

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
3rd Session — 18th Legislature
13th Day

Tuesday, March 8, 1977.

The Assembly met at 2:00 o'clock p.m.
On the Orders of the Day.

QUESTIONS

FINANCING OF POTASH PURCHASE

MR. E. C. MALONE (Leader of the Opposition):— Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister in charge of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan.

Now that the Government, in its wisdom, has seen fit to squander another \$144 million of taxpayers' money, I think it may be incumbent upon the Minister to explain to this Legislature where the money is coming from. In his announcement yesterday he was completely silent as to where this \$144 million was to be raised. Would the Minister, to the first of a series of questions that I have, indicate to this House where the money is coming from?

HON. E. L. COWLEY (Provincial Secretary):— Department of Finance.

MR. MALONE:— Well, I can see that we are going to have an interesting day. In that case, Mr. Minister, has the Department of Finance advised you as to where they are obtaining the money?

MR. COWLEY:— I want to point out to the Member, I get asked this question frequently by both the Members Opposite and by the press.

The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan deals directly with the Department of Finance in arranging finances. We have had a practice in Saskatchewan, for a number of years, under two administrations at least, one being that represented by the Party of the Members opposite of borrowing or getting our requirements for both government agencies and Crown Corporations through the Department of Finance. We have always found that worked to the best advantage of the Provincial Government and of the various Crown corporations.

I know that in other provinces money is raised in different ways. For example, the previous Liberal Government in Quebec borrowed directly for Quebec Hydro as opposed to borrowing through the Government of Quebec. Perhaps that was because there was more confidence in the Crown corporation than the Government, I don't know.

We approach the Department of Finance, indicate the capital requirements that we have, update and change them and indicate to them when approximately we will need the money and the Department of Finance then proceeds to make the necessary arrangements.

The closing date in this particular purchase is likely to be April 30th or thereabouts. We don't know the exact date. That is when the money will be required. The Department of Finance has been asked to have the money available. I presume part of it will come from the Energy and Resource Development Fund and part of it will come from other sources.

The Department has the option of advancing either debt or equity capital from either area. I would expect that when we get close to the closing of the agreement the Department will approach us with all the details.

MR. MALONE:— A supplementary question then. Do I take it then that the Minister who is in charge of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan which has just made a major purchase involving some \$144 million, does not know where the money is coming from? Is that what you are telling me?

MR. COWLEY:— No, Mr. Speaker, that is not what I said. I said that the money will be advanced to us from the Department of Finance. We have discussed and agreed upon the debt equity ratio. The Department has assured us that they will have the money available to us when it is required. I am confident that the Department of Finance will have the amount of money available and could have more money if it were necessary.

MR. MALONE:— Then, Mr. Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Finance. Would he inform this House if he knows where the \$144 million is coming from to buy the Sylvite Potash Mine?

HON. W. E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance):— The answer is, Yes.

MR. MALONE:— Would he tell us where?

MR. SMISHEK:— Mr. Speaker, we have money in the Energy and Resource Development Fund. Part of that money will be used for the acquisition of the Potash and we will finance part of it through borrowing.

MR. MALONE:— How much monies will come from the Energy Fund and how much will come from borrowing, and the money that is coming from borrowing how much interest do you anticipate you will have to pay?

MR. SMISHEK:— Mr. Speaker, no final decision has been reached as to the exact amount that will be used from the Energy and Resource Development Fund and how much will be borrowed, since we have a number of weeks to deal with the matter, but our current thinking, Mr. Speaker, is that approximately — and I want to underline that because no final decision has been made — approximately \$108 million will come from the Energy and Resource Development Fund and approximately \$36 million will be borrowed.

MR. MALONE:— Will you give me the interest rate that was part of the

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question?

MR. SMISHEK:— Mr. Speaker, we have been to the market and the rate will be about 8 3/8.

MR. R. L. COLLVER (Leader of the Progressive Conservatives):— Mr. Speaker, a question addressed to the Minister of Finance.

Obviously the Minister has at his fingertips the balances in all of these financing arrangements, so could he possibly tell us if the \$108 million approximately, is coming from the Energy and Development Fund? What is the current balance in the Energy and Development Fund, say within the last month? How much money is sitting in the Fund now and what interest rate is that Fund earning now?

MR. SMISHEK:— Mr. Speaker, I do not have the exact figures at my fingertips. I believe, and I may be subject to correction, I think we had at the end of 1976 about \$235 million. I think that it was earning in short term investments in the order of 9 per cent.

MR. COLLVER:— A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister of Finance telling us that the fund is earning on the short term market today 9 per cent on the \$200 million or is he saying that it earned the 9 per cent as of December 31, 1976.

Secondly, was not some portion of that \$235 million at the end of December, used for the purchase of the Duval Potash mines cash payable out of that fund as of December 31, 1976, paid towards the Duval purchase, leaving a balance that accumulated since? Surely we could have a more updated number than that.

MR. SMISHEK:— Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member wants the precise figures he is certainly free to put the question on the Order Paper. I can't have in my mind every detail. I did answer the question that at the end of December we had in the order of \$235 million and it was at the end of December that the short term investments were earning in the order of 9 per cent. If he asks me what the precise rate is today, I do not have it. I would be glad to take the question under advisement and I can provide him with an answer at a later date.

MR. E. F. A. MERCHANT (Regina Wascana):— I direct this question to the Minister in charge of the .. you've got to be quick with your changes you see . . . would it be fair to draw the inference that this purchase is based on your success, no doubt, with Duval and if that's the case since we presumably represent the shareholders in your projects and the Government has been operating Duval for almost six months, would the Government be prepared to table the production and sales figures from the Duval operations?

MR. COWLEY:— Mr. Speaker, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan will report, as do the other Crown Corporations to the Crown

Corporations Committee. The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan is involved in a competitive field where its amount of production in a given month and sales in a given month are somewhat relevant to what its competitors do and I think the Member is being unrealistic if he asks the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan to provide data to this Legislature that IMC or some other potash corporation would not.

MR. MERCHANT:— Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister well knows that would mean that we'd have the information some time next year. I wonder if the Minister would agree that the Potash Corporation could at least give the same kind of figures to its shareholders, the voters of this province, that, say the Potash Company of America would give to its shareholders, namely quarterly reports on profits? Would it be possible, for instance for the Minister to indicate that a quarterly report of some sort could be made available to the House, indicating the profit of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan to date, or the loss?

MR. COWLEY:— Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly that's a possibility that Crown Corporations could report to the Legislature on a quarterly basis. One of the problems we've always had with this is that it has always been considered that it was the prerogative of the Legislature to receive these reports and you will notice that the annual reports of Crown Corporations are not made public prior to the sitting of the Legislature. Certainly that would lead to some difficulties in July when a corporation's quarter came up, there's no legislature, there's no place to table it.

It's a possibility. I certainly would like to take it under advisement. I may say that I'm not perfectly familiar with what kind of quarterly reports the potash companies give to their shareholders, although I have seen some of their annual reports and it's very difficult there to break down parts of their operations, their potash versus their steel, etc., to get much acknowledgeable information. It seems to me it's pretty general stuff that you get in their annual reports, and I would suspect that it's even more general in the quarterlies, but I'd have to take that under advisement.

MR. MERCHANT:— Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. One of the advantages of having people who've never been involved in business, is you've no doubt, never seen a quarterly report. Would the Minister be prepared to indicate to this House that you would table, perhaps within a week, certainly within this Session, the profit and loss of the Duval operation to date? I'm sure the Minister would agree that that cannot give away any information that the companies would require in a competitive way. Secondly, I'm sure the Minister would agree that a publicly owned company is somewhat different from a privately owned company in your responsibility to report to this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear.

MR. COWLEY:— I don't agree with the Member's last comment. I think that both public and private companies have a responsibility to their shareholders and they should meet them. The responsibilities to our shareholders and the process with

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respect to Crown Corporations has always been quite clear in this Legislature. We're following the same procedures under this Government, that your Government followed from 1964 to 1971 with respect to Crown Corporations, including one like Sask Minerals that were involved in areas similar to PCS.

WEIGHT PROPOSALS

MR. E. A. BERNTSON (Souris-Cannington):— Mr. Speaker, question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. MacMurchy). Last year the Government withdrew its vehicle weight restriction proposals because of pressure from the public, the SARM and this Assembly. Is it the intention of the Government to pass regulations limiting the gross vehicle weight to tandem axle vehicles?

HON. G. MacMURCHY (Minister of Municipal Affairs):— I can't respond to the question from the Honourable Member at this time. The weight limit proposal is still under consideration by the Government. It is my hope to announce the policy to the SARM convention next week. I'm not as yet in a position to do that today.

MR. BERNTSON:— Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I understand there are ongoing discussions with the SARM as it relates to this policy. Will there be any regulation passed prior to the forthcoming SARM convention?

MR. MacMURCHY:— No.

MEMO RE SAIL PROGRAM

MR. C. P. MacDONALD (Indian Head-Wolseley):— Mr. Speaker, I have a question I'd like to direct to the Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins) and it's rather apropos to the questions following the Minister in charge of the Potash Corporation. Is the Minister of Health aware of a memo issued on January 26, 1977, by Mr. Rene Bower, Acting Director of the SAIL program, Regional Health Services Branch, to all requisitioners for SAIL programs? I'd like to read very briefly, just a small portion.

It is regrettable that SAIL is unable to meet the demands placed upon it, especially as much of it was initially promised. Without necessary funds, however, we are only able to obtain minimal stocks of equipment. When these are depleted we don't always know if we can replenish them. This is far from satisfactory, but all I can do at the moment is apologize.

Is the Minister of Health aware that the SAIL program is denied funds in order to obtain and purchase crutches and walkers and other aids to independent living and that people that are handicapped in the Province of Saskatchewan are being denied the services because of a lack of funds provided by the Government of Saskatchewan?

HON. W. A. ROBBINS (Minister of Health):— Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is well aware of the

fact that those people were without any funds when his Government was in power, in relation to helping those people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS:— It is true that the SAIL program has some problems and that the estimates made on the original requirements, were low. We didn't really actually know what the requirements would be. Neither did anyone else. We had to make some estimates and those estimates were below the actual demand that has occurred. I must make it very clear to the Member that the SAIL program is rectifying those problems and is doing it within its budget.

MR. MacDONALD:— Supplementary question. Would the Minister please outline to me what his interpretation of responsibility of the Government is to a universal program, funded by taxpayers money? Is it not the responsibility to provide universally those aids to independent living and not to deny one and give to another because the NDP Government refuses to provide funds to that program?

MR. ROBBINS:— Mr. Speaker, the Member is well aware that you must have some priority in terms of any program. He's aware of that. He is trying to make a political thing of this and, of course, he's not succeeding very well.

MR. MacDONALD:— Final supplementary. It's not a political thing. There are people that can't walk that are being denied crutches and that isn't political. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister please tell me just exactly the strength of his position in Cabinet when one day the Minister of the Potash Corporation spends \$144 million of taxpayers money and then he is denied a few paltry thousands of dollars to provide crutches to handicapped people.

MR. ROBBINS:— Mr. Speaker, that Member knows that the expenditure of \$144 million on potash has absolutely nothing to do with the current budget available for the SAIL program or Health or any other ordinary expenditure of Government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS:— One hundred and eight million dollars is coming out of the Energy Fund, money that wouldn't have been there if we'd listened to you people over there. We know that and you know that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. MacDONALD:— We are very sensitive about help . . .

MR. SPEAKER:— Order, order!

CRIME IN SASKATCHEWAN

MR. R. H. BAILEY (Rosetown-Elrose):— Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Attorney General. One of the problems that I am sure he is aware of, is the very rapid growth, in some categories of violent crime in the province. My question is to the Attorney General's Department. Has the Attorney General's Department been aware of the concern of some of the RCMP detachments of a potential fire-arms build up in the Province of Saskatchewan?

MR. R. ROMANOW (Attorney General):— Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to receive any information from the Honourable Member in this regard. I have not received any communication from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police myself in this area. I don't agree with the implication that the crime rate in Saskatchewan is so wildly out of hand that it requires some kind of extra special activity. Between 1968 and 1971, the crime rate during that period increased by 34 per cent. During the period of 1971 to 1975, it was less than 20 per cent. Now that doesn't say that we can't do more to work against crime but I don't have the specific request with respect to the fire arms build up.

MR. BAILEY:— A supplementary question. When we are talking about crime, I mentioned it specifically to the Attorney General, crimes in connection with violence and so on. Has the Attorney General's Department reviewed the number of cases in which break and entry were involved in which the theft did in fact involve rifles, pistols and ammunition?

MR. ROMANOW:— Mr. Speaker, we have breaking and entering statistics available but I doubt, in fact I don't have them handy right at this moment. I doubt that they are broken down in terms of rifles and pistols. This is a question of concern, no doubt about that. The Criminal Code speaks with respect to the question of carrying hand guns and wherever the evidence warrants prosecutions, prosecutions are carried out fully. But I am simply saying that while the crime rate matter has to be viewed carefully I have received no special representations from the RCMP to this date which says that something new has to be done in this area. And as I say, if you have received something to the contrary about local detachments or whatever I would be pleased to receive the name of the detachment in a form of a communication.

MR. BAILEY:— A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Attorney General is aware of this and I wanted to bring to the attention of the House, the number of crimes with violence and the repetitions of these crimes in Saskatchewan which are becoming a major concern of the citizens of Saskatchewan. Now this is done non-politically. It is not done along party lines at all, and I think the Attorney General owes it to the people to give some reassurance at this time that this growing amount of violence is going to be stopped. I think that the Attorney General should, at this time, answer the question. It is his department. At this particular time do you have any contingency plans to deal with this growing threat of violence in the province?

MR. ROMANOW:— Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the Member for Elrose (Mr. Bailey) but that kind of a question falls in the same category as some of the political propaganda that went around in the Prince Albert-Duck Lake and Sutherland by-elections about crimes to be punished. Is there anybody in this House that says that crime shouldn't be punished? Is there anybody in this House that says that there shouldn't be a contingency plan? What does the Member talk about? You tell me what the contingency plan is. We have more RCMP today than there were in 1971 and more prosecutors than there were. We have more magistrates. We have more expenditure on law and order and we have a lower crime rate in Saskatchewan. You fellows are going around trying to spread this little business, playing cheap politics with the RCMP and the judicial system. I say to the Conservative Party, shame on you guys, you shouldn't be such a political operation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:— Order! I want to take this opportunity to caution the Members who are placing the questions to please review the decisions that this House has made, in committee, and supported in the House about the form of questions to be asked in the House. At the same time if they could review written questions which appear on the Order Paper from time to time which are now becoming extinct, they may become more aware of the type and form of questions that are permissible under the rules of the House. It would then become much easier for the Speaker to keep the Ministers in order and not allow them to debate the issues. I know all Members who are asking questions will take this to heart and have a look at the form and substance of questions as they should be placed in the House.

INTEREST PAID TO ENERGY FUND

MR. E. C. MALONE (Leader of the Opposition):— Mr. Speaker, your comments are well taken. I should like to return to the priorities of this Government which deal with potash and not with health as the Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins) just indicated a few moments ago or with the rising crime rate, and talk again about the potash mine. Now my question is directed either to the Minister of Finance or to the Minister in charge of the Potash Corporation. What, if any interest is to be paid to the Energy Fund for the monies to be advanced to facilitate the purchase of the Sylvite mine?

HON. E. L. COWLEY (Provincial Secretary):— Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the money with respect to the Energy and Resource Development Fund will be considered as equity.

MR. MALONE:— Do I take it that the money is going to be paid back to the Energy Fund?

MR. COWLEY:— I think, Mr. Speaker, that obviously will depend on circumstances down the road. One has two options there. We expect that the Potash Corporation will be a growing and expanding corporation. One of the options will be to return

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some of the capital invested in it and to obtain capital in other areas or other ways for expansion. The other way would be to reinvest the money. Certainly in connection with the return on the money, the profits of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, one of the options there, as well, is to return that to the Energy and Resource Development Fund and to retain the equity. But whether or not we are building in a particular year a new or additional capacity for production will have an effect on that particular year, on whether there are profits paid to the Energy and Resource Development Fund or whether equity is returned to them.

MR. MALONE:— A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Then do I understand the Minister to say that you are taking approximately \$110 million from the Energy Fund, money that is now receiving interest at about 9 per cent, taking that money and putting it into the hands of a multinational corporation and receiving no interest whatsoever to repay that money unless perhaps some day in the distant future that mine starts earning money? Is that the position of the Government?

MR. COWLEY:— Well, Mr. Speaker, I think if the Member will take a look at how private corporations are financed, for example, they have a difference. They have shareholders who are putting money into it. Some of the money goes into it in the form of equity, some of the money goes into it in the form of debts. The share that goes into it in the form of equity does not go into it at interest and it represents the owners' investment and represents his claim to the assets of the corporation.

MR. MALONE:— A supplementary then, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister is so confident that this is going to be indeed a good project for the Government of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan, why doesn't he say now that the Government is prepared to repay this money at a determined rate of interest?

MR. COWLEY:— Well, Mr. Speaker, the Government certainly isn't prepared to repay the money. We expect the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. BAILEY:— Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister in charge of potash whether, in these recent two purchases which were made, was any of the monies taken from the various superannuation plans of Saskatchewan or borrowed from them in the way of making the purchase of either one of these mines?

MR. COWLEY:— I believe the answer is No, except insofar as the superannuation plans might have some investment in some insurance company which then in turn had invested in some Saskatchewan security that might have been advanced to the Potash Corporation. But if you are asking, was it directly, the answer is No.

MR. J. G. LANE (Qu'Appelle):— A final supplementary to the Minister. Your party has indicated in

the past and the Minister has indicated in the past that you wouldn't hesitate to tap the superannuation funds. Is it your intention to tap these superannuation funds for funds to purchase future potash mines and if so will you advise the superannuates and those involved of your intentions to do so?

MR. COWLEY:— I think the answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is No.

STATEMENTS

100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLERKSHIP

MR. SPEAKER:— Before the Orders of the Day, I should like to give Honourable Members a brief report and make an equally brief observation.

Last year the Special Committee on the Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the clerkship, recommended that our clerkship have the opportunity for an evaluation by some recognized outside authority.

I am pleased to announce that Sir Barnett Cocks, KCB OBE former clerk of the House of Commons at Westminster has accepted our invitation to perform the evaluation. He will be in Regina from March 28th to April 4th, 1977.

If he is willing, I propose to involve him somewhat in the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Supper program since he was also an active participant in the Canadian Parliamentary Association. Therefore, I would ask Members to please reserve March 29th for the CPA annual dinner. You will be informed later about the program and timing.

Having recognized the 100th anniversary of the clerkship in Saskatchewan we can now turn our attention to the observation I wish to make.

One hundred years ago to this day, the Council of the North West Territories met in its first session. That Council, humble in its beginnings, was the forerunner of our present Provincial Legislative capacity. That first Legislative Session concluded its business on March 22, 1877.

Until Saskatchewan was created in 1905 all of the capitals of the North West Territories were in what is now Saskatchewan. One hundred years ago the first location for the Legislative Council was provisionally at Fort Livingstone. It is unfortunate that the Honourable Member for Pelly is not with us today because Fort Livingstone was located within a few miles of Pelly, Saskatchewan, a centre in the constituency he has served.

The Swan River Barracks of the North West Mounted Police was built close to the Livingstone telegraph station in 1874 and it was in that building 100 years ago that the event took place.

That area of the North West Territories, Swan River district, was the hub of activity for a huge area stretching from the Qu'Appelle Valley to Hudson Bay and Manitoba to Edmonton.

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The next session of the Council was in Battleford and the capital was finally moved to Regina in 1883.

The session of 1877 was opened by a speech from Lieutenant-Governor David Laird. Topics for debate included registration of deeds, the protection of the buffalo and the prevention of the spread of infectious disease.

It seems appropriate, at this time, to note that the revenue of the North West Territories Government for the period March, 1877 to July, 1878 was \$526. I am unsure whether the expenditures were such as to leave the territory in a surplus for a deficit position.

I hope the Hon. Members have found these observations of interest. Now that the first 100 years are complete Members can turn their attention to the next 100 years.

CONDOLENCES

HON. A.E. BLAKENEY (Premier):— Mr. Speaker, I want to rise with leave of the House to move a motion of condolence on the passing of the Member for Pelly (Mr. Larson). I think it is appropriate that your statement before the Orders of the Day referred to the first meeting of the Council of the North West Territories and pointed out that it was in what is now the Pelly constituency, close to the village of Pelly at Fort Livingstone. The deceased Member for Pelly always had a lively interest in the history and lore of that area of Saskatchewan and it is fitting that this occasion offers us the opportunity to hark back to those days 100 years ago when we are expressing our condolences to the family of the Member for Pelly.

I would like to move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Hon. Member for Regina Lakeview (Mr. Malone), Leader of the Opposition:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing on Sunday of a Member of this Assembly, and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contributions he made to his community, his constituency and to this province.

Leonard Melvin Larson, who died on March 6, 1977, was a Member of this Legislature for the constituency of Pelly from 1964 to 1967 and from 1971 until his death. He was born in 1912 at Stornoway, Saskatchewan and received his education in Kamsack. He was a farmer in the Kamsack area and was a member of various farm organizations including the Farmers' Union, Federated Co-operative Limited, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and the Kamsack Co-operative Association. For 17 years he served as president of the Kamsack Public School Board and he was also president of the Kamsack area of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association for a term. He acted as director of the local telephone company for 12 years and also was a member of the Kamsack Ski Club. He was appointed Government Deputy Whip in 1975. He attended the Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Winnipeg in 1972 and was the Saskatchewan delegate to the 25th Parliamentary Seminar in London, England in 1976.

Mr. Speaker, may I add a few words of my own to the formal motion of condolence. I, like most Members of the house knew Leonard Larson and I knew him very well. If one were to describe Leonard Larson I think I would use the words, a person who had a great zest for life. His normal speed of operation was full speed ahead. He was a tireless worker in his community and commenced his labours on behalf of his neighbours at a very early age. At 17 he was secretary of the local school board, at 22 he was chairman of the local school board. I have referred in the formal motion of condolence to the many other organizations of which he was a member. He served as president of the Kamsack Co-op Association, was a Wheat Pool delegate and was active in the Federated Co-op, the Farmers' Union and a good number of other organizations of like kind.

He was very active in his political party, the CCF and the NDP. He was on the Pelly executive of the CCF in 1950; he served as president of that executive from 1952 to 1956. He was a provincial councillor of the New Democratic Party for many years. He served on the federal council of the New Democratic Party. He stood for nomination in 1960. He was the federal candidate in 1962 for that area, the Yorkton federal constituency. He was the federal candidate in 1963. He was first elected to this Legislature in 1964, he won by a narrow victory over the subsequent Member for Pelly, Mr. Barrie. He was defeated by Mr. Barrie in 1967, he was elected in 1971 and re-elected in 1975. That indicates a very long and very, very close association with the political affairs in his constituency. He was indeed very active in our party and was always a great strength to those party members who were carrying on in the way that he felt and they felt appropriate.

Leonard attacked the problems that he saw before him with a great sense of urgency. Anyone who was on the receiving end of some of his urgings that changes should be made and not next week but forthwith, is aware of the strength with which he held his views and the strength with which he could advocate them.

I always felt that when Leonard left political life he was going to have to learn to retire, because he certainly was not equipped to retire in his present state of mind. He was not about to stand back and look at the passing scene, but rather wanted very much to be part of it. However, it was not to be that Leonard was to learn to retire and perhaps wisely it was not to be. Leonard had many gifts. I know that when we had a get-together as a caucus, it was always our hope that Leonard would bring his fiddle, and would entertain us. He was a first class fiddler, and could play in a most entertaining way. He had an infectious grin and chuckle when he was in a good humour, and a rather commanding countenance when he was serious.

He was a Norwegian by origin; he spoke Norwegian. I recall the occasion when the teams competing in the Silver Broom, the World Curling Championship, were here in Regina, and we had them here on the floor of the House. Leonard went over and talked to the Norwegian team in Norwegian and I think this conveyed to them the great mixture of racial origins which make up our Province. I mentioned in the formal condolence that he had been a delegate to the 25th Parliamentary Seminar in London, England in 1976; on that occasion he and his wife went to Norway and visited extensively. They visited relatives there and I know that he enjoyed that visit very much and was very grateful to the Legislature for giving him the opportunity to be there.

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Leonard loved skiing, and was in fact an active skier up until the time of his death. Perhaps, fitting for Leonard Larson, he died with his skis on, and I think he did that in every sense of the word. He died still very much participating; in fact he was going to participate in a fun festival that afternoon in order to raise funds for the local hospital. He was going to ski down hill playing his fiddle. That is the sort of thing Leonard would undertake and I say would do it with some panache and some aplomb.

He was the sort of person whose energy, drive and commitment built this province. Leonard will be missed but he will not be forgotten because his legacy of community accomplishments lives after him.

Mr. Speaker, I so move:

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

MR. E.C. MALONE (Leader of the Opposition):— Mr. Speaker, it is with some regret of course that I rise, because of the events that have occurred, to join with the Premier on this motion of condolence to Mr. Larson's family.

I think the Premier best described Leonard when he used the words, "he had a great zest for life." I observed Leonard basically for my first couple of years in this House, sitting as a back bench Member and giving very vigorous speeches describing the evils of this party, and what was wrong in Ottawa, and what was wrong with the Liberal Party, but in talking to him in the halls, he always had a great sense of humour and, I think, a great enjoyment of the political process that he was engaging in at that time. Everything he said, of course, came from, I think, a deep rooted love for the Province of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan.

Over the past years though I got to know Leonard a little better when I joined with him on the Rules Committee of which you were the Chairman. We had occasion to take a couple of trips together and have several meetings together. Again I found his contributions to those meetings were very direct and very well taken. Again I agree with the Premier when he indicated that Leonard did not like things to be done in a week or two weeks from the day he suggested them, he would like them to be done in a matter of hours or minutes. His contributions to that particular committee were outstanding.

I think it says a lot that he died in the manner he did. His great love of life was such that I think that if he had to choose the manner by which he would pass from us, it would happen in about the way that it did happen. I understand that he enjoyed excellent health until last Sunday. My little knowledge of Leonard was such that I believe that he would like to have died with his skis on as the Premier indicated and which did come to pass. And I think, as well, it was a particularly good choice whoever made the selection, I don't know — that Leonard was chosen to go to the last Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in London. I spoke with him for some time after he got back and he described in detail how much he enjoyed returning to the country of his forefathers and in particular visiting the Legislature or whatever is a Legislature in Norway

and describing their processes there to us here.

I believe that anybody who takes a role in his community and his political part in the affairs of this province as much as Leonard Larson did deserves the respect of all of us here in this Legislature, deserves the respect of all people of Saskatchewan. So I join with the Premier in expressing the condolences for the Liberal Party to Mr. Larson's family. I know that many of us will be going to Kamsack tomorrow to attend the funeral and at that time I hope to be able to meet Leonard's wife and family.

MR. R.L. COLLVER (Leader of the Progressive Conservatives):— Mr. Speaker, may I add the words of sympathy and condolences on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Members of the Legislature.

I did not have the opportunity, as did the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Malone), to get to know Leonard Larson personally, other than within the confines of this Chamber and in the corridors briefly. Although I disagreed with almost everything Leonard Larson said, I agreed absolutely and totally with the enthusiasm and gusto with which he said it.

He was a man of humour, he was a man of intelligence, and I think more importantly he appeared to be, to me, a man.

May God grant him eternal peace and his loved ones the joy and comfort of his life.

HON. A.S. MATSALLA (Minister of Tourism and Renewable Resources):— Mr. Speaker, I should like to join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Malone) and the Leader of the Conservative Party (Mr. Collver) in paying tribute to the late Leonard Larson.

To me and the other Members of the Legislature Leonard will be remembered as a man of very strong character, a keen debater who spoke in absolute frankness, and expressed his views forcibly.

His philosophy was that of pragmatism, and with his quick analytical mind he presented it in most convincing terms. He will be remembered as a good servant of the Pelly constituency and a hard worker of this Legislature.

Public life was a part of Leonard Larson for many years. He gave himself to the service of others. He was a socialist at heart, and he believed that through co-operatives people can do things for themselves. Leonard was always willing to give of his best in the interest of his community. As a matter of fact, the skiing challenge he was involved in at the time of his untimely death, was for the purpose of promoting fund-raising for a new community hospital at Kamsack. Leonard has been very actively involved in party politics for several decades, early in the CCF and now in the NDP. He was always in the thick of the political organization, and worked hard towards its objectives.

Being a farmer nearly all his life, and being involved in the various farm organizations, the Farmers Union, the Wheat Pool, and the various co-operatives, Leonard Larson was a strong spokesman in support of the small family farm. He had always

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held the strong position that the small farmer was the backbone of our community and provincial economy.

I would be remiss if I made no mention of Leonard's love and appreciation for music. He listened to it and he played it. Not only did he bow the fiddle for his own liking, but for many years he was an active member of a popular, local dance orchestra.

Besides his close family, Leonard Larson will be missed by many in his community, and in his political associations.

To his wife Anna, and to his son Larry, and to his daughter Janice, I extend my deepest sympathy.

HON. E. C. WHELAN (Minister of Consumer Affairs):— Mr. Speaker, Leonard Larson was unique as a representative. He was high principled, fearless, dedicated to his constituency, often angry on their behalf. When he represented Pelly, he was aggressive, demanding, energetic and an orator. He gave no quarter and he expected none. It was my good fortune to address his annual meeting and to see the warm, appreciative association that existed between the people in the Pelly constituency and their representative, Leonard Larson.

Leonard was a good farmer, husband, father and citizen. One remembers his return to this Legislature last spring, when he had represented the Province abroad. How proud he was of the Province and of Canada! How proud was his reference to relatives he had met in his native land.

During this last summer, relatives from his home in his homeland came to see him. It was my good fortune to meet them in a Regina restaurant. There was pride in Leonard Larson's eyes as he talked about Saskatchewan, about the Legislature, our accomplishments, partly in their language and partly in ours. This was the gentle side of Leonard Larson that had kept him so close to his constituency and his family.

My last conversation with Leonard Larson was on Thursday morning last. We came up the front steps of the Legislature together, and parted on the second floor near the well outside of the Chamber doors. His aggressive personality, his enthusiasm, his anger were all there as he gave me some advice with his pipe clenched in his hand.

This is the way I like to remember Leonard Larson, the sincerity of his conversation and final words as he headed towards his office.

Leonard Larson was the sort of man who trained himself for public life. He held every kind of office you can be elected to. He didn't win without experiencing defeat when he sought office. He never complained about a defeat, he kept looking ahead. He was good for his constituency, he was good for the province, he was good for our Caucus, he was good for this House, he was good for his community and he was good for his family. I am sure that all these groups will miss him, particularly those who were closest to him.

I would like to join other Members of the House in expressing my condolences to Leonard Larson's family.

MR. J. A. PEPPER (Weyburn):— Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my sincere and heartfelt words of sympathy in the passing of one whom I consider a very true friend. Leonard Larson was a man who won the respect and admiration of all who knew him.

I have had the opportunity of sitting with Leonard, both as a Member of the Opposition and in the Government. I can assure you that he carried his share of the burden or tasks that were assigned to him without hesitation and always in a statesman like manner. He was truly a credit to the party which he chose to serve.

The Pelly Constituency has had, as their representative, a gentleman whose conduct will remain unchallenged and whose dedication to his people will long be remembered.

You always knew in talking to Leonard just where he stood on any issue. He enjoyed good debate and gave it everything he had to prove his point. He would acknowledge a mistake, but you would have to prove it to him first.

Leonard Larson will go down in the Parliamentary records as one who spoke and thought in a positive manner, prepared to always lend a helping hand to anyone in a time of need.

Politics to Leonard was not a game, it was a duty he felt obligated to fulfil, regardless of what sacrifices he might have to endure. In fulfilling his obligations to society never did he neglect or stint in his care or gratitude for his family.

These, Mr. Speaker, are some of the measurements by which a man is judged, and for which Leonard will long be remembered. To me Leonard Larson met all qualifications.

I want to join Mr. Speaker, with other Members of this Assembly in extending to the Larson family my sincere sympathy in this time and hour of need.

MR. H. H. P. BAKER (Regina Victoria):— Mr. Speaker, I too want to join others and concur in their remarks with regard to Mr. Leonard Larson, who passed away on March 6th of this year. I had considered Leonard Larson as one of my closest friends over the years. I am very pleased at this time to say that I had forfeited my opportunity to go to the Parliamentary Conference in London last year. According to our seniority system I was the next one to go. I am so pleased that he was able to attend, and visit the land from where his forefathers came. It makes me feel good in that way. But it is a sad occasion and I think we can say about Mr. Larson, that he was a man of sterling qualities, a selfmade man in every way. He will be long remembered and recognized for his great contributions in his field of agriculture, what he did for the co-operatives, and what he did as a representative of the Wheat Pool, developing one of the finest wheat handling agencies throughout the world.

He was a man who was definite in his viewpoints. He was a real social democrat, he was also a fine Christian living man, a great family man. Yes, he was a great man in every way. It is a real loss to this Legislature on his passing and I want to convey my deepest sympathy to Mrs. Larson and other members of the family on this their sad bereavement.

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MR. J. R. KOWALCHUK (Melville):— Mr. Speaker, I too should like to add just a very few words of sympathy to those already expressed by the Premier (Mr. Blakeney) and the rest of the Members of this House, to the family of our lost colleague, Leonard Larson. My own personal regard for Leonard was always strong in that he always spoke directly from the shoulder. He minced no words. He spoke from the heart, and was not always concerned with prim niceties, but he always spoke with total and complete sincerity, honesty and total frankness — virtues, Mr. Speaker, that, to some degree, are missed in today's political area.

Leonard was a man of the soil, Mr. Speaker. He loved the land he tilled. He, in my estimation, was considered a real farmer.

To Mrs. Larson and the rest of the family I also wish to express deep sympathy in the loss of an immediate member of the family and indeed a great loss to the community and the constituency that he represented.

HON. N. E. BYERS (Minister of the Environment):— Mr. Speaker, I too should like to join with the Members of this Assembly in paying tribute to Leonard Melvin Larson, and in extending sincere sympathy and condolences to the Larson family. I always valued my relations with Leonard, both as a personal friend, as a colleague who represented the constituency very close to mine, as well as in the political field and in our associations in this Legislative Assembly.

Leonard Larson was a man of very high integrity and he had a deep compassion for the problems and the well-being of his fellowmen. As a Member of the Legislative Assembly, Leonard dedicated much time and energy towards solving those problems, and representing the people of the Pelly constituency. From the time he was 17 and first elected to the Kamsack School Board, Leonard maintained a keen interest and involvement in community, farm and political affairs. We are going to miss Leonard. I remember at least one occasion having the opportunity to visit at the Larson home on the farm at seeding time. Leonard was not a Member then, but was very willing to set aside an hour or so to sit down and discuss some important business. He had associations with many people in his constituency, very close contact with the many native people in his riding, close contact as a Member with the people on the farms and with the people in the small towns. When you were discussing a proposal, or when you were trying to assess the effect of a certain action you would be certain that if you were to obtain Leonard Larson's opinion it would be an opinion that would be correct and down to earth. One of his favourite lines, that I shall always remember, that he would give when you sought his advice, was, "You had better believe it." In fact, until his untimely death, Leonard continued to provide conscientious service and leadership in his community, in his constituency and to this province. Friendly and outgoing, Leonard knew his constituents and his constituency well. He was one of those MLAs who, I think, could be recognized on sight by a great majority of his constituents. At the same time he was one of the few MLAs who could pin a name, and usually a first name, to a large number of his constituents. In his community and throughout the Pelly constituency, and in this Assembly, Leonard was very well liked and highly respected as an individual, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and as a politician. Leonard's record

speaks for itself.

MR. C. P. MacDONALD (Indian Head-Wolseley):— Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a few moments of the Assembly's time to join with other Members in expressing sincere condolences to the family of Leonard at his very untimely passing.

You know, whenever I think of Leonard Larson I always smile. I suppose I shouldn't say that on this occasion. But the reason I smile, I don't think anybody ever made me as mad in the Assembly as Leonard Larson did. I don't think anybody ever could make my hair curl because of my philosophy and perhaps my ideals the way Leonard could, because as the Leader of the Opposition indicated he disagreed with every thing he ever said, but you always respected him for his frankness and for the straightforward way in which he presented his viewpoints and his arguments. But the thing that you couldn't help liking about Leonard was that no matter how mad you got here, it was like a hockey game. When you walked off the ice Leonard always had a smile. He enjoyed debate; he also enjoyed the give and take, and he always received your ideas and listened to them carefully. For that reason I think that I know that his family and his community and Saskatchewan will miss him, because we will miss him. And I do want to join with other Members in passing on my sincere condolences to the members of his family, and I am sure that all of us will miss Leonard Larson and some day it will be great to have another Member of his calibre back in the House.

MR. P. P. MOSTOWAY (Saskatoon Centre):— Mr. Speaker, I too, should like to express my sincere sympathy to the family of Leonard Larson and I should also like to say a few words of tribute to him.

Leonard Larson, as you are probably aware, was my seatmate. He was also the Deputy Whip. I had a lot to do with Leonard in that regard (as a Member of our caucus) and also because he was a Member of a special committee which was in operation a few years ago. I got to know Leonard quite well. One thing that I could say about Leonard, and will say, is that he was certainly firm in his beliefs, and you always knew where he stood. But he was always prepared to listen and he could come down and if you could prove to him as another Member mentioned this afternoon, that he was wrong, he was always big enough to admit that he was, but usually he wasn't wrong. One thing that I think of is the various chats that I had with Leonard, sometimes with him alone, and sometimes with others, and always I think in terms of big clouds of smoke coming from his pipe (he thoroughly enjoyed his pipe), and in that sense you always knew where Leonard was. We would be chatting about things like politics, farming, etc. He was a real grassroots farmer, and he loved the land, and even though he could be harsh at times, he would always mellow whenever you talked about his family. He was a very devoted family man, and he would always soften up and his eyes would light up whenever you mentioned his wife or his children.

Mr. Speaker, Leonard is certainly a part of the rich Christian heritage of Saskatchewan. I am sure that all Members of this Assembly, that all citizens of this province and particularly his constituents, will sorely miss him. I know I certainly will.

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HON. W. A. ROBBINS (Minister of Health):— Mr. Speaker, I should like to also say a word or two with respect to Leonard Larson.

I knew him before he was elected to this Assembly, when he attended meetings for Federated Co-operatives and I was an employee of the Co-operative Superannuation Society and I had some connection with national organizations at that particular time. We were both elected in 1964 and sat opposite here. We were deskmates at that particular time. I know that Leonard Larson was very active in the farm movement, both in the Farmer's Union and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. I visited his farm on one or two occasions. He was very proud of his farm, and was an excellent farmer. He made a valuable contribution as well in the Consumer Co-operative Movement through his local co-operative at Kamsack and also as a delegate to Federated Co-operatives, the central wholesaling organization for co-operatives.

Leonard Larson was a big blunt man and he was a good representative of his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of visiting the House of Commons in London last August and the first contact I made there was through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the officers of that Association immediately asked me about Leonard Larson. Leonard, of course, had attended as a Saskatchewan delegate the 25th Parliamentary Seminar in London a month or two prior to that and they were very much interested in him. I, too, would like to add my condolences to the family, to his wife, son, daughter. I think we can simply say 'we will remember him.' Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, that is part of the eternity of life.

MR. R. N. NELSON (Yorkton):— Mr. Speaker, I too should like to join with my colleagues in honouring Leonard Larson and in extending sympathy to the whole Larson family.

I have known and worked closely with Mr. Larson since the early 1960s when he first ran as the Federal Member of Parliament for Yorkton. I have known Leonard Larson to be a hard-driving, hard-working man who served humanity first all of his life. His family can be justly proud of his work and also of his life as a family man. We knew Leonard was a man of firm convictions. We always knew that he would question us closely on any of our actions within the caucus and without. But we always knew exactly where Leonard stood as had been mentioned before because Leonard was a man of great integrity.

So on behalf of all the people of Yorkton who knew, loved and respected Leonard Larson, I should like to extend our deepest sympathy to the Larson family in this time of their deep bereavement. I pray that they will have the strength to face the future without the warm presence of husband, father, and friend.

MR. M. KWASNICA (Cutknife-Lloydminster):— Mr. Speaker, it is with sorrow and regret that I rise to speak in this motion of condolence.

Leonard Larson was a fine man who kept a steady balance between his work, his family and his recreation. I will

remember Leonard Larson for his sincere manner in which he approached the problems which his constituents brought to him. He was a kind man and a good friend. We shared many things in common over the years, but the one thing in common which we both shared, was music. And we had spent many happy hours in the years gone by in recreation and fun and enjoyment. I know Mr. Larson will be missed deeply by all and I want to extend my sincere sympathy to his wife Anna and his family.

HON. E. KRAMER (Minister of Highways):— Mr. Speaker, the very fact that so many people, many of our colleagues, and Members of the Opposition have spoken about our departed friend Leonard Larson is indicative of the kind of a person he really was. I can only say that nothing that has been said today can really measure the man. In the 25 years that I have been a Member of this Legislature I have known him. I knew him before then when I was active in the Farmer's Union; that was when I first met Leonard. I can only say that I am terribly sorry that he is gone. I am tremendously proud to have known him.

MR. D. H. LANGE (Bengough-Milestone):— Mr. Speaker, as the youngest Member of the Legislature I should like to say just a word about Leonard Larson. Along with the attributes that have been mentioned, that he was a man of humour, a man of intelligence, and of strong character, I think it is also necessary to remember that part of that strong character included a gentle demeanour which reflected patience and understanding and kindness. I think this was perhaps innate and was fostered by his family. He had a bit of a fatherly image, to me. There were few people who made more mistakes, either in caucus or in the Chamber than I did, and there were few people who had more understanding and more patience with me than did Leonard Larson. I will never forget that aspect of his concern and understanding. More than a colleague, he was to me a friend. Such has been the case with several other senior Members in the House, including Eiling Kramer, Auburn Pepper, Art Thibault, the former Member for Prince Albert West, Dave Steuart and the former Member for Lakeview, Don MacPherson. All of these gentlemen were good to me in this respect. It is particularly that quality about Leonard that I should like to mention. Because I did not tell him while he was here, I should like now to pass it along to his family.

Leonard Larson was a candid person in life and he probably would not mind if I were somewhat candid about his death. If he and I could have sat down a couple of weeks ago, he quite openly would have discussed his own death; when he would leave this world, and how he would like to leave it. Probably one of the ways which Leonard would have chosen to have left this world would have been exactly the way in which he did leave, that is, in full stature and health. I think he would not mind if that observation were made. The greatest regret about his death is perhaps not that he has left this life, because he had accredited himself well before leaving, but the greatest regret is that those who were close to him will miss him dearly. I will certainly miss Leonard as a colleague, but more than anything I shall miss his human warmth and friendship. It is in this context that I should like to express condolences and sympathy to his wife Anna, to his children Larry and Janice, and to the immediate families.

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MR. E. A. BERNTSON (Souris-Cannington):— Mr. Speaker, I knew Leonard Larson for only two short years. During that time I dealt with Leonard from time to time as Whip. I also sat on Rules Committee with him and we did have two particular things in common, we were both farmers and we were both Norwegians.

During the travels of the committee which we sat on we had several chats and I developed a fondness for Leonard. In the two short years that I knew him he had my respect and admiration. He will be missed by all who knew him and I wish to join the rest of this Assembly in conveying my sympathy to the bereaved family.

HON. A. E. BLAKENEY (Premier):— Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Regina Lakeview, Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Malone):

That the Resolution just passed, together with the transcripts of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased Member, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

MOTIONS FOR RETURN

RETURN NO. 15

MR. C. P. MacDONALD (Indian Head-Wolseley) moved that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 15 showing:

Under the Saskatchewan Succession Duty Act: (a) the quarterly collections during the year 1974; (b) the number of estates that were involved; (c) the number of beneficiaries that were involved; (d) the number of estates that were valued between \$200,000 and \$500,000; (e) the number of estates that were valued between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000; (f) the number of estates that were valued over \$1,000,000.

HON. W. E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance):— Mr. Speaker, in the way the order is called for there are some difficulties we would have in answering the question or giving the information that is requested. As Members are aware that up until 1974 the province had an arrangement with the Federal Government where they did the collecting for the provinces and some of the information is just not possible for us to provide. I have discussed the matter with the Hon. Member and I should like to move the following amendment:

That all the words following “showing” be deleted and the following substituted therefore: (a) the quarterly collections during 1974 under the Saskatchewan Succession Duty Act; (b) the number of estates from which some amount of duties was received; (c) the number of estates that were assessed for Succession Duty purposes during the period January 1, 1974 to December 31, 1974 that were; (1) of value between

\$50,000 and \$200,000; (2) the value between \$200,000 and \$500,000; (3) of the value between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000; (4) the value in excess of \$1,000,000.

Motion agreed to.

RETURN NO. 16

MR. C. P. MacDONALD (Indian Head-Wolseley) moved that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 16 showing:

Under the Saskatchewan Succession Duty Act: (a) the quarterly collection during the year 1975; (b) the number of estates that were involved; (c) the number of beneficiaries that were involved; (d) the number of estates that were valued between \$200,000 and \$500,000; (e) the number of estates that were valued between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000; (f) the number of estates that were valued over \$1,000,000.

HON. W. E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance):— Mr. Speaker, on this particular Order we have a little bit of a problem. I have discussed the matter with the Hon. Member. The information could be provided but I don't think that it would be of very much value to him. That is under (c) the number of beneficiaries which is in respect of all the some 5,000 reports that are made annually in the number of deceased persons. I think he is merely interested in the number of beneficiaries that actually paid. Since our discussion earlier this afternoon I've not been able to work out the amendment and I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

RETURN NO. 2

MR. E. C. MALONE (Regina Lakeview) moved that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 2 showing:

Copies of any agreements or amendments to agreements made since January 29, 1976 between the Government of Saskatchewan or Government Finance Office or Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and the Duval Corporation of Saskatchewan, or any company known to be a subsidiary or associated company with the Duval Corporation.

He said: I should like to say just a couple of words. I assume since I haven't heard the Minister indicate to me that he was going to give me these documents that he is not going to. That is the reason for making this motion debatable. I am interested to see what the Minister's reasoning is for not producing these documents for our perusal.

We, in the Liberal Party, go on what may be a radical idea, but we feel that governments that are doing the people's business, should let people know what they are doing. I think that most democratic governments function under the same basis. Perhaps the NDP is an example of one government not functioning under that basis. I can see no reason whatsoever for these documents not being divulged to the Legislature and to the people of Saskatchewan.

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The Government is spending, I believe, \$128 million of the people's money in connection with the purchase of the Duval mine. I think the people, as a right, are entitled to know in what manner that money is being spent. So I await the Minister's comments with interest. I hope that I am wrong and I hope that these documents that I have requested are going to be tabled and given to us or that there is some legitimate reason that is not allowing him to do so now. I hope as well that this motion is not just stood off the Order Paper, which happens on occasion in this Legislature when the Government is faced with something they do not like doing.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I move Return No. 2

HON. E. L. COWLEY (Provincial Secretary):— Mr. Speaker, I have a few words to say about this particular motion. I listened with interest to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Malone) with respect to this motion and his belief and the Liberal Party's belief is that information should be provided to the public. I don't disagree with that item fundamentally, although I think the Member will agree that there is always the question of what is in "the public interest", to make public at a particular time. I think his colleagues in Ottawa obviously have some disagreements from time to time with the Opposition there and indeed with the press on that. I just point out that while one can agree in principal it is not a simple issue always to make the dividing line.

With respect to this question, the primary, indeed I believe the only agreements, between the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and Duval relate to the settlement that was negotiated between PSC and Duval which resulted in our acquisition formally of that mine on the 29th of October.

We are, as the Member opposite knows, now in the process of negotiating a similar detailed purchase arrangement with the people from Sylvite. While we have an understanding with respect to its sale, there are a great many items which have yet to be completely finalized. I am advised by the officials in the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and by the legal advice from the people that they have, that it is their belief, which I accept, that the negotiations with Sylvite and with future companies that we may acquire would be hampered by the publication of these documents which obviously once provided to this House are completely public to anyone who wants to take a look at them. On that advice I am recommending to the House, that it is not in the public interest to make public this information.

MR. C. P. MacDONALD (Indian Head-Wolseley):— Mr. Speaker, I find the argument of the Minister intolerable, intolerable for the people of Saskatchewan. Two days ago he informed us that he was investing \$144 million additional dollars in another potash mine. Today we learned that they are not going to pay interest from the Energy Fund, the Energy Fund that is today paying the people of Saskatchewan nine per cent. All of a sudden we are having a business operated by the Government of Saskatchewan that is operated differently from any other business in the world.

Who for example, can obtain \$110 million and pay no interest? What kind of a distorted profit structure will we

see? What other distorted kind of socialist arithmetic are we going to have perpetrated on the people of Saskatchewan in this regard?

Mr. Speaker, I remember very well when we purchased the Prince Albert Pulp Mill, the debate that went on in this House about the necessity of public disclosure when we invested huge sums of taxpayers' money. How readily the Liberal Government of the day put on the table, all the documents relating to the Prince Albert Pulp Mill, when we were at the same time further negotiating for additional pulp facilities in the Province of Saskatchewan as of course is a necessity for further development in the forest industry. There is absolutely no excuse.

Of all the political parties in the Dominion of Canada that have stood up and demanded public disclosure of railway books, of company corporations and now they turn around and tell us that the NDP is different than any other private corporation in this country, that they can be secretive, they can deny the shareholders, which is the public of Saskatchewan, the valid information which is related to the purchase of the potash corporations that they are now in the process of buying.

Shame on you! Shame on all the Members who stand up and defend the purchase of a potash mine with taxpayers' money when you refuse to tell the taxpayers of Saskatchewan whether it is a good deal or a bad deal.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I know that many of our Members will have a great deal more to say on this issue and I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

RETURN NO. 6

MR. R. E. NELSON (Assiniboia-Gravelbourg) moved that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 6 showing:

For the period June 1, 1975 to October 31, 1976, the persons under contract to supply personal or other services to any Government Department, Branch, Commission, Agency or Crown Corporation, giving in each case: (1) the name of the individual or corporation; (2) the Department, Branch, Commission, Agency or Crown Corporation to whom the contract was made; (3) the period of commencement; (4) the time of termination or if not completed, anticipated date of termination; (5) the purpose; (6) the cost, or if not completed, the estimated total cost.

HON. R. J. ROMANOW (Attorney General):— Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity to examine the form and the wording of this particular Order for Return No. 6 and I am going to recommend to the Members of the Legislature that we do not pass this particular request and Order as suggested by the Member.

I have tried to look at ways and means for a possible amendment which would in some way or another overcome the difficulties which I will enumerate in just a moment from our point of view and still provide some of the answers to the questions that the Hon. Member asks. But quite frankly, I have not been able to devise such a proposed series of amendments.

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Basically, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Members of the House to take a look at the wording of this proposed amendment. The wording is so broad as to virtually in effect paralyse the Government in terms of provision of the information. What the Member wants is for the period of June 1, 1975 to October 31, 1976 all information with respect to every department, every branch, every commission, every agency or every Crown corporation, those who have supplied personal or other services, so called.

Now what is meant by "other services?" As the Members will know the Government is involved on a daily basis in the provision of so-called other services. There is the provision of labour services. Those are easily identifiable. What about the question of provision of car services? Or provision of the stationery and supply services? The question of telephone services? You can continue on in any kind of sphere.

If the Hon. Member wants to zero in on a particular kind of service, whether it is a consulting service or whether it is a corporate service or if it is a personal service, an identifiable service, then I think we might be able to correlate that kind of information package and table it for the Members of the Legislative Assembly. But to simply ask of Government to provide all kinds of information of so-called other services for every department, Crown corporation and the like really makes it an unreasonable request, one which can do nothing but tie up many civil servants over many hours to try and provide this kind of information.

Quite frankly, in honesty and frankness to the Member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg (Mr. Nelson), I am not sure he wants that kind of information. He doesn't want to know the details of paper clips or purchase supplies or other services that are provided in this regard. At least I don't think he does. I think what he wants to know is the scope of external consultants or something of that nature.

I could presume on his behalf what he wants and say that it is external consultants and amend it to that effect but I think that would be presumptuous. Therefore, since I am not quite sure of the nature of the information that he wants, I think the only way to handle it would be to defeat this motion, and have the Member come back with a more specific motion on external consultants or whatever, and I am sure the Government under those circumstances, will be pleased to agree to that Order for Return and to provide the necessary information. But I think if one looks at it legitimately and fairly, you would agree with me that it is simply not possible to agree to this motion because the task of providing this information is really just too wide.

Therefore I am recommending to this Legislature that we turn down this motion.

Motion negatived.

RETURN NO. 7

MR. R. E. NELSON (Assiniboia-Gravelbourg) moved, seconded by Mr. Wiebe (Morse), that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 7 showing:

- (1) With respect to the Saskatchewan Power Corporation since June 23, 1971, the number of general increases in

electric power rates and the date on which each took place; (2) The number of general decreases in electric rates and the date on which each took place.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on this particular motion I am simply asking the Government to tell us the story of the electrical increases over the past few years, and I am sure the Attorney General shouldn't find too much difficulty in finding some of those. There have been plenty.

While this Government has preached restraint to the workers and to the farmers and to the citizens of this province, the Power Corporation had done anything but practise that policy. I am certain none of the substantial increases would have passed the guidelines of the Wage and Price Control Board. Mr. Speaker, the people that are hurt most by many of these increases, are the elderly who have retired and are living in their own residence and they are attempting to live off savings from an era when a dollar was worth more than a few cents. Had the Minister in charge of SPC and his Cabinet been honest enough before the 1975 election to have taken the advice of the management of SPC at that time, modest increases in that year before the election may have prevented substantial increases since that time.

It would appear that this Government is presently playing the same political game and going after the people now so that they can lay low before the 1979 election. I so move.

HON. J. R. MESSER (Minister of Mineral Resources):— Mr. Speaker, I first want to say that the Government will provide the Member with the information that he asks for. But I think it only reasonable to undertake to respond to some of the remarks that he has addressed to this Assembly in regard to the attitude of the Corporation and increases in rates that may or may not have taken place.

Mr. Speaker, the Member knows full well that the Saskatchewan Power Corporation is one of the better managed utilities in the Dominion of Canada. It has with exception between 1964 and 1971 always undertaken long-term planning in regard to the availability of power and gas to Saskatchewan private consumers and industry. I could undertake to remind the Member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg (Mr. Nelson) about the attitude of the former Liberal Government in regard to selling literally millions and millions of dollars of natural gas reserves that the Saskatchewan Power Corporation held which would now be contributing, Mr. Speaker, to lessening the burden and the costs of power and gas to Saskatchewan consumers. That's water under the bridge and I am sure that Saskatchewan people will never forget that it was a Liberal Government that undertook to give those reserves away, to give those reserves away, Mr. Speaker, to some of their friends.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Corporation has been confronted in the last several years with increases in power and gas, that is not uncommon to utility companies in Canada, North America or globally for that matter. I am sure that the Member is aware that I provided him with information last year which showed not only in this House but in the Crown Corporations Committee discussions that Saskatchewan Power Corporation charges are among the lowest in Canada today. The only exception

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perhaps being areas within the Province of Alberta, not all of Alberta, but some areas in the Province of Alberta providing cheaper electric hydro or thermal power and natural gas than is the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. We intend to, even though there have been significant increases, continue to provide power and gas to people in Saskatchewan at cheaper rates than other parts of Canada and that's what is relevant in regard to increases, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. MESSER:— Mr. Speaker, I told you at the beginning of my remarks, that I would undertake to clarify some of the misinterpretation of the Member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg (Mr. Nelson). I have undertaken in my brief remarks to do that. We will be providing the Member with the information that he asks for.

Motion agreed to.

RETURN NO. 21

MR. S. J. CAMERON (Regina South) moved, seconded by Mr. G. H. Penner, (Saskatoon Eastview) that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 21 showing:

Copies of all studies or recommendations prepared for, or on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, by the Transportation Agency.

HON. G. MacMURCHY (Minister of Municipal Affairs):— The motion reads that “Copies of all studies or recommendations prepared for, or on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, by the Transportation Agency.” The problem, Mr. Speaker, is with respect to the words, “all studies or recommendations”, I think would take us just a little bit too far in terms of the information that the Hon. Member is seeking. I think it would not be in the public interest to go to that extent, since a lot of the studies and a lot of the recommendations and a lot of the papers prepared are not necessarily even dealt with or considered by the Government.

Rather, I would suggest we delete those words, “studies or recommendations,” and in their place use the words, “submissions or briefs”. I think with that amendment the Hon. Member can get the information which he is seeking.

Therefore, I move, seconded by my seatmate, Hon. W.A. Robbins, (Saskatoon Nutana) the following amendment:

That the words “studies or recommendations” in the first line be deleted and words “submissions or briefs” substituted therefore.

MR. S. J. CAMERON (Regina South):— Mr. Speaker, I want to address myself briefly to the Minister's amendment. I don't think it takes very much by way of Members to recognize that what the amendment would do is to render the motion completely impotent. I can readily get my hands on the submissions prepared of behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and made to various bodies, and indeed I have them.

What I am interested in knowing is what studies lie behind those submissions. The Government of Saskatchewan has been active these past two or three years in conducting studies and in commissioning studies with respect to some pretty fundamental questions of transportation in Saskatchewan. I refer particularly to the studies which have been done in respect to the Hall Commission and the Snively Commission. Bear in mind that we are paying to have these things done, that is to say the taxpayer is paying for the studies. Based upon the studies, submissions are made by the Government to these various organizations. We very much want to see the studies themselves, to see who conducted them, to see what sort of questions they addressed themselves to, what kind of evidence they gathered in respect to them; the sort of detailed kind of information which is so very important to these fundamental questions we are now looking at. As Members know we are looking this year to some very fundamental solutions to some pretty fundamental problems in Saskatchewan with respect particularly to grain transportation. This kind of information I think ought to be made available to Members. I think the Minister knows full well what he is doing with his amendment, which is rendering the motion completely impotent. I would ask those Members who are genuinely interested in having more information in these areas to vote against that amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

RETURN NO. 19

MR. R.A. LARTER (Estevan) moved, seconded by Mr. E. Berntson (Souris-Cannington) that an Order of the Assembly do issue for a Return No. 19 showing:

The total sales of potash mined in Saskatchewan in 1976, to date (a) The portion of these sales that the Duval, and now Cory Mine obtained. (b) The budgeted sales figures for the Cory Mine for 1977. (c) The budgeted sales for the Cory Mine for 1978.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this question was placed on the paper, I believe, just the start of questions that are going to take place and have been taking place with regard to potash mines. We now have the announcement of the second potash mine. The information I asked for, I think, is merely the start of information that we are interested in finding out, at just how much the cost of production of potash is going to go up with Government running the business. Just how many more employees is it going to take to produce the same amount of potash? It is going to be interesting to watch this series of figures over the years, just how many more employees we do employ. We know this is going to be substantial because at the time it was announced that the head office of the Potash Corporation would employ approximately 400 people, so that we know that the same amount of potash going out of Saskatchewan is already going to that many more people. For this reason the start of this series of questions could be quite interesting.

I so move.

MR. MESSER:— Mr. Speaker, we have been wondering as a Government

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in Saskatchewan and I think there is good reason for many people in the Province of Saskatchewan to wonder whether the Conservatives are just mixed up or deliberately trying to misinterpret facts.

When I take a look at the Order for Return that the Member for Estevan has just asked to have considered, he is talking about employees, whether or not the Saskatchewan Potash Corporation or the Cory Mine, the former Duval Mine is going to undertake to employ more people. I don't see anything in the Order that relates to people or employees, I don't know how if we answered it as he has it phrased here, it is going to give him any information in regard to the numbers of employees.

I am at a further loss as to how on one occasion, just recently in two by-elections in this province they can say the Province of Saskatchewan is undertaking to acquire a potash industry and it won't add one more new job to the Saskatchewan economy whatsoever.

Now in his remarks to this Order he is assuming that we are going to have, I think he mentions 400 more new employees involved in the potash industry. Mr. Speaker, he can't have it both ways. I think the people of Saskatchewan have to ask themselves, does this Member and his colleagues deliberately misinterpret the facts to their best interests or are they simply mixed up. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that they are slightly mixed up, but they are much more articulate at misinterpreting the facts for their best interests, for their best interests only.

Now it would appear that they want some information out of this Order, Mr. Speaker. But I say to you and I say to the people of Saskatchewan that information is not what they are seeking. They are undertaking to try to embarrass the Corporation before it even has an opportunity to really prove itself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. MESSER:— We have had, Mr. Speaker, a potash mine for only several months and he wants information, and he and his colleagues with the exception of two have sat here for almost two years now. Not once have I heard a peep from them asking for information in regard to IMC, PCA or any other privately owned potash mine. But upon the Government getting involved in the potash industry, immediately they want to know every little detail of its operations on almost a daily basis and they know that's impossible. They know that it will prove nothing, Mr. Speaker. They are simply trying to embarrass the Corporation and the Government before it ever has an opportunity to prove to Saskatchewan people that it will be a benefit to them. I assure him, and I assure the people of Saskatchewan and the Leader of the Opposition . . . the Leader of the Opposition laughs — I wonder if he was laughing when he heard the results of the elections in these two by-elections which formerly were held by Liberal Members. If I were he, I would sit back and listen to see whether he can acquire some knowledge in regard to what people of Saskatchewan are really asking for.

Mr. Speaker, that corporation given some time will show Saskatchewan people that it will administer and harvest their

resources in their best interest. In that period of time, Mr. Speaker, people will become more aware that if we are going to continue to provide the level of service that this Government is noted for, we have to have some better means of controlling the development and expansion and extraction of our resources.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Members opposite would like to see us in very significant ways increasing income taxes and other taxes, like they do in the provinces of Ontario, like they do in some of the provinces in the Maritimes, governed by Liberals and Tories. But that is not going to happen, not to that extent in Saskatchewan because of the attitude of this Government in regard to resource development, an attitude of foresight and optimism, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what the Member asks for in this resolution, he knows full well, will inhibit and jeopardize the Potash Corporation's management capabilities. No other company is going to provide in advance information in regard to sales and their production patterns. They simply can't afford to do that because in the competitive market and in the movement of the potash they are then going to be at a disadvantage with their competitors. I say that the Member is fully aware of that, being, I think, a successful businessman in the community of Estevan. I am sure that he is not telling his competitors his margins of profits and his projected sales and inventory of equipment that he has, at the beginning of every fiscal year. He doesn't do it and he wouldn't do it, because he knows that it's going to be detrimental to his operation and that applies to this potash company only to a much greater degree.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he is also fully aware . . . well he hasn't been proven to be a loser, but I'm sure that his seatmate the Member for Nipawin is going to be a loser in a number of ways in the very near future. But, Mr. Speaker, he also knows that he will have ample opportunity, ample opportunity to seek out information that he is asking for during the Crown Corporations Committee reviews of that Corporation's activities. It has historically been the practice of this House, and I think it has been one that is admirable in comparison to what happens in other provinces, a means of acquiring information which is much more meaningful, to provide much greater opportunity for Members to continue to pursue the information that is offered.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I move that all of the words after 'showing' be deleted and the following substituted thereof:

The total (a) production and (b) sales of Saskatchewan potash during the calendar year, 1976.

I so move, seconded by the Attorney General, Mr. Romanow.

The debate continued on the motion and the amendment.

HON. R. ROMANOW (Attorney General):— Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words with respect of this matter because of the importance of it and the reason that this motion is important is because I think it illustrates really two or three very major principles to the people of the Province of Saskatchewan. I know that the Conservatives obviously won't agree with what I have to say, but I do hope that they at least reconsider the posture and the

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position that they have taken with respect to this whole potash matter and with respect particularly to the form of this question.

Mr. Speaker, if one looks at the form of this question, what does it do? The form of this question says, we want to know the total sales of potash mined in Saskatchewan in 1976 to date and then proceeds to single out Duval and the PCS Cory operation only. It doesn't seek to divide the potash sales, in terms of the other companies, IMC or PCA or Kalium or any of the other entrepreneurs in the area, whatsoever. What it seeks to do is single out the Crown Corporation, a Saskatchewan Crown Corporation. A Crown Corporation whether we agree or whether we don't agree is a corporation funded by the taxpayers of the Province of Saskatchewan, in the interests of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. The Progressive Conservatives single it out and they say from the totality of the potash sales, we want to take a look at what PCS' portion is and we want to expose it to the world and we want to expose it to the competitors of PCS. That's what you are saying, because you're not asking anything about any of the other operations. Oh yes, and the boys back there, they agree with that. They think that's the approach that should be taken.

I just want the Legislature and the Province of Saskatchewan to mark that. That's not a request for information singling out the only potash company which is owned and directed totally by the people of Saskatchewan, with the only possible consequent result being to detrimentally affect PCS Cory Ltd.

Mr. Speaker, what the Conservatives are saying through this motion is that they don't care what happens to PCS Cory Ltd. They don't care that that kind of information puts PCS Cory Ltd. in a disadvantageous position, because they don't ask a question about IMC or PCA. They are strangely silent about IMC and PCA. They are strangely silent about any of the other private potash corporations. Now, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province are entitled to ask the question, why are they silent about IMC and PCA? They will say that it's because these are private companies. Now if they wanted a breakdown of the percentage of sales, why didn't they ask to do that? I tell you why they didn't, Mr. Speaker. They didn't ask that question because as the Minister of Mineral Resources has pointed out, they don't want to ask any questions which they know will be embarrassing to large private potash corporations and in particular, those corporations which are their friends, their friends together with the Liberal Party in this operation. There is no other explanation for that. None whatsoever.

Now, just further examine how insidious that kind of a campaign is, Mr. Speaker. What that says is, that these people as MLAs are prepared to run the risk that the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan if it is competitively hurt by this matter, by this information coming out, that the taxpayers of the Province of Saskatchewan should suffer the risk, not IMC shareholders, not the shareholders of PCA, not the shareholders of Kalium, but the shareholders, the people of the Province of Saskatchewan should stand the risk of any possible detrimental effect if this information comes out. That's what this motion says.

Mr. Speaker, that singles out Crown Corporations. I want to know . . .

MR. PENNER:— Ah . . .

MR. ROMANOW:— Oh, the Member for Saskatoon Eastview says “ah”, because all that they are saying, the Liberals and the Conservatives, sure is “ah”. Sure it’s “ah”, because the Conservatives and the Liberals have no interest whatsoever in asking about PCA. I want to know during the course of this debate, why it is that the Conservatives didn’t ask about PCA? I want to know during the course of the debate, maybe the Member for Saskatoon Eastview can tell me, why it is that you’re not interested in some of the information respecting private corporations? Why is it that you want all of our sales and you’re not asking anything about the PCA or IMC? There is no logical reason for that except for the conclusion that I make.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. I know that the potash policy is controversial. That’s obvious. There are those who are for it and there are those who are against it. But I tell you that the policy is launched. Everybody knows it’s launched because we’ve bought one mine at \$128 million. We’ve got another mine tentatively at \$144 million. It’s launched. Now whether you agree or disagree with the approach, it’s there. There’s a duty on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan and in particular the MLAs of the citizens of Saskatchewan, even if you disagree with the policy, not to go about undermining it. Ask questions, yes, you can ask questions. You have a right to ask any question you . . .

MR. PENNER:— You didn’t even have the guts to ask the people.

MR. ROMANOW:— Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Member opposite, whether or not the people say yes or no to that will be decided in due course in the 1979 or 1980 election provincially. It will be decided. And whether or not they want the Liberal approach, which is a total sellout to the private potash companies, or whether they want the Conservative fuzzy kind of approach of selling it to shareholders of the private companies is another issue. That will be decided.

I’m not saying that you don’t have a right to ask questions. You have a right and you have a duty to ask questions about PCS Cory and about the negotiations of Alwingsal or anywhere else. You have a duty to ask the questions. We have a responsibility to answer those questions as best as we can. But, you do not have a responsibility to single out the Crown Corporations and put them at a disadvantage for the taxpayers’ expense. That is totally irresponsible. That’s what you are doing. Totally irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the people of the Province of Saskatchewan that this is a continuation of the kind of irresponsibility that we witnessed in the last two by-elections in Saskatoon Sutherland and Prince Albert-Duck Lake, the continuation of the Conservative irresponsibility of the highest order.

Now I want the Member for Saskatoon Sutherland or the Member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake when he gets up to speak in this debate, to tell me how it is, as their ads have said during the course of the campaigns in those two by-elections,

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that somehow the money used to buy a potash mine is taking money from hospital care or education, as you stated in your advertising. You know that that is a blatant falsehood. Every one of you Conservatives know that that's a blatant falsehood. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that it has to do something with what the Member for Sutherland talked about, something called zero budgeting.

MR. SPEAKER:— I am at a loss as to the direction the debate is taking except that I believe it's away from the resolution, the item that's before us and it deals with potash mines in Saskatchewan and sales figures. I think the Attorney General is straying from the topic.

MR. ROMANOW:— Well, Mr. Speaker, I, of course, accept your ruling but surely I'm entitled to draw a conclusion as to whether or not this is a responsible motion. In my opinion it is irresponsible because it singles out Crown Corporations. In my opinion it is irresponsible and it reflects a continuation of that irresponsibility as identified by the two by-elections. Mr. Speaker, I say this again. If somehow you say that that is not within the scope, then I will have to try and keep my points more relevant, but I didn't think that they could be more relevant than that. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that if that's the case, perhaps I am misreading the motion and under the circumstances I, therefore, beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

RETURN NO. 25

MR. E. F. A. MERCHANT (Regina Wascana) moved, seconded by Mr. Wiebe (Morse) that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 25 showing:

With respect to Saskatchewan Telecommunications:

- (1) (a) the size of the average rural telephone bill for standard service, (b) the size of the average urban telephone bill for standard service;
- (2) the average cost of obtaining party line service in rural Saskatchewan;
- (3) (a) the average cost of obtaining individual, telephone service in rural Saskatchewan where available, (b) the cost, where applicable, charged for telephone lines that go through the land of the farms in part (3) (a).

He said: Mr. Speaker, both Return No. 25 and Return No. 26 ask fairly basic information. They really ask the two Crown Corporations to do some comparisons between rural costing and city costing. I can't honestly imagine how the Government in their convoluted logic will find a way to say that this is not information that we should have. I have nothing more to say about it, other than to move Return No. 25 showing, seconded by the Member for Morse, Mr. Wiebe.

HON. N.E. BYERS (Minister of the Environment):— I don't want to reply in detail to the variety of

details that the Hon. Member has requested here, but with the indulgence of yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the other Members of the House perhaps I could just outline as briefly as possible some of the very simple principles that are applied in arriving at these costs.

The Hon. Member's question is based on the assumption that most telephone service to rural areas is provided through Sask Tel, the Crown Corporation.

MR. SPEAKER:— Order! What's the Point of Order.

MR. MERCHANT:— Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the Minister may then rise and give a political speech about the answer that he says he can't give at this time. The question is whether he is prepared to give the answer or not. I suggest to you that if we're now to be treated to a lecture or a congratulatory speech about the way that Sask Tel operates, that that is not in order at this time.

MR. SPEAKER:— I think the way Members conduct their debate here is at their own peril, providing it doesn't infringe on the rules set down in the House and I, at this point, don't see anything improper about the manner in which the Minister is discussing it. I'm not commenting on the contents of what he is saying, I'm just saying that he has a right to debate the issue, whether he is going to support it or attempt to defeat it.

MR. BYERS:— I will try and keep my remarks as brief as possible, Mr. Speaker. If I start to stray even to the periphery of being out of order, I hope you will call me to order.

The Hon. Member's question presupposes that most, if not all telephone service for rural areas, is provided by Sask Tel. It is true that under the Unserved Area Program, a good program launched about 1966, about 7,000 to 8,000 farms have received telephone service by that method. These are served directly by Sask Tel. Until the offer, last November, made by this Government to the rural telephone companies, some 720 in number, that Sask Tel take over the operation of their companies and assimilate them — generally rural phone service has been provided through the rural telephone companies. The Hon. Member here is seeking a comparison between rural and urban basic services. The difference where Sask Tel provides the service is roughly in the order of one dollar difference between the rural and the urban, depending on what category you are in.

Essentially we have three rate groupings in the province. The two large cities of Saskatoon and Regina are in the largest group. The second group are the smaller cities plus Melfort and the third group is those centres with 1,750 or fewer subscribers.

Under the recently revised rate schedules for the group comprising the smaller centres, the rate will be \$3.80 per month with the rural subscribers paying \$4.90. For the cities and the smaller cities including Melfort the basic charge will be \$4.65 for residents and \$5.75 for rurals, for the rurals

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in the area of the two major cities, city rate will be \$5.45 per month compared to \$6.55 in the rural area.

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that the principle of this differential has long existed. There were at one time approximately eight different categories, but the rate change effective November 1, 1975, reduced the categories to three.

I am somewhat disappointed in the Honourable Member's question in that he might have sought some comparisons with telephone service in other jurisdictions. I know this Session has just resumed and he may be seeking this information at a later time. Let me just, for the benefit of the records give some comparisons.

For example, the urban rate for Sask Tel in the smaller centres is \$3.80 per month which compares with \$4.90 with a comparable centre in British Columbia. Under Alberta Government Telephones the rate is not \$3.80 per month, not \$4.80 per month, but \$4.85 per month. Under Manitoba telephone service it is slightly cheaper than ours, at \$3.85. The telephone rate in a small centre in Manitoba is one dollar per month cheaper than in Tory Alberta. Under the Maritime system, where I happened to attend a meeting of the telephone industry last June, I attended a dinner where the Premier of that province was the speaker. He made a very passionate plea to the private telephone industry in that province to do what they could to try to develop a program to serve the rural areas of that particular province. There are no provinces where you can go in Canada where the available telephone service is of the same quality that we have in this province in the rural areas. There are certainly no provinces that have a comparable system to our northern communication system, built since our Government came to power in 1971 at a cost of about \$16 to \$18 million. Last year we had the distinction of opening the Direct Distance Dialing System in Uranium City, so that now all centres in the province served by direct distance dialing.

Turning to cities the size of Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Weyburn, Estevan, Swift Current, the basic phone service for an urban subscriber under the new rate will be \$4.65 per month compared with British Columbia with \$5.95; \$5.60 under Alberta Telephones; Manitoba - \$4.60; Bell - \$5.80 which is a \$1.15 higher than Saskatchewan; for Maritime Tel - \$8.65. If you live in a city the size of Prince Albert, down in New Brunswick, you would pay exactly \$4 per month more for your basic telephone service than you would in the city of Prince Albert. If you lived in New Brunswick it would be \$7.95 and in Newfoundland it would be \$8.

Compared to larger cities, our rates are much more favorable — Regina at \$5.45 — and this by the way is under the recently revised rates that will come into effect April 1, 1977. In Saskatoon it also is \$5.45 as compared to Victoria - \$6.65; Vancouver - \$8.05; Calgary - \$5.60; Edmonton - \$5.70; Winnipeg-\$4.90; Bell - \$7.45; Halifax - \$8.95; St. John - \$7.65; St. Johns - \$8. per month.

It is little wonder, Mr. Speaker, that one of the jobs we Ministers spend a great deal of time at, is meeting groups from other jurisdictions to examine our phone system and just for the edification of the Hon. Member for Wascana (Mr. Merchant) who is apparently trying to become more familiar with communications, if there was any party in this province that

needed to improve its communications with the rural people, it is the Liberal Party. I think the Hon. Member is at least making some efforts on behalf of his colleagues.

We did have a group here, a state legislator from the State of Minnesota, who came to look at our rural telephone communication system and was quite impressed by it.

Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed that he hasn't asked for more information. I beg him to continue to study this problem and perhaps we can have questions that will seek information at a greater depth. I would be more than delighted to provide him with the information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

RETURN NO. 27

MR. S.J. CAMERON (Regina South) moved that an Order of the Assembly do issue for Return No. 27 showing:

Copies of all materials, studies, submissions and briefs prepared by or for the Government of Saskatchewan or any of its agencies with respect to the costs of moving prairie grain by rail and the rationalization of the prairie branch line system.

HON. G. MacMURCHY (Minister of Municipal Affairs):— Mr. Speaker, we are not able to answer the question as asked and I, therefore, move an amendment, seconded by my seatmate, the Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins):

That the words “materials, studies”, in the first line be deleted.

The debate continued on the amendment.

MR. CAMERON:— Mr. Speaker, I should like to address some very brief comments to it. It is, of course, an amendment much in the same variety as we saw earlier, but again, it is not lost really on any of us what the Minister is doing. What he is doing in straightforward, clear terms is denying to the Assembly studies which were conducted at the expense of the Government of Saskatchewan into the cost of moving grain by rail.

The thing is, we paid for those studies and in a very real sense the farmers, who are most affected by them, paid for those studies. There was in the course of the submissions some indication that there was a conflict between the submission of the Government of Saskatchewan to the Snaveley Commission and what was disclosed in some of the studies that were undertaken. It was my understanding, at the time, that one of the studies undertaken and some of the evidence eventually presented to the Snaveley Commission, if you recall, had to be subpoenaed because the Minister wouldn't give the information to Snaveley directly and he subpoenaed him. The reason he didn't want to give it, apparently, is that it indicated that the cost of moving grain by rail in the province was substantially higher than what the Government of Saskatchewan had been consistently

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indicating it was. So there was a conflict between what the Government was saying and leading farmers to believe, and what was included within the studies.

Obviously we are not going to defeat the Motion. But let it be lost on nobody the attitude the Government is here evidencing.

Studies were prepared for the Government at the expense of the people of the province with respect to an issue which is very vital to these people, very vital to the farmers of the province. How much does it really cost to move grain by rail?

You know that you hired a good number of people to do those studios. You hired some experts to do those studies; they made studies; they gave you all kinds of information about that very question. They have a right to that information, a right to know what their tax dollars provided, by way of answers and information, to that very important question. What you are saying to them in your arrogance, is, no, you can't have it; no, you can't have it; we won't show it to you. All we will show you is the submission that we gave to the Snavely Commission and the other submissions we made in respect to that question. But we won't show you the most important piece of information which is the study we conducted and the evidence we gathered on that very vital question.

I don't know how that Minister, with his rural representation and rural background and his knowledge of the importance of that issue to farm people, can, in this House, take a position as a politician that would deny them that kind of fundamental information. I say that is an attitude which is arrogant, completely insensitive and unjustifiable.

Amendment agreed to.

Debate continues on the Motion as amended.

MR. C.P. MacDONALD (Indian Head-Wolseley):— Mr. Speaker, I should just like to bring up one point, an additional point that my colleague has brought to my attention.

If you recall, Mr. Speaker, at the WEAC Conference in Calgary, one of the very fundamental issues that were brought forward to WEAC by the NDP Government, our representatives from Saskatchewan and Manitoba, were demands that the railways publicly disclose the cost of moving grain in Saskatchewan and western Canada. They demanded it to a degree that the Federal Government accept their proposal and now, the costs of moving grain as submitted by the railway, has come up for public debate. And yet here the very people who recommend that the railways provide that kind of basic information, this Government, now denies the studies into the very same subject matter. I find this very difficult to understand, Mr. Speaker. I find it difficult to interpret the motive behind the NDP in this regard. I think that the farmers of Saskatchewan will be most disappointed. No issue is of more fundamental importance to the farmers of Saskatchewan and to the Saskatchewan economy than that debate which involves what will happen with the transportation costs of the farmers' grain now and in the future.

Many recommendations and suggestions are now being proposed. The Hall Commission is about to release its submission. Mr. Speaker, I am amazed and disappointed at the Minister's response and his amendment. I should like an opportunity to further consider and discuss it and I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 1 - CUTBACKS IN HOSPITAL SERVICES

MR. G.H. PENNER (Saskatoon Eastview) moved, seconded by Mr. Cameron (Regina South):

That this Assembly condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for the cutbacks in hospital services, which has resulted in the reduction of hospital staff and the closure of significant numbers of beds in this province, and calls on the Government to restore Saskatchewan's basic services to their former level.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty evident to most people in Saskatchewan that 1976 has been an extremely difficult year for Saskatchewan's health care system for two basic reasons.

First of all, that there has been a significant cutback in services which can be provided by our hospitals.

Secondly, the Government has changed the emphasis in health care from a sound basic plan to one that is top heavy with politically expedient frills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER:— Now in dealing with these two reasons let us first examine the cutback on our acute care system and let us clear the air. It has never been an issue and, anybody who can read, understands that there were more dollars made available in 1976 than in any other year for the hospitals of Saskatchewan or for our acute care system. But the same people who can read and understand that statement can also read and understand that the dollar in 1976 bought less than it even had before. Thus, the hospital boards in Saskatchewan had very little alternative but to cutback beds and to cut back staff.

The Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) spoke a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, and chastised the Members to my left about statements they had made that were misleading. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that they pale in significance when compared to some of the statements that have been made by Members in his caucus as to where the blame lies with regards to cuts that have been made in our hospitals and the number of beds that have been closed and in the number of hospital staff that has been cut back, because it has not been the responsibility of hospital boards; it has not been their decision to do that but a decision made by the Department.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that in order to see that the record is set straight and so that Members over there no longer have to

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sort of flow along with the attitude that ignorance is bliss, I would like to make perfectly clear a situation with regard to one hospital and one hospital only in Saskatoon.

In August of 1975 one Saskatoon hospital was informed that the 1976 operating budget should be based on providing a total of 103,850 patient days of care. This was a substantial reduction from what had been approved in the base line year of 1974 when 113,000 patient days had been approved. Discussion then took place in January and February, 1976, with officials of the Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan regarding the establishment of the '76 operating budget. As a result of these discussions, it was established that a total of 678 full-time equivalent positions would be allowed in the '76 budget. This represented a reduction of approximately 20 full-time positions or 41,600 paid hours. The hospital was not informed by letter of the above rate decision until April 19, 1976. On April 13, 1976 they were informed in a letter from the Minister of Health that a further five per cent reduction in patient days would come into effect July 1, and they would be subsequently informed as to what implications this would have on their staff complement. Note that, they would be subsequently informed about what effect that would have on their staff complement. On May 7, 1976 they were informed by letter that they would be required to reduce an additional 14 staff positions effective July 1, which represents approximately 29,000 paid hours. Total staff cuts for 1976 were therefore 34 full-time positions representing some 70,000 paid hours. The 34 staff cuts represented a reduction to approximately five per cent of the total staff.

In addition, funds for medical-surgical supplies, drugs, gases, food, purchase laundry and linen services were also reduced. Possible reductions were also suggested in nursing supplies, pharmaceutical supplies, printing, stationery and office supplies.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, this is but one hospital in Saskatoon. Implications were generally the same for the other two.

Some additional facts for Members opposite include the following:

1. Saskatchewan has the highest separation rate of all provinces. However, when one analyses this it should be pointed out that there is a marked variation among the major communities in the Province of Saskatchewan. For example, in Melville, there are 327 beds per thousand; in Melfort, 241 per thousand; in Yorkton 226. The Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins) is aware of these figures. In Moose Jaw there are 209; in Regina 138 per thousand; Saskatoon 127 per thousand. Saskatoon has the lowest separation in the province and to date is lower than the national average of 156 per thousand.

2. The second thing I think Members opposite should understand: available hospital beds in the province are 7.4 per thousand. That's compared to the national average of 5.4. However, in reviewing these figures and comparing them to the City of Saskatoon, which has a population of approximately 132,000 people, plus the surrounding area which is served by the three hospitals, the following should be noted. That there are approximately 1,264 beds set up in Saskatoon. Of this number approximately 500 or 42 per cent are utilized by the citizens of Saskatoon and 764 or 58 per cent are residents in the

surrounding area. Based on a population of 132,000 (and I recognize that that may be out a little bit but it is close), the bed ratio per thousand of population for Saskatoon is approximately four per thousand, which is well below the national average and well below the provincial average.

When the Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins) wrote to advise of the five per cent cutback he gave a number of suggestions to this particular hospital in ways in which they could effect the cuts without any difficulty. Every one of the suggestions that he made in his letter had already been implemented by the hospital in question, Mr. Speaker. Every one of them. Let's go down the list. He suggested that maybe there only ought to be admissions for justifiable reasons. I don't know what he thought doctors were doing in the past with regard to admissions. With the pre-booking system, the emergency admission committees, the surveillance of the chiefs of the clinical departments, the tissue committee, the medical audit committee and the other quality controlled committees, there is a very thorough screening of all hospital admissions. Within the limits of human judgment the Medical Advisory Committee believed that no patient is admitted to the hospital unless that admission is justified on medical grounds. The admitting practice of this particular hospital had been scrutinized by many bodies outside the hospital. The appendectomy, hysterectomy and prairie natal morality committees of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, the hospital accreditation survey have all commented favourably on the hospital's careful screening of all admissions and yet this was one way suggested by the Minister of cutting back.

The second suggestion was that admissions should only be made if the patient can't be treated on an out-patient basis. Well that makes ordinary common sense too, Mr. Speaker. And the hospital in question here has already maximized its availability of using out-patient services. The Medical Advisory Committee had again suggested on a number of occasions that more procedure than treatments could be performed on an out-patient basis, and that had gone through the general channels in that particular hospital and had been worked through.

A third was early discharge of patients. If the Minister had taken a look at the average patient stay in that particular hospital over the last few years he would have noted that there has been a steady decline in the average number of days that a patient is in the hospital.

I think another point, and the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Rolfes) might be particularly interested in this, is that this particular hospital has between 15 and 25 level IV patients in the hospital awaiting discharge to level IV facility but there aren't enough level IV facilities around for them to be put into.

I think it is an unfortunate circumstance, Mr. Speaker, that we've got level VI facilities in this province for acute care beds being used up by people who are level IV because doctors don't dare put the level IV people out because there is no place in the province for them to go. I think it is about time that the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Rolfes) and his Department, Mr. Speaker, got their heads out of the collective sand and began to do something about that.

My former colleague for Saskatoon Sutherland (Mrs. Edwards)

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made that point and made it very well and there was probably no one else who understood it better than did she. It is certainly something that the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Rolfes) ought to address himself to, and he would be doing far more good for the people of the province than sitting there with his mouth open now. I hope he will get into the debate.

At this hospital, Mr. Speaker, all patients attending for out-patient surgery have all the necessary investigation performed at other facilities before they come to the hospital. It is the established policy of the hospital not to admit patients for investigations which can be performed as an out-patient. Unless there are other considerations involved in the patient's care and management the hospital has also made it a policy to accept on the patient's medical records photo copies of investigations performed prior to admission in order to save unnecessary duplication of these investigations.

As I go down the list, Mr. Speaker, I think it becomes clear that the kinds of things that were suggested, honourably I think by the Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins), were things that had already been done. One of the difficulties when the second cutback was announced, and that it was going to be universal, was that it did not take into consideration that some hospitals in this province had done far more to make their operation effective and efficient than had others, and yet those that had done the kinds of things that the Minister was suggesting were cut back at the same time. Now the effect of the cut backs on the hospitals are as follows:

1. A reduction of approximately 500 patient admissions;
2. Closure of approximately 16 beds;
3. An increase in the number of patients awaiting admission to hospital;
4. Current waiting list of approximately 1,800;
5. Increase in waiting time of patients (some of them waiting six or seven months).

A chap phoned me the other day and he wanted to get in because he is a farmer and he wanted to have his surgery during the winter, but he couldn't get in because of the length of the waiting list.

MR. H. H. ROLFES (Minister of Social Services):— We will do . . .

MR. PENNER:— Oh I'll tell you, there's no need for you to try and do anything about it. If you want to come back to my office when I've finished here I'll be happy to share it with you.

Let me summarize the overall effect, Mr. Speaker. A reduction of 93 acute care beds in Saskatoon; a reduction of something like 160 hospital staff; a reduction of about 950 surgical procedures from the previous year. A substantial increase, as I have already said, in the waiting list for people wanting to get into the hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, I began by saying that one of the reasons for the terrible year our acute care health system has had is because there were cutbacks forced on our hospitals. And there

is absolutely no doubt about that fact. The other reason the health system has run into problems is because the Government has placed far too much emphasis on politically expedient programs that are too expensive to operate and the Government doesn't have the guts to do anything about it.

I should like to look at a couple of example, Mr. Speaker. I am going to pick out two. The first one I want to talk about is the Dental Plan. It is now a matter of record that in the first year, Mr. Speaker, that the plan operated, according to the Government's own figures, own report, that the cost per child treated was \$145 and that average did not include \$8 million paid out by the Department of Education to renovate school facilities. And I wish you had come around and watched the people who came into the schools. It was a bit disheartening, Mr. Speaker, for those of us involved in education who have to fight tooth and nail to get a dollar, to get a light changed for the educational process, but I'll tell you there were no difficulties involved for people coming in and getting lights changed and switches changed and new paintings and new cupboards and new sinks — \$8 million and the costs aren't all in yet. And then in addition, another \$2 million was spent by the people in the Department of Continuing Education to train the dental people. Now the Attorney General wonders why I am making reference to these figures.

HON. R. J. ROMANOW (Attorney General):— Cutback, or are we spending like drunken sailors?

MR. PENNER:— You are spending irresponsibly, that's what you are doing. Because in the first year of operation . . . and there is only the one report for us to look at Mr. Speaker, 12,490 six year old kids in this province were treated by the dental plan. Now I have invited people before, anybody who paid \$145 . . . by the way if you amortize out the \$8 million and the \$2 million the total in that particular year amortized per child works out to something over \$900 per child.

AN HON. MEMBER:— Baloney.

MR. PENNER:— Well I'll come and talk with you about the figures. I would be happy to. I took them right out of your report — absolutely no question about where the figures come from. Now it is true that when you take the capital program and the training program over many, many years the number of kids you divided into is going to change and that's why we have not used the figure. That's why I have simply used the operating costs at \$145 per child treated. But I would ask any parent of any six year old child who ever spent \$145 out of his own money to have his six year old child's teeth treated to let me know. I have put out the challenge before over the media, in here, and it's absolutely unheard of. It's absolute nonsense, particularly when the dentists of this province, before the Government ever embarked on it own plan, had agreed to run one for something under \$70 per child treated. It's an absolute waste of public money Mr. Speaker.

I want to raise another example and I think a pretty good example, and that has to do with the Drug Plan. Prior to the implementation of the Saskatchewan Drug Plan, according to a survey Mr. Speaker, the average Saskatchewan family spent \$11 per year on prescription drugs. It was suggested that a

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plan be implemented which would provide help for those who needed it, a plan similar to the one in Manitoba which offers rebates to families who incur costs of \$50 a year or more. Instead, however, because it was election time (at least I assume that that's the reason) the NDP couldn't resist the vote-getting appeal of a free universal plan. The reality of the situation is simply, Mr. Speaker, the Government doesn't have enough health care dollars to go around. It hasn't had the intestinal fortitude to admit its mistake on the Drug Plan and to admit that the 70 odd civil servants that have been hired to operate it, that the \$20 million it cost in the first year of operation was money that it didn't need to spend, that it could have provided the drug care needs for people who needed it without making it a universal plan, an expensive plan, one that is an unnecessary waste of taxpayer's money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. PENNER:— Instead, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and the people in his Department faced with a decision, realizing there weren't enough dollars to go around, decided that they were going to close hospital beds, that they were going to cut staff from our acute care system, rather than admit the political reality of the mistake they made with regard to some of these other frills.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I say that was a poor choice because that choice has left two significant problems — waiting lists for admissions to hospitals that are growing rapidly and secondly, Mr. Speaker, excessive workloads on hospital workers that have seriously compromised their job satisfaction leading as a result, to poor morale and deteriorating patient care. During the past dozen years no new beds have been provided in Saskatoon and yet at the same time the population has grown substantially. Now, Mr. Speaker, this Government takes deliberate steps, not to provide more beds, but to close some. We all know that there is not sufficient money to do everything we should like to do and I'm sure, if the Minister speaks in this debate, that's one of the things he is going to say, that it isn't an unlimited amount of money for health care, and we agree with that. It is all the more reason, Mr. Speaker, for this Government to prioritize its spending of its health care dollars.

I believe there are some positive commonsense decisions which can be made in the field of health care to help keep costs in line, and at the same time maximize the number of acute care hospital beds available for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Firstly, immediately change the present Drug Plan so that it assists only those who are in real need of drug care; specifically the chronically ill, the elderly, the people who really need the care; secondly, reopen discussions with Saskatchewan's dentists with regard to the Dental Plan; thirdly, rather than dismantling a committee in Saskatoon on the rationalization of health care, the Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins) ought to be encouraging discussion along these lines. Now I know that the Minister has had a rationalization committee both in Saskatoon and in Regina. I agree that that's something that we need to do and we ought not to let the thing drop. Fourthly as I said before, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Social Services should be encouraged to take its head out of the sand and recognize the fact that acute care beds are being used by patients

who are level IV and that that is a terrific waste of the taxpayer's dollar when people who have level VI to VIII can't get in because they are being taken up and there is no space for people who have level IV needs. The Minister of Health (Mr. Robbins) has cited preventative health care and physical fitness as goals of the health care system. These are laudable. I agree with them. But to use them as an excuse for closing beds and for cutting staff is not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Government to restore Saskatchewan's basic health plans to its former high level, and to stop wasting millions on non-essential gimmicks in the health care field, where costs far outweigh the benefits provided. I urge all Members to support the motion as it is stated in the Order Paper.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

HON. W. A. ROBBINS (Minister of Health):— Mr. Speaker, we are close to closing time and I should like to make only a few brief remarks with respect to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Saskatoon Eastview (Mr. Penner). He pointed out that the dollars that were paid to hospitals in 1976 were dollars that would buy less than previous dollars, simply because of the inflationary rate. That of course is true. But in Saskatchewan our increases to the hospitals in 1976-77 will be an increase of approximately 26 per cent over the preceding year.

SOME HON. MEMBER:— Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS:— The inflation rate is about 8 per cent. Alberta's increase is about 11 per cent, Ontario's about 10. The former Liberal Government in Quebec, the increase was less than 1 per cent. I should like the Hon. Member for Saskatoon Eastview (Mr. Penner) to know that the staff patient ratio in Saskatchewan hospitals in 1976 was higher than it was in 1975. I should like the Hon. Member for Saskatoon Eastview to know that although he is talking about a Saskatoon hospital, every hospital in Saskatoon, all three of them, did not have occupancy in their beds in 1976 equal to the approved average daily census in 1976.

SOME HON. MEMBER:— Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS:— I should like the Member to know that in 1970-71 53.6 per cent of the health budget went for hospitals. I should like him to know that in 1976-77, 58.9 per cent of the health budget went to hospitals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. BOBBINS:— I should like him to know that occupied beds per thousand in 1975 in Saskatchewan was 5.6; British Columbia 5; Alberta 4.4; Manitoba 4.4 and Ontario 4.1. If our bed availability was limited to the Canadian national average you would have had 40,000 fewer people in hospitals last year. If we were limited to the Ontario rate we would have had 47,000 fewer people in hospital. If we were limited to Alberta and Manitoba bed availability rate we would have had 38,000 fewer people in hospitals.

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SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS:— Now, the Hon. Member for Saskatoon Eastview (Mr. Penner) keeps talking about Saskatoon hospitals. I should like to point out to him again, that they did not equal the approved average daily census in any one of those hospitals in the year 1976.

I would like to make a few more comments with respect to the frills, the so-called frills, that the Hon. Member for Saskatoon Eastview (Mr. Penner) talks about. He says, that the Dental Plan is a frill. Of course he is using statistics related to the current situation of the plan. Obviously you have to amortize it over a period of time because it is obviously going to be in effect for a long period of time. He talks about the Drug Plan, he talked about the \$20 million expenditure in its first year. He was just out \$10 million; the cost was under \$10 million in the first year.

I want him to know, also, that every province in Canada is putting restraints on the rise in escalating costs of acute care in hospitals. They must, simply because if you look at our statistics in the year 1974-75 \$240,340,750 for health; in 1975-76 \$293,517,093 for health; in 1976-77 we estimated \$338 million in round figures and it's going to be closer to \$360 million.

Mr. Speaker, I will have a good deal more to say in this particular motion, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:— Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:58 o'clock p.m.