Minister of Finance says. Nothing could misrepresent the truth any more than that. If the money isn't coming out of the front pocket it's coming out of the back one. But they've been great at perpetrating the myth that somehow there are things in this province that are free. Mr. Speaker, the Budget indicates very clearly that their attempt to dupe Saskatchewan people has caught up with them. The Budget clearly indicates an abdication of responsibility in my view.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — I want to say that it would be much easier to accept, albeit difficult to swallow, to see a Budget come down which forces cuts in services for health care, cuts in services for the elderly, cuts in services for education, or a lack of financial support to municipalities, if other actions of the

Government indicated that the money was not available. But let there be no mistake about it we've got all kinds of money to buy potash. We've got all kinds of money to build office buildings but we don't have sufficient money to maintain the level of service in people oriented aspects of this Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER: — Mr. Speaker, in his address to the House on the 24th of March, the Minister of Finance talked of two criteria which went into the preparation of the Budget. The first was the need to fight inflation, the second was the need to develop a stable, secure and rewarding economic future for the people of Saskatchewan. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this Budget measures up to neither of those criteria. What it does is blame the Federal Government for the problems we face regarding inflation and then dumps the solution and the problems squarely on the shoulders of local government, whether they be municipal governments, school boards or hospital boards. The Budget is ill conceived and lacking in effective leadership and insight. In short, Mr. Speaker, it represents, in my view, a cop out.

I have a good deal to say, Mr. Speaker, about why I think that and I should like to begin by taking a look at the field of education in a more specific way. Mr. Speaker, the Budget shows the gross budgetary expenditure in education of nearly \$355 million, which is up \$55 million over what it was in 1975. School grants, that is the operating grants for the program for kindergarten through Grade Twelve are up \$27 million, a percentage of about, just better than 19 per cent and that is part of the global picture that I gave a moment ago.

Now at first blush, Mr. Speaker, one might think that those figures are pretty reasonable. When Government Members are going around the province they can say, well, the grants for education are up 20 per cent and pat themselves on the back as they have a tendency to do. But let's take a little closer look at the whole matter of money available for spending in education. A couple of years ago the Government opposite decided that they ought to be able to control teachers' salaries and so we moved into provincial bargaining. And they decided as well, Mr. Speaker, that teachers should be treated a little differently from all other employee groups in the province and instead of being able to negotiate the length of their contract they should have a mandatory two-year contract placed on their shoulders. The result of that, Mr. Speaker, was that there was a two-year settlement and it was very evident after the first year that the settlement for the second year was totally inadequate to keep teachers in pace with other salaried people in Saskatchewan and other teachers in western Canada. But they weren't prepared, Mr. Speaker, to reopen negotiations and so there was a bit of a COLA clause that was put in.

Now the result of all of that, Mr. Speaker, was that the Government realized the error of their ways and they took out the two-year mandatory legislation. Unfortunately, for school boards in Saskatchewan, or more importantly, for ratepayers in Saskatchewan, it happened too late. Because now we find ourselves with a situation where we are going to have to pay teachers in Saskatchewan substantially more this year than we have had to pay in the last few years. As a matter of fact we are going to have to pay so much more that the amount of

money that the Government has apportioned for education, Mr. Speaker, is going to have to be used up to pay teachers' salaries. Now we don't have a settlement yet, Mr. Speaker, we know that the amount of money that is on the table is in the range of 16 or 17 per cent and school boards when they settle their budgets, which has to be done later this week, are going to have to put in a figure to represent the salary increase that they are going to have to pay and over which they have no control. And I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that what they are going to have to do is in effect take the amount of money that has been apportioned in increased grants and apply that to their teachers' salary component in order to pay the teachers who are going to work for them next year.

Now what that has done, Mr. Speaker, has effectively been missed. It has meant that all of the other increased costs that school boards have will have to be picked up locally. And for the first time, at least in my memory, that the grant that is supplied to school boards will effectively only pick up one component of school board costs and they will not apply to things like increased costs in paper, in books, in any hardware equipment, in power. Oh yes, that power bill that school boards are having to put in is double what it was a year ago, but there is no money available to cover that. Transportation costs are up substantially, maintenance costs are up substantially. And what does it mean, Mr. Speaker, it is simply this, that all of those costs are going to be picked up by the local taxpayers. It means in effect, Mr. Speaker, that mill rates locally are going to rise substantially in order to keep the level of service even at the place where it was a year ago.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to develop the theme with regard to education a little bit more. I notice that the time is getting to the point where we ought to be moving on to other business and I beg leave at this point to adjourn the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT

Urgency of Some Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: — Before the Orders of the Day on Friday last a statement was requested by the Hon. Member for Nipawin (Mr. Collver) regarding the urgency of some Oral Questions.

By any measure the definition of 'urgency' will be subject to debate. However, since debate about the definition of urgency would destroy the Oral Question Period, as Members presently wish it to be structured, the Speaker's discretion will have to prevail within the guidelines set out by parliamentary experience.

On Friday, the Member for Moosomin (Mr. Birkbeck) asked a question, which in part was as follows:

Did the Minister at any time between 1974 and 1976 transfer 335 employees of the provincially funded Souris Valley Extended Care Hospital to an organization controlled by the Provincial Government funded out of SHSP?

I refer all Hon. Members to the Interim Report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, page 9, Section 5 (c) which states:

Questions should be asked only in respect of matters of sufficient urgency and importance as to require an immediate answer.

The specific question refers to a period of three years and not to any new or immediate event. The Member may have had some urgent point in mind but it was not demonstrated in his question.

I suggest to the Members that detailed information for several past years of details of the estimates should be sought through written questions or during the consideration of the Estimates in the Committee of Finance.

I stress to the Members that a matter raised, may in itself be 'important' but this does not necessarily make it 'urgent'.

HON. J.R. MESSER (Minister of Industry and Commerce): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day, the Member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg (Mr. Nelson) I believe asked a question and I wanted to make a statement before the Orders of the Day under Minister's Statements and I have not had the opportunity to do that on Friday or today because of the radio time. If the House would permit I should like to respond to this question at this time, if that is appropriate.

MR. SPEAKER: — Is it the wish of the House to return to Ministerial Statements?

MR. MALONE: — I am not sure if I heard the Member correctly, is he responding to a question from the Member for Assiniboia, or is he making a Ministerial Statement?

MR. SPEAKER: — Apparently the question from the Member for Assiniboia had something to do with generating the Ministerial Statement that the Minister wants to make at this time. If the Assembly does not wish to return to Ministerial Statements at this time we'll take it tomorrow under Ministerial Statements.

MR. COLLVER: — Mr. Speaker, before the Ministerial Statement would it be possible after the Ministerial Statement just to comment on the point you have just raised in terms of the Speaker's statement?

MR. SPEAKER: — Perhaps before we return to Ministerial Statements I would allow the Member a brief comment.

MR. COLLVER: — Mr. Speaker, you have ruled that your rulings pertaining to urgency are going to be at your discretion and I respect your wishes in that. However, I should like to draw to your attention that in the light of these particular questions whether they are over a period of time or not, we are in the Budget Speech

debate and the Budget Speech does refer to not only this particular period of time of 1976-77 but also refers to previous periods of time and makes comparisons. If we are, as Members, to adequately determine whether the comparisons are reasonable or unreasonable, it seems to me that we should be able to get the information from the Ministers that would assist us in determining whether or not the comparisons that the Minister makes in the Budget are reasonable and rational. Therefore, it seems to us to be a very urgent matter. If, for example, improper comparisons between one period of time and another are made in a budget presentation it can totally change around and turn around the complexity of the Budget. It can make it look like something that it isn't and perhaps by the time the presentation is completed to the press, by the time we get back to it in Estimates, why the impact is already made by perhaps erroneous comparisons. So, although I respect your judgment in this matter, Mr. Speaker, I should like to suggest that when previous periods of time are brought up at budget time that that certainly can be an urgent matter and I would hope that that would be taken into consideration in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: — If I were to adopt the view advanced by the Member for Nipawin I would open the flood gates for something that the Members would feel should be answered. I might refer briefly to May's Parliamentary Practice, 17th Edition, page 364. It gives the criteria for urgency, the definition of urgency and this is the basis on which I just put forward the ruling. I might say on the first citations the question that was put forward doesn't pass the test. The first one being the matters that must be raised must be, "prima facie urgency". Secondly, "of recent occurrence and raised without delay". Therefore, the question of urgency on these is not proved for the question that was raised by the Member for Moosomin on which I just brought forward the statement.

Answer to Question on Coronach Poplar River Reservoir

MR. MESSER: — Mr. Speaker, the Member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg (Mr. Nelson) asked a question and I believe it was Thursday last with regard to the Big Beaver railroad line. On Wednesday, March 24 a 500 foot long section of railroad grade in the East Poplar River Valley was washed out. The failure was due to the high water level and wave action on the Poplar River Reservoir. The present water level which is three feet below the tracks was anticipated by the corporation, however, the railway grade was expected to remain serviceable under such conditions. I might say that this line is a controversial line as it was slated by the CPR for abandonment and it has been conveyed to us that perhaps the maintenance was not at the level that a railway line that was not slated for abandonment would have been at. Consequently one might be able to assume that a proper roadbed would have been able to withstand the action of the water level and the wave action and not be subject to washing out. I am also told that it is now running one train per week on the line so that it is not an extensively used line, however, a line that is valuable to the community and we certainly appreciate that.

The corporation is now then, in light of these conditions, working with the CPR to arrange repair of the grade and

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restoration of the rail service. The Saskatchewan Power Corporation will supply the materials and equipment to rebuild the grade under the supervision of the CPR. It is estimated that the rail line will be reopened within less than three weeks time. In its present location the railroad will eventually be flooded, action is therefore being taken to raise and relocate the track. Construction will commence in early summer with the track relocation to be complete before next spring.

MR. R. E. NELSON (Assiniboia-Gravelbourg): — Mr. Speaker, if I could ask the Minister. First of all the residents of the area certainly don't want to .

MR. SPEAKER: — It is quite permissible for the Member to make a short statement in reply.

MR. NELSON: — Mr. Speaker, if I may. We certainly don't want to add to the danger of having the railroad taken out of the basic network. And secondly, the Minister stated that the level of the water was at a level that was expected by SPC, and I just wonder then why a ditch was dug out, or a portion of the dam was dug out to drain the water, if this was a fact?

The Assembly adjourned on the Motion of Mr. Snyder (Minister of Labour) at 5:28 o'clock p.m.