

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
First Session — Nineteenth Legislature

Wednesday, April 4, 1979

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.
On the Orders of the Day

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. R. PICKERING (Bengough-Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly, a group of 27 Grade 7 and 8 students, seated in the east gallery, from the Lake Alma School. They are accompanied by their teacher, Ken Johnson, parents, Mrs. Britz and Mrs. Whitteron, and their bus driver, Mr. Hofseck. I will meet with the group at 2:45 in the rotunda for pictures, and downstairs for drinks after that. Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join with me in wishing these students an educational and enjoyable afternoon and of course, a safe journey home.

HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. B. PONIATOWSKI (Saskatoon Eastview): — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly, 40 Grade 8 students from St. Matthew School in Saskatoon. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. Also, I want to welcome their teacher, Mrs. Martin, and their principal, Brian Noonan. I would also like to note that Brian Noonan is a former colleague of mine. I had the pleasure of working with him when I was in the Saskatoon system for a number of years in various innovative programs.

St. Matthew School in Saskatoon is somewhat unique in that they offer instruction both in English and in French. I thought I should relate those comments to this Assembly. I ask all members to join with me in wishing the students and their teacher, Mrs. Martin, and their principal, Brian Noonan an enjoyable stay in the legislature, an educational one and a good visit to Regina. I plan to meet with them later in the afternoon.

HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS
Condemnation of Prime Minister of Canada

MR. W.C. THATCHER (Thunder Creek): — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kaeding). Mr. Minister, you may be aware that last night while speaking in Quebec City the Prime Minister of Canada made an outrageous attack on the most precious resource possessed by the province of Saskatchewan and the other western provinces, namely the farmers. My question to the minister is this. Will the Minister of Agriculture on behalf of his government join with members on this side of the Assembly in a universal, unanimous condemnation of the Prime Minister of Canada for his outrageous comments about Saskatchewan farmers last evening?

MR. SPEAKER: — Order. I'll take a new question.

The Labour Standards Act

MR. R. ANDREW (Kindersley): — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Snyder). I have been advised, Mr. Minister, that one of the problem areas in the

present dispute between the Government of Saskatchewan and the SGEA (Saskatchewan Government Employees Association) is that a substantial number of the employees are classed as field employees, with the result that they are exempt from The Labour Standards Act and are not entitled to overtime. Would that be a correct assessment?

HON. G.T. SNYDER (Minister of Labour): — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks whether there are a number of people within the public service who are working unrestricted hours. I believe that is the fundamental question. The question is to be answered in the affirmative. There are a number of people within the public service; there are a number of people in private industry who are working unrestricted and unsupervised hours. I can think of used car salesmen. I can think of a number of instances. People working on highway contracts are also exempt from the hours of work provision that are normally the rule for the rest of the work force. Special circumstances, yes, there are some instances where people are working unrestricted hours, basically field employees who are unsupervised, who do not arrive at any particular point to perform their duty. They are on the road. They are unsupervised and accordingly, yes, they have been exempt from the provisions of The Labour Standards Act.

MR. ANDREW: — Supplementary. Would I be further correct in assuming that if in fact these employees were to work over the 2,088 hours for a given period of one year, they would be paid at straight time and not time and a half for any overtime over the 2,088 hours?

MR. SNYDER: — It's not right to assume that. At this point in time, as I said, they work unsupervised and unrestricted hours and no record is kept of the time. In the great majority of instances the judgment is made on the basis of a performance record. I have in my own department labour standard officers who depart from a given place. They are out in the community auditing books for a variety of retail firms and others. The production record is a thing that leads us to believe they are either doing a good job or doing not so good a job and, accordingly, we do not keep track of their hours nor do they. There are a number of examples that can be given — industrial relations officers with my department on many occasions find themselves working on into the night. Sometimes they will be involved in delicate negotiations that run as long as sometimes 24 or 30 hours at a stretch and then when that's completed they are working unrestricted hours and are given an opportunity to pace themselves and work in that way. I am not saying there can't be accommodations made but the Public Service Commission is charged with the responsibility of negotiating these. I have been given the understanding there is an effort being made with both parties agreeing to reconcile some of the difference and perhaps arrive at a solution and an equitable one for both parties.

Averaging of Hours

MR. R. KATZMAN (Rosthern): — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, or new question. Mr. Speaker, in light of the comment re: the averaging provision in Saskatchewan, is it true that your industrial relations officers have forced towns and cities on averaging order to pay overtime rates to any employee who they have found has been on average even though they are affected by the weather the same as you say the highway people are?

MR. SNYDER: — In the event that they are not exempt from the provisions of The Labour Standards Act they are obliged to comply with The Labour Standards Act. There are, as

the member indicates, averaging permits provided from time to time in the event it is agreeable both to the employer and the employees and under those circumstances an averaging permit will be provided which allows them to average. For example, 180 hours over a four-week period and these are quite common when both employer and employees concur in the arrangement.

Uranium Mining Industry

MR. R.A. LARTER (Estevan): — A question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, in light of today's Leader Post article where the head of Cominco, Harold Fargey, mentions that mining industry faces tougher times ahead and predicts tough international competition in the 1980s just when most of Saskatchewan mining of uranium is coming on-stream, would the Premier not agree that with the hundreds of millions of dollars you are going to be spending into the future, this is truly a risk game and it is better left to the private sector with no risk to the capital of the people of this province?

HON. A.E. BLAKENEY (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, I agree that any mining venture is risky and I agree to the extent the public sector participates in mining they are assuming a risk, but I believe that the risks carry with them the reasonable prospect of a good return to the people of Saskatchewan. With respect to uranium mining, I think that there is another reason why the public should participate. I believe that on the record of the past in Canada, the record of occupational health and safety and general safety has been significantly better in the publicly owned uranium mines than in the privately owned uranium mines, than in Eldorado Nuclear, than in Denison or Rio Algom. Also with respect to what is going to happen to uranium, I believe that there is a significant advantage to the public in having a major share of public ownership so that this important, but also potentially dangerous commodity receives the closest possible scrutiny from the public, and so that the public has the greatest possible knowledge about it.

May I just make one further qualification. Part of our problems in the past with respect to petroleum and natural gas has been that the public has not had reliable information about petroleum and natural gas, about the reserves and about the likely future supplies. I think if there had been significant public ownership of many, many of the companies which are in the petroleum and natural gas field we would have had more accurate information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. BLAKENEY: — And I think it's imperative that we have that kind of information about uranium in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LARTER: — Supplementary, Mr. Premier. Last week I quoted that Australia was coming on stream with about two-thirds of the world's production in uranium in the 1980s at the same time as we are coming on with uranium. Also, the Lloydminster oil fields by all the oil companies calculations are at least ten years into the future of coming in so that is output of taxpayer's money. Do you not agree that we would have \$600 million to \$800 million in the heritage fund drawing at least 10 per cent interest, or \$60 million to \$80 million a year without one dime interest by the taxpayer of Saskatchewan if you were to do this?

April 4, 1979

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, the heritage fund is a heritage for future generations of Saskatchewan people . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . In my judgment people who are putting aside money for future generations ought not . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Like Alberta?

MR. BLAKENEY: — . . . ought not to invest in . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . investments which have no potential of capital gain, of capital growth, ought not to invest in that type of investment, but rather ought to invest in a security which has a potential for growth. I realize the arguments the other way but it is my submission that when we are taking money out of a resource, out of a long term resource like oil, we should not put it in the bank and draw bank interest or in bonds and draw bond interest, but rather we should invest it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . rather we should invest it. Mr. Speaker, I apologize to you but not to the members opposite since they are making it exceedingly difficult for me to make myself heard, and my purpose is that they hear what I have to say. I appreciate the members opposite are not very encouraged by what I have to say but I suspect that the people of Saskatchewan are. And I suggest to you, future generations of Saskatchewan people are going to be interested in what I have to say on this point.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BLAKENEY: — I want to say again that I believe when we take money out of a resource like oil which is a rapidly depleting resource, we should take that money and invest it in another resource which will be around 15, 25, 35 years from now or 50 years from now and I think potash, heavy oil and uranium are three. I ask hon. members and everybody else in Saskatchewan, if you had had \$100 million 25 years ago, would you have been better to put it in bonds or would you have been better to put it in resources? I say that in almost every case it would have been better to put it in oil, or uranium or potash. We would be far better off.

MR. THATCHER: — Where was the government back in those days, 25 years ago?

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order. I wonder if the members can allow the minister to answer the question. Then the members, if they have a further question, can get up and ask it.

MR. LARTER: — Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Premier, is it not true that the taxpayers of this province will be putting out something over half a billion dollars before we get 5 cents return on the heavy oil in the Lloydminster field or the uranium in northern Saskatchewan? That's in 5 years to 10 years.

MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether that's true. I think it unlikely. But if it is so, we will have private enterprise partners in each case and presumably the private enterprise partners are making investments which they think are in the long-term best interest of their shareholders. I don't know why the long-term interests of the people of Saskatchewan, in terms of long-term profit, would not be the same as those of the shareholders or those private companies who are putting their money in, presumably, for five years without a return. I think it is clear that resource investments are frequently long-term investments. I do not expect that they will be in there five years without a return. We heard the same things with respect to SaskOil and it is turning a

very tidy profit right now. We are very pleased with the profits of SaskOil. I know members opposite are very displeased with them because they prove that their theories are wrong. And I suggest to you that just as their theories with respect to SaskOil were wrong and are proved to be wrong by the audited statements, so their theories with respect to the improvidence or lack of providence of our investments in heavy oil and uranium will prove to be wrong.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. J.G. LANE (Qu'Appelle): — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. You alluded in your response to the opening question from the member for Estevan (Mr. Larter) to the fact that if the province had had the knowledge and invested in the resource industry in the past, that perhaps things would have been better off. How do you square that with your policy as indicated by the minister responsible for SEDCO, for example, of being the most secretive government on Crown corporation information in the history of this country? The public has less information, today, under your government in the involvement of Crown corporations than they would have had if they had invested in private companies and at least got the information at shareholders' meetings.

MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member suggests that with respect to SEDCO we give out less information than comparable Crown corporations in Canada. I flatly deny that. I ask hon. members to look at the similar Crown corporation in Manitoba and find what information you can get about that Crown corporation. I say that we are prepared to give all the information about the general level of our investments. And I say we are not prepared to give information about particular loans to particular businessmen. That has been the policy throughout the period when we were in government and when we were in opposition. It was the policy when the member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lane) was the executive assistant to a minister of the Crown, who sat right there and enunciated the same policy that I am enunciating. I say that it is the right policy. It is the right policy because while the public should know about the general lending policies of SEDCO, it is unfair to businessmen who come to SEDCO to subject them to having all their business affairs scrutinized by this legislation and all of their financial information made public. That is not fair to small businessmen and we do not intend to subject small businessmen to that penalty in order to get access to SEDCO funds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — A supplementary question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Are you saying that you are now prepared (given your answer on Henninger malting, which is 91 per cent owned by the province of Saskatchewan now and \$15 million over budget according to the minister responsible for SEDCO) to table in this Assembly all of the information with regard to Henninger malting, all of the marketing studies, all of your investments in Henninger malting so we can finally get to the truth? You are going to be true to the statement you have just made that the public has, in fact, the truth? It is not a small business; it is not privately owned; it is now government owned. Will you now table all the information on this scandal?

MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, if I said yes to that, the next question would be will you do the same with respect to PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan)? Will you tell the public what your plans are with respect to marketing potash, so that IMC will have all that information? The answer is no. If we are in a competitive business we expect to reveal to the public the same information that our competitors reveal to the public. If

our responsibility is to operate those industries for the benefit of the Saskatchewan people to get the best possible return for them, we will give to the public the same information that our competitors give and we will not give our competitors any advantages that they are unwilling to give to us. That seems to me to be a straight matter of prudence, if we are to discharge our responsibilities to the people of Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

Theme Song for Celebrate Saskatchewan

MR. R. PICKERING (Bengough-Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Culture and Youth (Mr. Shillington) or the minister responsible for Celebrate Saskatchewan. In 1967, Canada's centennial year, a theme song was established to help add a lot of color in celebrating our hundredth year. Has the minister given any serious thought to establish a program to select a theme song to help celebrate Saskatchewan in 1980?

MR. E. TCHORZEWSKI (Minister of Health): — Mr. Speaker, the member for Kinistino (Mr. Cody) has come up with a great and novel idea, but I won't repeat it here in answer to the question. But the simple answer is yes. There are some plans for exactly developing that kind of a project. If the member is going to ask a supplementary question as to what are the specific details of it, I will have to take notice and provide it to him later. But, indeed, that was a great idea at that time, we think it's a great idea for the 1980 celebrations, and we will be doing it.

MR. PICKERING: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister tell this assembly if the choice of the song will be by competition or the choice of the government?

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, it will be by competition.

Safety of Chimneys

MR. G. TAYLOR (Indian Head-Wolseley): — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Snyder). It has been brought to my attention that new developments in energy conservation are causing existing chimneys to be taxed beyond the limits of their design. And with your approval, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a couple of examples. One of these is in the new trend toward insulation. We're insulating attics very thick and that is causing the upper part of the chimneys to be operating at a temperature cooler than they're designed for, and causing collapse. Secondly, with the trend toward energy conservation, many gas-fired chimneys are now having wood burnt in them. People are putting in wood burning stoves as a type of conservation. What action, Mr. Minister, has your department taken under its gas safety regulations to inform the people of Saskatchewan about the serious problem?

HON. G.T. SNYDER (Minister of Labour): — Well, the member will probably be aware that there was a release made by the director of safety services with respect to a certain brand of chimney which had failed and, at that point in time to my knowledge, there was only one manufacturer and one set of chimneys — the fabricated chimney — that had

failed. And the release was for the particular purpose of alerting Saskatchewan people to the possibility of failure of that chimney. It asked them to perform an examination which is done quite easily by flipping the veil, taking off the cap, and looking up through the flue to examine for any deficiency in that particular chimney. I don't know of anything further that could be done or needs to be done at this time. I'm not aware of any other problem, other than that specific one which the gas inspection people drew to the attention of the Saskatchewan public some time last week.

MR. TAYLOR: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I always advocate a bit of prevention rather than cure and I think, if you would take my suggestions into consideration, Mr. Minister . . . Also, with regard to fireplaces, I think there's quite an abuse going on. There's a trend towards them now and again. I will ask you if you would consider investigating this, as I think it is a serious problem, and putting out some information to people as to the hazards they may be creating to their own safety and to their homes by overtaxing chimneys.

MR. SNYDER: — I think I'd like the member to be a little more specific. We have fireplaces now in use which are built of mortar and there are others that have a steel-lined flue. I can't indicate to the member that coal or wood burned in the fireplace (which usually is not done) would be of any more danger than the usual fuel which is the wood that is generally burned. I don't know that they are being overtaxed to any greater degree. I'd like to have some specific information on that. If you have any information that might enlighten us I'd be glad to hear about it and we would look at it in due course.

Saskatoon Cancer Clinic

MR. E.A. BERNTSON (Souris-Cannington): — A question to the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. Can you inform this Assembly today who you have selected, out of the volumes of applicants, as director of the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic?

MR. E.L. TCHORZEWSKI (Minister of Health): — Mr. Speaker, the brief answer to the member opposite is that there is a selection committee established by the cancer commission. They, as of yet, have not named the new director. They have had a number of interviews and several people have been to Saskatchewan to take part in those interviews. That, I suspect, will lead to an announcement in the very near future and it will be announced in due course.

MR. BERNTSON: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. It seems that we have several items that relate to cancer care in Saskatchewan in a holding pattern. We have no permanent director in Saskatoon; we have a group wanting to get on with the building of patient hostels in Saskatoon and Regina; and more recently, we have the resignation of an excellent individual as director of the cancer commission in Saskatchewan. Would it be fair to say that the reason these things are held in a holding loop, so to speak, is that you're waiting for this more autonomous cancer foundation to make the decision on these matters?

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear to the House that there is no holding taking place as far as cancer treatment and care is concerned in the province. That is being carried out as it has been in the past and is being carried very adequately. I want to inform the member (because I think this is the second time he has made reference to the question of the possibility of hostels being established) that there has been, for several months now, a committee of the Saskatchewan Cancer Society and the Saskatchewan Cancer Commission, that is doing some inquiries into that specific

question. I'm sure that the member means the Cancer Society when he talks of groups who are interested in establishing some hostels. We are not having that in the holding action because indeed the planning is taking place and they are involved in it. Nothing from the point of view of care and treatment is being held up because of the plans to establish a cancer foundation. Certainly there are plans to establish a cancer foundation. We have announced that and made it very clear and we will very soon be introducing legislation into this legislature which will do just that.

MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Speaker, it will be a year on June 8 since the Watson Report was tabled. You have known since that time what direction you were taking as it relates to this autonomous cancer foundation. We have been here for almost two months. Where is the legislation? When can we expect to see it, and why the delay?

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me remind the member that since last June there has not been a session of this legislature until this particular session. How he might expect there would have been the establishment of a cancer commission by legislation before that, I fail to understand. Nevertheless, as I have said, we are committed to a cancer foundation act. We have had all kinds of consultations with interested people and people who will be involved and are involved in cancer treatment. I think that is the way it ought to be done rather than done in isolation. That takes time, and we have been quite prepared to take that time in order that what we do is the best possible for the province of Saskatchewan. That bill will soon be introduced in this legislature and when it shows up on the order paper and gets tabled, I am sure the member will be most pleased to be able to take a chance to look at it.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Merger of District Court of Saskatchewan and Court of Queen's Bench

HON. R. ROMANOW (Attorney General): — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of the committee on the proposed merger of the District Court of Saskatchewan with the Court of Queen's Bench.

It may be recalled that the Speech from the Throne announced that a study had been initiated in January to examine all the ramifications of merger, and to make recommendations to the government. The committee was chaired by Isadore Grotzky, Q.C., the Executive Director of Court Services in my department, and had two other private practitioners serving on it, Mr. D.E. Gauley, Q.C., of Saskatoon, and Mr. Harvey Walker of North Battleford. Also serving on the committee were Mr. Don McKillop of the Civil Law Branch, and Ms. Louise Simard, the former legislative counsel, a private practitioner.

The committee consulted extensively with the legal profession and members of the judiciary, holding meetings in nine different centres throughout the province, and visited Edmonton to discuss the implementation of the Alberta merger legislation, which is to come into effect at the end of June 1979.

The committee has recommended that there is no sufficient reason why merger should not be proceeded with in this province. Should the government accept the principle of merger, the result would be that the jurisdiction of the District Court would be merged with that of the Court of Queen's Bench, providing Saskatchewan with the three, instead of the present four-tier court system, namely the Provincial Court, Court of Queen's Bench and the Court of Appeal.

The chief reasons in favor of merger are, I should add, that a three-tier court system should be easier for the citizen to understand and utilize and enable a more effective use of judicial manpower in this province.

Merger would lead to the elevation of the judges of the District Court to the Court of Queen's Bench. This requires the co-operation of the federal government which appoints judges of both of these courts under section 96 of The British North America Act. It has been the policy of the federal government for some time to co-operate with provinces wishing to adopt merger, and the federal court has in pursuance of that policy amended the judges act to enable Saskatchewan to proceed with merger should this province so decide. The committee has recommended a so-called grandfather clause under which the judges now appointed would maintain their present residence after their elevation to the Court of Queen's Bench. With respect to judges appointed after merger the new system should require one or more of the judges to reside at Battleford, Estevan, Melfort, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current and Yorkton. Other recommendations include:

1. That upon any vacancy occurring that vacancy may be filled by transfer with the consent of the Chief Justice and the judge being transferred.
2. That no judge, once appointed be required to change residence without that judge's consent.
3. That there be a chief justice and an associate chief, one residing in each of Regina and Saskatoon.
4. That all judges travel on circuit as administered by the chief.
5. That in addition to fixed sittings, provision be made for cases to be heard on a trial-ready basis.
6. That consideration be given to establishing sittings at new centres.
7. That mergers be proceeded with only if adequate facilities and support staff are in place or firmly committed before implementation.
8. That if enabling legislation is passed at the current sessions of the legislature, the legislation shall come into force on December 15, 1979.

In any event a lead time of six to eight months appears to be required.

9. That the provision for supernumerary judges be continued for the time being.

Mr. Speaker, the government is now examining and analyzing these recommendations and considering whether or not it should proceed with the policy of merger and, if so, whether it should do so during the current session or at a later session. I shall be making a further statement shortly on the government's position once we've had an opportunity to fully review the report and discuss these matters.

MR. J.G. LANE (Qu'Appelle): — Thanks to the Attorney General (Mr. Romanow). I thank the Attorney General for the courtesy of forwarding a copy of the report and the statement prior to his remarks. We, too, will be awaiting our statement on this particular

April 4, 1979

matter. We have some difficulty, of course, on the fact that merger seems to be one of the most studied areas by the government offices. We had Mr. Justice Hall's study a few years ago against merger and the government has seen fit to again restudy the matter. I didn't think it was of that great import that two studies were necessary, but we were to compare this particular study to that of Mr. Justice Hall's, and at that point we too will have a statement to make on the particular matter.

MR. SPEAKER: — Before Orders of the Day, I have a statement.

I have reviewed a ministerial statement by the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Whelan) given on April 2, 1979 and have concluded that it did not adhere to the general conditions which govern minister's statements. The purpose of a ministerial statement is to provide an opportunity for statements on government policy and administration to be made to the Legislative Assembly. The guidelines for such statements and replies to them have been outlined both in the House and in the procedural authorities. The Fifth Edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, page 87 states:

Both the government and opposition contributions should be brief and factual. The purpose of the ministerial statement is to convey information, not to encourage debate.

A Speaker's ruling recorded in the Journals of the Province of Saskatchewan on March 22, 1967, is appropriate.

It has long been the established practice of this Legislature for ministerial statements to be made upon Orders of the Day and it is traditional that Cabinet Ministers should, as a courtesy to the House, if the House is in session, make any major policy statement or announcement in the House, prior to announcing the same outside the House. Each of such statements should be brief, factual and specific.

I have found the statement of April 2, 1979, contained debatable material. The ruling of March 22, 1967 continues:

It has further been an established practice of the House to allow, by courtesy, a brief, strictly relevant comment to be made thereon by the Leader of the Opposition or some other senior Member but it is understood that a debate cannot take place, no motion being before the House.

I found the response of the Leader of the Opposition equally offensive for the same reason. I want to request all ministers and respondents to review the general rules governing ministerial statements and responses so that that portion of our business may be conducted according to the usually recognized parliamentary practice.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

MOTION FOR INTERIM SUPPLY

HON. W.E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance): — Mr. Chairman, I move the following resolution:

Resolved that a sum of not exceeding \$150,882,440 being approximately

one-twelfth of the amount of each of the several sums to be voted, as set forth in the estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1980, laid before the Assembly at the present session, be granted to Her Majesty on account, for the twelve months ending March 31, 1980.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Chairman, I move the following resolution:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1980, the sum of \$40,992,920 be granted out of the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund.

Motion agreed to.

The Committee reported resolutions.

Resolutions agreed to and read a first and second time.

HON. W.E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance): — I move Bill No. 67 — An Act for the Granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service for the fiscal years ending 31st day of March, 1980.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first, second and third time.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 2:49 p.m. the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the Throne, and gave royal assent to the bill presented to him.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE — SASKATCHEWAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION — VOTE 48

ITEM 1

MR. P. ROUSSEAU (Regina-South): — Mr. Chairman, I am not in the habit of agreeing to such a large sum of money just on a quick, quick vote. First of all, I would like to know why SEDCO requires an amount of \$20.8 million. Is it to reimburse many of the losses you have had? All it says in here (Estimates) is Loans, Advances and Investments. It doesn't refer to losses of the corporation and it doesn't refer to any other purpose. I would like to take exception to what the Premier said during question period today on individual advances or loans made to corporations, that there was no way he would supply them to us. Well, I think every member on this side of the House has that information already.

One piece of information we do lack, of course, is the mortgages SEDCO has. Would it be in order to ask for that information? My main concern, however, at the present time is with the \$20.8 million?

HON. R. ROMANOW (Attorney General): — A point of order, if I may. I believe we are on Vote 48, and I believe that Vote 48 is identified as a statutory vote. In other words, the

appropriation of the funds is determined by statute, in effect not by the House, but by statute through the House (but not by the committee). In fact, I think the items listed on page 105 to 109 regarding loans, advances and investments are listed, in a sense, as a convenience to members, or an identification to members. The House itself, technically, does not vote (I submit to you) on the items because the appropriation is created, where identified by the statutory appropriation. There is the debate on the statutory appropriation. I wonder if you would care to give my remarks some thought and perhaps make a ruling on this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — We will have to handle this vote the same as other votes of item 1. The broad principles and the policies of that department which are under estimates and the administration, I think, all come under subvote 1 in all estimates. But the specific questions regarding specific loans, or specific investments, I believe come under Crown corporations and under that committee. That is why we have Crown corporations in there and that's when you deal with the estimates of SEDCO. The personnel there are prepared to answer at that time. So I would like you to keep to the same as we have been in the past, dealing with the broad principles and the policies of whatever estimates we are dealing with, the administration. I would ask the members to try to accommodate me in operating it in that manner.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, thank you for your ruling. I appreciate the fact that you have indicated we stick to a broad sense. So, again, on my broad sense question, why the \$20,800,000?

MR. ROMANOW: — Again, I'm sorry, on a point of order. Perhaps I didn't make my argument as clearly as I should have. I appreciate what Mr. Chairman, has ruled about the Crown Corporations Committee and the detailed examination of SEDCO in Crown Corporations Committee. That, obviously, from a government point of view, I have no quarrel with (for other reasons perhaps as well). But what I draw to Mr. Chairman's attention is this. On Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation, page 107, there is an item called Vote 48 — item 1, Advanced (Statutory). Note, you will see, that it is statutory to supplement my argument down the line — housing corporation, Land Bank Commission, Crown investments, and so forth. In some areas it is not identified as statutory. Take for example, on page 105 — agriculture, Vote 46 — there is, on item 1, no statutory indication. There is on item 2. On co-operation and co-operative development there is no statutory allocation.

Now, Mr. Chairman, you will see the point that I am making. On the SEDCO, Vote 48, there is a statutory advance. It's designated by legislation, not designated by the Committee of Finance. If I can put it in blunt, technical terms, as opposed to the other areas, I think I'm correct in saying that the practice has arisen in this House of identifying those votes, be they statutory or otherwise, for the convenience and the courtesy of the members. They're not there, from a technical point of view for the passage of the vote of the members, because it's statutory. Clearly, it would be contradictory to pass a statutory allocation and then deny that statutory allegation by, in theory, the Committee of Finance refusing to vote the amounts.

So, accordingly, this is a somewhat different issue. I appreciate that you say that it should be left to the broad general policy, and I don't want to deny the opposition that opportunity. But this is a different issue with respect to the statutory vote. My question to the Chairman is, and I'll take my chair, whether or not in allocations such as Vote 48, which is identified as statutory, there is anything to vote? What we are doing here is listing as courtesy, and my proposition to Mr. Chairman is, while I agree with your

general proposition that you can't get into the nitty-gritty of SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) other than in Crown corporations, (or any other Crown corporation, other than Crown corporations), this is something special which may not exist with respect to the other items that are listed under that particular heading.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order.

MR. THATCHER: — May I speak to the point of order?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I would prefer to answer the minister first. I think his statement in regard to the statutory is quite true. We do not vote this as a sum of money, but I do not think there is anything to prevent an overall question regarding it. But there is no vote of the money as such.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, could I ask you, as a point of clarification, are you ruling, in terms of Vote 48 where SEDCO is borrowing the sum of \$20,800,000 that in effect, as it appears now in the estimates, it is already a fact, that it has already happened and that we, as an opposition, by law, according to your ruling, do not even get an opportunity to put forward debate or question on it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. This statutory, as I interpret it, is provided by an act. That is my ruling and I'm trying to stay within the bounds of the ruling and the bounds of the regulations. And that's what I have stated. If my ruling is not right, you have the . . .

MR. THATCHER: — May I please get clarification from you? Pardon me if I'm a little bit slow, but are you telling us, and let's be very clear, that the \$20,800,000 that is in these estimates, requested by SEDCO as a loan which was presented to this Assembly, in effect already happened before it was presented to this Assembly, and that we as an opposition, as elected people do not have any opportunity in the scope of the Committee of Finance to question the Crown corporation involved, in this case SEDCO, regarding the reasons as to why they require this \$20,800,000. Now, I'm trying to get this very clear, Mr. Minister. Is that in effect what you are telling us?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I said that the overall policy, yes, you're quite in line to question. But the vote itself is set in the statutory, and I am making the ruling by what I think the regulation is governing it. You will have the opportunity under Crown corporations to then question the different loans regarding SEDCO.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, I believe the member for Regina South (Mr. Rousseau) posed a very broad general question to the minister in charge of SEDCO. Basically he looked at his estimate books and his question said very simply what do you need the \$20,800,000 for which is presented to us in the estimates? Mr. Chairman, are you ruling that question out of order?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I didn't rule that question out of order. That's an over . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

MR. THATCHER: — That's the only question we have asked, in effect, and if that question was satisfactory then are we not prejudging what . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Proceed.

April 4, 1979

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, then I will ask my question again of the minister in charge of SEDCO. Why do you need \$20,800,000?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, SEDCO, as you well know, is a corporation structured to assist business and industry in the province of Saskatchewan. SEDCO is here to help create jobs in industry and in business in the province. SEDCO is a developmental corporation to help promote and establish industry and business that will in turn create these jobs that we are hoping to have in the province. The funding is also necessary for SEDCO's equity purposes that arise from time to time when we have industries that are not capable of establishing themselves on their own. When they ask us to join ventures with them we use a portion of this money for venture capital. In short, SEDCO's purpose and aim is to create and maintain jobs in the province of Saskatchewan by helping industry and business.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Perhaps down the line we'll get the information that we're looking for. You indicated just now that a portion is for venture capital. That's a portion; what about the rest of them?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, I said a portion of that money may be used for venture capital. I said the other moneys are used for many other purposes. You can take it as you wish. Take what figure you like. In Crown corporations we may be able to give you an exact figure; we'll wait and see what happens.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, we are asked to vote today. I am asking the minister once again, why . . .

MR. ROMANOW: — There's no vote on this. It's statutorily voted; that's why you are out of order.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Are you calling me out of order, Mr. Attorney General?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I'm not calling anyone out of order. I am stating that there is no vote today because this is statutory advances. There's no vote today on this.

MR. R. KATZMAN (Rosthern): — Mr. Chairman, am I not correct that for the last three years I have been here we've always had a vote on this area? We've always had a vote.

MR. ROMANOW: — Yes, we always list it, but we don't vote it.

MR. KATZMAN: — We've always voted, Mr. Attorney General. We've always had a yea or nay.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, I am going to insist on returning to my question again and again and again until I have the answer which I am looking for. Why are we asking for \$20,800,000?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member can stand there and ask the same question from today 'til tomorrow. I have already stated that a portion of this money is used for venture capital and an equity position in the various industries. I am not prepared to give him any amounts.

MR. J.G. LANE (Qu'Appelle): — You have indicated that in the broad policy SEDCO is to create jobs. You've obviously stated that that is one of your purposes. How many jobs

will be created by the \$20 million figure? You should have that information. We are trying to determine whether or not you are in fact matching your policy that you've just stated. I would like to know, are you creating one job, or how many jobs, to match your policy?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, I don't have any figures with me that will tell me what the dollar value here has created in terms of jobs. I think that question can be asked in Crown corporations on a specific industry, a specific business, and we'll be prepared to answer it.

I think the question before the House this afternoon is the total amount of funding for SEDCO. That's the topic we're debating, the total amount and for what purpose?

MR. LANE: — That's right. I'm just taking your words. I am taking the policies that you have stated to be SEDCO. All I'm trying to find out is whether or not your spending is in compliance with your policy and one of them is job creating. If you are not creating any jobs than you're not matching the policy which you stated. All I have asked you is to try to find out whether you are attaining the policy which you set out. I would like to know specifically how many jobs you estimated to be created to comply with your policy?

MR. VICKAR: — Well, again, Mr. Chairman, definitely we are creating jobs. I don't have an itemized list. I will have that in Crown corporations and you can get that information.

MR. LANE: — The hon. minister knows that in Crown corporations that's for two years ago and that's not my question. I'm not allowed to ask you estimates in Crown corporations as to how many jobs SEDCO, because of \$20,800,000, you hope (in complying with your policy) to be able to create for the people of Saskatchewan. You know it can't be asked in Crown corporations. Crown corporations deals with the fiscal year, the year previous. So I'm asking you, in attaining the policy that you have delineated, how many jobs you expect to create?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I might make an observation here?

MR. THATCHER: — Oh, why don't you sit down for a while. Heavens!

MR. KATZMAN: — Let the minister answer.

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I'll make an observation. I want the members of the House (I'm saying this as dispassionately as I can and as objectively as I can) to consider the process that we're embarked on here.

Under Vote 48 there is a statutory vote by statutory . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Is this a point of order?

MR. ROMANOW: — I'm speaking to the vote.

MR. THATCHER: — Where does the minister fit in on this, Mr. Chairman?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I have the floor. I realize that they don't want to hear this, but I say this, Mr. Chairman, just give me two minutes to listen to this and then do what you want to do politically, statutorily . . . O.K. Mr. Chairman, you do what you want

to do politically, legislatively . . .

MR. THATCHER: — We want to find out about \$429 million in bonds.

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I want to make a point. The point that I wish to make is this. Under Vote 48, there is a statutory allocation of funds pursuant to a statute of this Assembly that has been passed by this Assembly. The minister is here in his capacity as the Minister of Industry and Commerce. He is not here in his capacity as minister in charge of SEDCO. I could be the minister in charge of SEDCO as the Attorney General. The Minister of Environment could be the minister in charge of SEDCO because SEDCO can be assigned ministerial responsibility. He is, as it so happens, in fact. But he is not here in this capacity. He is here in the capacity as the Minister of Industry and Commerce. Let me finish off. This statutory vote is a vote, or a statute, proposed by the government, out of public funds passed by the legislature. It is not funds from the Department of Industry and Commerce to SEDCO. There's a clear difference. This is not funds from Vote 9, Department of Industry and Commerce, to SEDCO, or Vote 10 as you saw as we passed it. This is a statutory application from out of the consolidated funds to an operation called SEDCO as there is to land bank and as there is to FarmStart. And that's why I say, while the minister here happens to also be the minister in charge (I don't deny that), he is not here qua the position of being minister in charge of SEDCO. He is here qua his position of being Minister of Industry and Commerce and that's a statutory allocation that this House has passed. That has been the procedure throughout the piece. We have listed it. Every government has listed it, has put this statutory allocation for the convenience and the information of the members. Now that is the position. So when a member says, look, if you want to ask me the job details on Henninger, or job capacities . . .

MR. THATCHER: — We most certainly didn't ask those questions.

MR. ROMANOW: — O.K., the job capacities of the members. And when the member says look, I will have that answer on specific matters related to SEDCO if it is possible in Crown Corporations, that surely is the proper procedure.

I say, Mr. Chairman, any other argument is trying to disrupt virtually 75 years of practice in this House. I don't need to tell Mr. Chairman that. The member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher) says maybe it needs time for disrupting. Maybe it does, but if it does it doesn't deserve disrupting on the unilateral determination by the PC Party.

If we need to rewrite Crown Corporations, if we need to rewrite the Committee of Finance, if we need to rewrite the statutory allocations and the vote mechanism in the blue book, there is an appropriate mechanism for doing that, a rules committee which meets every so periodically, updates and revises the rules. But not this committee. I say, Mr. Chairman, that if we allow ourselves to get into that kind of a situation there is no end to it. You might as well bring every SEDCO official in here and this minister might as well, because you can justify every question put on the basis of testing it against the policy light. And if that is the case you will abolish the Crown Corporations Committee. Surely, it is a very slippery road to lead on.

I say this as non-partisanly and non-politically as I can. I am trying to do this in the interest of achieving your objectives and our objectives. You want to score some point on SEDCO and industry, go ahead and do it. There are proper forms to do it. I suggest to you, with all due respect, this is not the form to do it.

MR. LANE: — Mr. Chairman, let me respond to the Attorney General.

Let me state what the Attorney General has told the people of Saskatchewan. He has said, unequivocally, that to question government spending is political, ignoring hundreds of years of British parliamentary tradition, wherein it is the obligation of the opposition to hold a government to account. And we have every constitutional and legal right to question the government on its spending . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — . . . a right that is being summarily denied by the Attorney General with his statements opposite.

Let's take a look as well, at what the Attorney General is saying. He is saying, leave the questioning on Crown corporations to the Crown Corporation Committee. Where does that leave us? That leave us two years behind on review of the expenditure. Even if the government opposite saw fit to be fair and reasonable in its handling of the accounts of Crown corporations and its presentation of public spending in Crown corporations, which it is not with its defence of 'not in the public interest,' then we would still not be able to determine, in broad terms, the direction that the Crown corporations intend to go in the year being debated here this afternoon. Now, I want the press to make note that under the existing provision, as it exists according to the press to make note that under the existing provision, as it exists according to the Attorney General, we are not only entitled to question two years back or a previous fiscal year on what happened, not on what's going to happen in broad terms but what happened. Then, based on that we run into certain defences — not in the public interest, why should we give out that information, it's not good for you to know, I don't know, it's not the year under review — the standard defence. Or, I wasn't the minister at the particular time, which was the one raised by the Minister of Industry and Commerce (Mr. Vickar). At no time is this Assembly entitled, if we take the word of the Attorney General, to look into the year ahead, the potential broad direction that that Crown corporation intends to embark upon. He said that that is not in the public interest, that that is illegal, that that review of expenditure is improper. We say that that is a shameful and morally dishonest position for that government to take and a morally dishonest position for the Attorney General to take. We very carefully phrased our questions within the framework of the answer being given by the Minister of Industry and Commerce. We didn't ask him how many jobs in a particular industry. We didn't ask him how much was going into equity financing in non-specific companies. We didn't ask him, how much is going into developmental organization and the ramifications thereof on specific industries. We didn't ask that. Surely that Crown corporation must be able to tell the public we want \$20 million next year, we expect to be able to create 1,000 new jobs or 900 new jobs on our programming, we expect to use half of that on equity programming because we want to accomplish new industries in the following broad areas. That's not an improper question. I suggest when you muzzle the opposition or stonewall the opposition on highly proper questions it is the one more nail in the coffin of government secrecy that you are burying in this province. I suggest to you that our questions are designed specifically on the broad questions raised by the Minister of Industry and Commerce on the matter of jobs, equity participation. We got a rather shocking statement by the Attorney General that the Minister of Industry and Commerce no longer is speaking for SEDCO. I have the last annual report of SEDCO, and the chairman and the minister responsible for SEDCO was the Minister of Industry and Commerce. I suppose the first question we have to ask is, is he going to speak today for SEDCO or not, and if not, which minister is?

MR. ROMANOW: — I'm sorry, but I feel that I have to make a few points in rebuttal. I think the member for Qu'Appelle had some legitimacy to his argument, except that he destroyed it by what I think are incredible stretchings of statements of fact. Take for example, the last statement about whether or not the Minister of Industry and Commerce is also the minister in charge of SEDCO. I said in my opening remarks and I repeat again, he obviously clearly is the minister in charge of SEDCO, but I also said, and I repeat again, he is here to meet the Committee of Finance; he is not here as the minister in charge of SEDCO. He is here as the minister in charge of the Department of Industry and Commerce. That's the capacity in which he is here. The fact that he also happens to be the minister in charge of SEDCO is a logical thing; there are SEDCO questions related to the Department of Industry and Commerce. All of that, I think, is O.K. If you notice the chairman's ruling, (who am I to query the chairman's ruling in any event) he said, broad policy questions related to this matter have been traditionally allowed. While that is not my perfect optimum, I can accept that. But by the same token, the minister may say (from SEDCO), look, I want you to direct that question to the Department of Crown Corporation, we will work out the details of it. So I can see that the members opposite are obviously just not interest in this point of view. They are determined to try to make a political point of issue. On this, Mr. Chairman, I don't know what else we can do. All that I can say is that the minister can take the position, as I think he properly ought to, and with all due respect, Mr. Chairman, must, in terms of determining the scope of the committee, he must set this out clearly because if we start leaning into the illogical extensions, I think that leads to pure chaos — chaos, in terms of the ordering of the government business. You can put it in any terms you want — muzzling, stonewalling and that kind of stuff. I just think that is an incredible position.

I make the position to try to have an orderly disposition of the House business, Mr. Chairman.

MR. LANE: — You still haven't answered, is the minister responsible for SEDCO here today to answer Vote 48 or is another minister going to answer for SEDCO? Who is going to do it? Who are we to question in the broad areas of policy?

Don't take your local extensions as being what we are going to do. This is for the chairman to do, and he has already ruled that we can ask general questions, and that is precisely what we are doing.

So now do we direct our questions back to the Minister of Industry and Commerce or not?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I am not quarrelling with the ruling of the chairman, but you are changing that ruling by asking the last question. Your last question is, is the member, namely the minister, here as the minister in charge of SEDCO, and prepared to answer questions qua minister of SEDCO? I am saying the answer to that clearly has to be,

If on the other hand, the question is, is the Minister of Industry and Commerce here, qua, his position of industry to which he must answer all overall policy questions, as part of the industry package, as related to SEDCO, is what Mr. Chairman has ruled. The answer obviously is, yes, and I've argued that. But I think there's a very important clear distinction. He's not here in his capacity as minister of SEDCO. That is Crown corporations. That's where you get into the details.

And may I say while I'm on my feet, Mr. Chairman, and take this last point before I sit

down. I say this to the hon. member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher) and I wish the member for Qu'Appelle will just listen to this point. I make this one final point. You're talking about the year under review. I know the frustration that the opposition has. When I was in opposition I faced the same kind of thing — it's not under the year of review and so forth. And I realize the problem there. But I would say with all due respect, I believe the ingenuity of the member for Qu'Appelle or the member for Thunder Creek could frame a question on future activities based on SEDCO as a result of something directly arising of the operations from the year under review. I would be very hard pressed to determine . . . It's true the chairman got to make a judgment call on the nature of the question, otherwise you'd make that a shambles. But you can do that, and you could have SEDCO and Crown corporations from here until kingdom come, obviously and frame your question on any basis. But you ought not to do it, with all due respect, in the Committee of Finance.

He is here as a member of the Executive Council responsible for a ministerial department. The statutory vote comes as a responsibility given to him by all of us — I suppose by the Executive Council, members of the Executive Council. And in that regard I say to you the legal proposition I advance is still sound, so I hope we're not arguing and we're not disagreeing as to the overall general policies of SEDCO. Who am I to challenge the chairman's ruling? I agree with that but keep in mind (as I say I think it's worthwhile having the discussion at the beginning) there will come a point if the minister says, look it has to go to Crown corporations, that that is also a very legitimate and acceptable answer. To which I would say with respect, the chairman's ruling then basically falls into play.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, on page 107 it says very clearly that Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation wishes to borrow almost \$21,000,000. Now, Mr. Chairman, our position on this side of the House is not a very fancy one and there's nothing particularly original about it, but we would like to know some details of this \$20,800,000. Now I am sure, Mr. Chairman, you would agree with us that were we not to ask some questions about this amount of money we would be remiss in our duties as an opposition.

Now the Attorney General can nitpick all he wishes as to who's going to answer for SEDCO or what capacity the member for Melfort is in this Assembly today. On this side of the House, Chairman, the only thing that interests us is that there is a Vote 48, which granted we cannot amend and we don't say yes or no to, but have a perfect right by all tradition and practice, the British parliamentary system, to question the minister in charge, whoever he may be, on this amount. Now if the Attorney General wishes to assume the portfolio or the responsibility for SEDCO this afternoon, we don't care. We have some questions on the \$20,800,000 that we wish to direct to whatever minister is designated in charge of the Crown corporation.

Mr. Chairman, while I am on my feet, I might as well serve notice that we intend to do exactly the same thing when we come to Vote 48 on the housing corporation. We intend to do it on every other Crown corporation that is going to borrow money. In fact, Mr. Chairman, as you go down the list of these votes, which, if left up to the Attorney General, we would simply go boom, boom, boom on, they will total up to about \$429 million.

AN HON. MEMBER: — That's quite a bit of money!

MR. THATCHER: — That is quite a bit of money, Mr. Chairman, \$429 million. Now I

April 4, 1979

suppose the precedent is going to be set (at least from the government's point of view) on Vote 48.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to serve notice there is no precedent being set for the opposition. We intend to do our job. For every one of these votes, we intend to press whatever minister you may choose to designate for that day to be in charge of that Crown corporation. We intend to push it. And we intend to push it for a very good reason. There may be 75 years of tradition for the practice the Attorney General has made reference to. I don't know. He's obviously much older than I am.

But, Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out to the Attorney General that 75 years ago, or even 9 years ago, there wasn't a provincial debt in this province of \$2.6 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. THATCHER: — Five times in your stewardship, our provincial debt — what do they call it when it has gone up fivefold? Quadrupled when it is four. I am not sure what it is when it has gone up five — for that reason alone. Mr. Chairman, were we not to zero in on these loans, before they are done, we would be totally remiss in our duty as an opposition.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say to the Attorney General, who, on certain occasions in the past few weeks of this Assembly, has had quite a bit to say about the opposition or in his terminology, the lack of opposition. When the heat from the opposition starts to generate like it did yesterday and today, all of a sudden his logic seems to turn rather dramatically. We are being irresponsible; we are breaking 75 years of tradition.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that we have every right, regardless of what the practice may have been (which we do not accept, or completely believe to be true) on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to question you on your loans before they are made. Mr. Attorney General, you know very well that is true, because if we didn't have that right, don't tell me that you would be putting them in this estimate book. Don't tell me you would be doing that. We have the right. Mr. Chairman, we appeal to you as an impartial chairman to give us that right, to ask the questions, the questions which the people of Saskatchewan would like to know about, the \$29 million which is going to be borrowed on their behalf. We are 17 duly elected members of this legislature and we were elected for a purpose. Mr. Chairman, we ask for nothing more than to proceed on a purpose that the people, in their wisdom, have placed us in.

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I want to respond to the member for Thunder Creek and I want the member for Souris-Cannington (Mr. Berntson) to listen to this. He says the opposition has the right to question \$480 million worth of borrowings.

MR. THATCHER: — I said \$429 million.

MR. ROMANOW: — \$429 million.

MR. THATCHER: — \$419 million. I'm sorry.

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, that's not the debate here today.

MR. THATCHER: — Oh yes it is.

MR. ROMANOW: — No it isn't.

MR. THATCHER: — Oh yes!

MR. ROMANOW: — You have the right to question the Minister of Finance (Mr. Smishek) on the borrowing policies, the amounts of money he borrows, the interest rates he makes the payments on, or whether we are getting the province in debt during his estimate (and I fully suspect you will) . . .

MR. THATCHER: — And I fully intend to do so.

MR. ROMANOW: — That's right, exactly. You've made my point. You intend to and you will on the Department of Finance estimates. My point is that you don't use this statutory appropriation as 'the vote' upon the basis . . .

MR. THATCHER: — Are you trying to say that \$420 million isn't in the borrowing?

MR. ROMANOW: — No, look, I'm saying there are three different issues here. One is overall general borrowings; that comes under the Department of Finance, vote 1. Two, overall general policies with respect to SEDCO, in the broad this is something different from the activities in the Committee of Crown Corporations on SEDCO in the detail, and three, the Crown Corporations Committee of SEDCO, SGIO, or anything of that nature.

Now we're arguing about either one or two. I don't quarrel with it in this committee. I'm not particularly happy with it, but I don't quarrel with it.

What I'm trying to say to the opposition is, it's not number three. You can't get into the details into the Crown Corporations committee. I could mount an argument about free standing Crown corporations (those which generate their own operations from loans and returns) and those corporations which are somewhat different from free standing. FarmStart's an example. I think an argument could be mounted to that effect very effectively.

I don't sense that we're arguing in big detail on this thing. I'm not trying to say that you don't have a right to ask general questions about policy.

MR. THATCHER: — That's exactly what you're doing.

MR. ROMANOW: — No, I'm not. I'm saying . . .

MR. THATCHER: — You're stone-walling.

MR. ROMANOW: — Yes, well I know that these are the names that are being thrown out, but this is the fact of the matter. Now, I'm just pleading with the opposition. There is a reason for 75 years of tradition. There are these rules which do make some sense. I think they've served the province of Saskatchewan fairly well in the past, maybe not perfectly but fairly well. If you think Crown corporations is a new mechanism for review needed there, then I think that what ought to happen is for the members of the opposition to put on the order paper a private members' resolution saying that this Assembly urge the Government of Saskatchewan to establish a committee on it to review, set out your practices, all of that. For one member I'd have to look at that very carefully. Maybe out of that a new mechanism can arise for the detailed operations.

But in estimates, for goodness sakes, let's not squabble just for the sake of feeling that you've got to give me a black eye (I got a couple of black eyes from you last night. You worked me over pretty good.) because I made an intemperate and unjudicious remark about a weak opposition, which I didn't really mean when I said it. I was wrong . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Don't do it on that basis, O.K.?

Mr. Chairman, perhaps we understand each other. Maybe the best way to handle it is to have these boys ask the questions on SEDCO and hope they don't get into the details of it. I won't object unless they do, and with all due respect, I feel Mr. Chairman, will have to make a ruling. I could be wrong. I am many times. I just felt that we were heading into a slippery slope because I know the next questions were job creations and then the next questions are inevitable. At that stage in the game is where I say we do away with Crown corporations if we accept that in this committee. I think we are all ad diem in this matter.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, that was the best suggestion I have heard yet — we do away with Crown corporations.

MR. ROMANOW: — It is on the record. Did you mark it down?

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Bring it in here, bring it in here. I would not want to give the Attorney General a black eye. I won't give him a black eye. So I will get back to the question again. Why are you asking for \$20,800,000?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, I have repeated on two separate occasions, the reasons why we are asking for some \$20 odd million. Do you want me to repeat what I said previously? I can very easily do that — for developmental purposes, for job creation, for equity purposes, for venture capital. That's it.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, in asking for this loan of \$20,800,000 in advance of your year, obviously you must have some projections or certain internal information which indicates you will require the particular amount. Now, can the minister tell us why you have chosen to go this route, that is to ask the Assembly or to ask to borrow \$21 million (if you will allow me to refer to the \$21 million rather than \$20,800,000) instead of shall we say, selling equity or assets already owned by SEDCO?

Now, I believe I am correct, Mr. Minister, in assuming that there are a variety of businesses — some of them are basically government owned, some of them are private — where SEDCO does own an equity position. Some of these equity positions have been owned for a great many years. Why has the minister chosen to simply ask for an outright borrowing of \$21 million when, perhaps, he could have raised this money by looking at say, some investments SEDCO had made many years ago, that may have appreciated in value. Perhaps in book value they haven't increased that much, in fact, may have even diminished. But in terms of market value they might be quite valuable when placed on the open market. So, my question to the minister is why have you specifically chosen to go the straight \$21 million route instead of perhaps, looking at a sale of equity?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, it is customary for all Crown corporations, as with any private enterprise, if I might use that term, to set up a budget for a year. SEDCO is no different. SEDCO has struck a budget like they have over the many, many years prior to when the hon. member and I were in this legislature, and they come up with a figure,

based on the activities that they have performed over the past number of years. It is also true the member asks why we don't sell off some of our activities to create some of this funding. Well, Mr. Chairman, SEDCO is involved, and has been selling off equity positions to the entrepreneurs who are prepared to buy them on their own. And, in other cases, these entrepreneurs are not prepared to sell off their equity. Therefore, we still own a good portion of the equity that we're asked to keep.

MR. THATCHER: — In light of the minister's answer, would the minister tell the Assembly the equity positions that he indicates have been sold off by SEDCO? Would the minister tell me in terms of dollars what this sale realizes? For instance, that would, I suppose, in your financial figures, come under the category of income or receipts or whatever system you may use. Would the minister give us a dollar value of what these sales have brought, say last year, and what you project them to bring this year?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, unfortunately that is a question that has to be directed to Crown corporations. I do not have Crown corporation people here. I do not have SEDCO people here who are prepared to give me the answers, and I don't know the answer. I'm prepared to give you that answer in Crown corporations, when the SEDCO people are going to be in attendance.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, of all the ministers in this Assembly to throw the Crown corporations at me, at me personally, you are the last one, because I sat through Crown corporations one year ago, when you said it is not in the public interest so many times. You'll excuse me if I appear to be just a wee bit cynical where your particular portfolio is concerned, having been there once. Now, Mr. Minister, you are here in the capacity, I assume at least, to answer the questions as minister in charge of SEDCO. I suggest to you today, Mr. Minister, that it is your duty to have this sort of information available. Now what I've asked you is of a very general nature. I've asked you how much money has been raised for comparative purposes, last year, and what do you project will be raised this year by the sale of equity to private entrepreneurs?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. State your point of order please.

HON. G.R. BOWERMAN (Minister of the Environment): — Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Industry and Commerce (Mr. Vickar) does not have his SEDCO officials here to answer detailed questions with respect to SEDCO. With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I believe that this Committee of Finance is being drugged to the point where as the member in his seat said, he wants to have the SEDCO officials here so that the questions with respect to SEDCO might be asked in the finance committee. And I suggest that if we pursue and continue to pursue this line of questioning, we're going to find the Committee of Finance investigating the Crown corporations, as the member for . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Souris-Cannington (Mr. Berntson) is not the member whom I was referring to. The member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher) has already indicated he's going to ask this question. He's made it very clear that he's going to ask these same question on all the statutory votes and I think it's important, Mr. Chairman, that we come to a conclusion as to what this committee is responsible for and what it is not responsible for. I submit that you should bring the members to order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Perhaps on the indulgence of the House and with the permission of the Assembly we can make something a little bit more pleasant for a little while and try to make it a little more pleasant for a group of people in the gallery. I am going to ask the member for Melville (Mr. Kowalchuk) to introduce a group. If you people will agree for him to do this.

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. J.R. KOWALCHUK (Melville): — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, also the members of this legislature. I want to introduce to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, a group of 43 Grade 8 students from the Ituna High School. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery and the supervising leaders and teachers are Mrs. Ann Buchko and William Hudema. Their good bus driver is Ed Braden. They have been here this morning and we had a very enjoyable meeting together. They have visited many places in the city. They are here to hear the debates this afternoon and on behalf of all of you I think we would like to bid them welcome to this legislature. We also sincerely hope that they will find the deliberations here important and interesting and something that they can take back home with them, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I wonder if we could proceed now and I would hope to keep it — Order, please, order on both sides, please — I would hope that we can keep it in an orderly manner. I stated my ruling at the start of the estimates this afternoon. When a minister has stated that he will answer the question in Crown corporations where it is brought to his attention, you have the privilege of asking it in regard to the SEDCO report. Then I have no other alternative but to accept that and I would hope the minister will answer it and I think he is obliged to answer it at that time. Again, I ask you in this subvote where it says 'statutory advances' that we cover just in general terms the duties, the principles and the policies of SEDCO and I would hope that we could get on with the work in that manner, please.

MR. THATCHER: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if I may respectfully point out to you that I had the floor when I was being interrupted by the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Bowerman) and, Mr. Chairman, may I suggest . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order! When any member rises to a point of order, then it is my duty to acknowledge that minister or that member whether it's on opposition or otherwise. That's why I think I rightfully called you to order and that was my reason for doing it. Now, I give you the privilege of rising and carrying on the debate.

MR. THATCHER: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, you or the people that you are the minister responsible for, arrived at the figure of \$20,800,000 as a borrowing for SEDCO and as we discussed earlier, Mr. Minister, you had to have certain financial information available to you to arrive at the \$21 million you required. Mr. Minister, we had a very brief discussion as to the means that SEDCO has at its disposal to have income. Now, obviously, when your outflows are going to exceed our income you have to borrow. I think it's fair to say you require an additional \$20 million to make your loans over what you foresee as income for this year.

Mr. Minister you mentioned previously that some income is received by SEDCO by the sale of equity which SEDCO holds in various holdings throughout the province of Saskatchewan. Again, Mr. Minister, I will ask you for comparative purposes, how many dollars did SEDCO receive last year by the sale of equity and what do you project this year? I'm not asking for a specific figure. I'm not asking for you to give it to me down to six decimal points. I'm asking for a ballpark figure of what you people in SEDCO project that you will receive in terms of income from the sale of equity this year. Now, Mr. Minister I think you must have seen the figure and if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Minister, the

SEDCO people are not that far away. We're happy to wait for the answer if you have to consult with anyone. So therefore, Mr. Minister, again, I will ask you that question. What do you anticipate, in a ballpark figure, receiving from the sale of equity?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, I've already sated that I don't have the figure on what our equity sales were for last year and I said I would give that to the hon. member at the right and proper time. How does the hon. member expect anybody to forecast the sale of equity in the coming year? There's no way that anybody can tell you or me how much equity we're going to receive, how much money we're going to receive on our equity investments in the next year. That's going to depend on the individual whose going to sell off that equity or buy it back from us. It's utterly impossible!

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, I find your statements incredible. Absolutely incredible! Mr. Minister, I suppose when the Minister of Finance's estimates come up I would ask the Minister of Finance, how did you arrive at the revenue that you were going to get from the sales tax? How did you arrive at the figure that you're going to get from income tax? How did you arrive at the figure that you're going to get from oil or potash? Mr. Minister, I submit to you that if the Minister of Finance couldn't handle those questions, just boom, boom, boom like that, the Premier would throw him out by the scruff of the neck into the corridor. That's got to be the most basic question and one of the simplest the opposition ever put forward. And you want to say to me, how am I supposed to come up with a projected figure? Mr. Minister, come on. Are you telling us, Mr. Minister, you in fact had no budget, you drew up no budget this year, and you made no projections of income?

AN HON. MEMBER: — Mr. Chairman, point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Would the member for Shellbrook (Mr. Bowerman) state your point of order.

HON. G.R. BOWERMAN (Minister of the Environment): — Mr. Chairman, I respectfully request that the Chairman rule on this matter because we are continuing to talk about the details of SEDCO. I am telling you, Mr. Chairman, if we pursue this matter all they will do is make a mockery of this committee. That's all they are attempting to do — to absolutely make a mockery of the legislature itself by the continued pursuit of the line of questioning which they are going through. The only way, Mr. Chairman, that we are going to be able to resolve this matter is if the chairman makes a ruling as to what questions the members of the opposition can ask with respect to SEDCO. They have even suggested (the member for Thunder Creek, Mr. Thatcher) suggest that he would wait until the minister got his officials in from SEDCO to answer the questions. That is what you are attempting to do.

I invite the chairman to make a ruling with respect to the questioning that is going on on this subvote.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Well I just say that the ruling is, as has been stated by Mr. Pepper, the regular chairman of the committee, that questions of a general nature are allowed under this particular item and I would ask the members to ask general questions and not any specific problems.

MR. THATCHER: — I would, if I may, in concluding my remarks make a comment to the minister in charge of the environment. You can interrupt on your points of order all that

you wish, but the general line of questioning that we are pursuing is going to continue and we have every right to do so. We can't help it if the Minister of the Environment is embarrassed at some of the answers which may be forthcoming from the minister (or the lack of the answers that are forthcoming). But none the less, that is the vote that is called and we intend to continue with our broad general line of questioning.

Now as I was saying, Mr. Minister, in questioning you from your answer where you posed the question back to me, how could we ever come up with a figure for this category? How would we know? Am I to assume from your answer that you and your departmental people did not draw up a budget, or that you did not go down the list of normal income categories, of where you derive income, and make an estimate of what you could expect for the current year, '79-'80 ending March 31, 1980? Are you telling us that you did not make estimates? And then are you in effect saying that you did not estimate the revenue you had received from the sale of equity? Are you telling us that you didn't look at past years and see what you had derived in income from the sale of equity? Are you telling us that you don't have a figure for '78 or '77 or '76? Is that what you are telling us? And from those figures you could not make an estimate for 1980? Are you then telling us that you did not have any idea of what your expenditures would be? Are you telling us that you did not have any idea of what your expenditures would be? Are you telling us that you had no idea of what your loans would be? Are you telling us that by looking over your statements from 1978, '77 and '76 you would have no idea of how much money would be outflowing from SEDCO? Is that what you're telling us?

Mr. Minister respectfully, may I ask you to get to your feet and tell us exactly — what are you telling us? Are you telling us that you don't have a budget?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I want to rise on a point of order. The point of order on which I rise, Mr. Chairman, is exemplified by this last question. Roughly paraphrased, the last question to the minister was: You mean to tell me you don't have any estimates of the amount of money out and your equity and your debt situation (referring to SEDCO and if it is so, what is it for the years '77 and '78? For what, for SEDCO? Not for industry. That, Mr. Chairman, is a clear obvious implication of the question. Surely those questions can't be for the Department of Industry and Commerce because if they were, those are general questions which should have been directed under Vote 1 of the Department of Industry and Commerce which we have already passed. So it can't be Vote 1, Department of Industry and Commerce. That's water under the bridge. It has to be aimed at SEDCO. If that is aimed at SEDCO I say that's exactly the kind of perversion of the practice of this House that I'm asking Mr. Chairman to avoid. It's exactly the kind of difficulty that we're going to get ourselves into. It can't be answered by the member, short of the member having the SEDCO people present. He just doesn't have the SEDCO people present here. I say again, Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order to say that is a question which is related to the specific operations of SEDCO and, as such, is a question which should be reviewed in the Crown Corporations Committee or in the alternative, on orders of the day at question period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. I would like to say a word on this. The Attorney General outlined what he thought was the member's question. He's sharper than I because I didn't get what the question was. I thought he was trying to lead up to a question. I was hoping he would get to it eventually. I am sure he would have, had he been given the opportunity. I understand the ruling of the Chair has been that under this particular item general questions will be allowed. Specific questions are the purview of the Crown Corporations Committee. As long as the members try to keep to that ruling and ask general questions and not test the Chair, I am sure that we can get

through this expeditiously and everybody will get their questions which they are rightly entitled to in this particular committee.

I'll call upon the member for Thunder Creek.

MR. THATCHER: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, Mr. Minister, without any preamble to prelude my question is, did SEDCO have a budget, did you make up a budget this year? Because you arrived at the figure of \$21 million which obviously means that somebody estimated that the money that would be flowing out was going to be greater than the income and that, for whatever purpose, you were going to need \$21 million. Did you have a budget?

Then, Mr. Minister, I wish to pursue something which you yourself commented on earlier. What was the amount of money SEDCO projects to derive in income in this calendar year from the sale of equity?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. I think your first question is certainly in order, to ask whether or not SEDCO had a budget. It's a fairly general question. But to ask specifics about that particular budget, I would rule should be held for the Crown Corporations Committee. I call on the minister to answer the first question.

MR. VICKAR: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I stated before and I say it again. Yes, SEDCO does provide a budget. There's a budget every year the same as any other Crown corporation.

MR. THATCHER: — Would the minister tell this Assembly who makes up the budget and approximately what time of year is it made up, in the calendar year. When do you make it and when is it presented to you or is it presented to you, in effect? Does it go to the board of directors and then to you or what is your procedure in drawing up this budget?

MR. VICKAR: — The budget is drawn up by the management committee in SEDCO and it is presented to the board of directors who in turn study the budget, revise it. The, there is a committee of finance within the structure of the SEDCO board who in turn work with the SEDCO management to finalize the budget.

MR. THATCHER: — In drawing up your budget, obviously you must come to specific figures. Could the minister tell the Assembly how the people in the process of drawing up their budget, arrive at these particular figures? Do you use basically past years, or do you . . . well, tell me the factors that you use? For instance for this year, the year that we're talking about right now, borrowing the money, how did you determine or do you have a figure that you think will be loaned out? I'm not being very specific on this, Mr. Minister, so I'll try to clarify. Obviously in the course of a years, a lot of people come to SEDCO to borrow money. Now, I would assume that in your budget, somewhere the decision is made that you will have roughly X number of dollars to loan out to a variety of people. Would the minister tell us the factors that you use and the process that you go through in trying to derive how many dollars will be available for borrowing?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, a point of order.

MR. THATCHER: — Now, that's pretty thin, Roy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Mr. Attorney General, state your point of order.

April 4, 1979

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, the lack of respect the PCs have shown to this House, I think, has clearly manifested itself today. I rise on this point of order. That is a question, that the minister, must of necessity, have the assistance of his SEDCO officials to answer. Any reasonable man would assume that. He has around him as is the tradition of the House, the officials of the Department of Industry and Commerce. Just apply that common sense test as to whether or not the question involves the detail of SEDCO or not. May I say while I am on my feet, Mr. Chairman, please examine the question of the slippery slope that we are on, if I can put it that way, as to what is general and what is specific.

I say, Mr. Chairman, the question is out of order because it deals with specifics.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Thank you very much for your comments. I didn't think that the member had asked for any specific figures. He asked generally how these items were arrived at, and if the minister can answer the question, he can. If he doesn't want to answer it, that is his prerogative.

MR. THATCHER: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank goodness that there is somebody who is impartial in this Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I'm not a bit impartial.

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, if I may, I would suggest to the hon. member that a budget is prepared in a similar manner that you would prepare a budget for any other business. You use your past year's experience, you use your projections and you formulate a budget on your operation.

MR. LANE: — I understand that Mr. Overend, the general manager of SEDCO, is out in the hallway. Perhaps one of your officials would like to go out and bring him into the House so that the minister has . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order!

MR. ROMANOW: — Let him go, Mr. Chairman. Bring all the boys from SEDCO, bring them from SGIO, and turn the House into a shamble.

MR. LANE: — . . . I'm sure that all hon. members would wish the minister should have one of his officials bring Mr. Overend in so that the matters can be answered. The Attorney General says no.

Let me state for the record that the Attorney General has said no to having the general manger of SEDCO in this Assembly when we are discussing a \$20 million expenditure by the public, dealing with SEDCO — typical of the approach of the Attorney General. But let me ask the minister responsible for SEDCO. We have seen a situation develop generally with SEDCO where it will make a loan to a company and then convert that loan to an equity position. Now, of course, what that means is two things: that the government now owns the company, but secondly, the public no longer has any review of the loan. In other words, there is no longer any record of a loan. Can you tell us specifically what your policy is as to equity conversion from debt . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. I rule that question out of order. Do you have a different question?

MR. LANE: — Well, could you tell us generally what your policy is as to debt being converted to equity? When is it triggered?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I would rule that that question would be more properly asked under Crown Corporations Committee. I think you would have to come up with a fairly specific response to a question like that. Next question.

MR. LANE: — Well, that is obviously a general policy question of the criteria as to when that would be triggered. I'm not asking about any specific company. There is a policy of conversion and surely the minister would give it to me. Are you refusing to answer that, Mr. Minister?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I ruled that particular question out of order. If you have another question?

MR. LANE: — Well, I'll go back to my initial question. In your estimate, with the amount that you were going to spend, do you have any idea as to the number of new jobs that you hope to create next year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I hesitate to rule that question out of order, particularly as the Attorney General is telling me that it is, but I think it is. I think that question is out of order. You are asking for specific numbers, etc. I think that that question would more properly be asked in Crown Corporations Committee when the officials with the records are there and prepared to answer those questions.

MR. LANE: — I can ask in Crown corporations how many were created in the year under review which is a fiscal year previously . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, yes, I said that I can ask that question. All I'm asking is do you have a number of jobs that perhaps you hope to create out of this expenditure?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, I answered that. Yes we do, and I will give him the specifics in Crown corporations.

MR. LANE: — I can't ask you in Crown corporations because it's not the year under review. When are you going to give it to me in Crown corporations?

MR. ROMANOW: — I'd like to make a comment on this line of questioning about SEDCO and the position of the Progressive Conservative caucus in this regard. First of all, it's interesting that the member for Qu'Appelle says he cannot ask this question in the Crown Corporations Committee about SEDCO. I disagree with him. He can ask the question in Crown corporations. It's got to be under the year under review or matter related. I would suspect, and while I'm not the chairman of that committee, that's a question which might be ruled in order.

I want to make the point that I made at the beginning of this thing. Mr. Chairman, if there was a rule against repetition there wouldn't be a Tory in this House. Mr. Chairman, they would have left a long time ago, about 1975. I say to the members of this House, again, with as much non-partisanship as I can, this is a statutory appropriation. Mr. Chairman, I just asked the members to consider under statutory appropriations what they are embarking on in this House. Statutory appropriation is called by the House Leader. It is called by the House Leader by saying we'll deal now with loans and advances. An argument might be advanced but the statutory advance does not need to be called by

April 4, 1979

the Committee of Finance. Since it is statutorily appropriated, it has been appropriated. Now, if that argument is right in the legalities of this House then the question is the nature and the flavor of the questions which are being attached by the PCs.

The members from the PC caucus — I invite them to show us how strong an opposition they are, to stay here until June. I challenge them to stay here until June, to July . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — To August, that's my birthday.

MR. ROMANOW: — . . . any time they want to. But I say, Mr. Chairman, on the particular aspects of this matter, they are on to a position which is not within the keeping of the tradition of the House, as Mr. Chairman, has ruled. Mr. Chairman, of the committee proper, Mr. Pepper, has ruled in general terms. This business of being general but not specific, I accept that ruling but you see the kind of predicament it gets the House into. Because the next questions is, there's Mr. Overend in the back of hall. Bring him in, maybe he'll sit down. Oh, we're going to honor the rule but have Mr. Overend in there. Then the next thing is, well Mr. Overend is there, what about this SEDCO annual report here? Maybe we should take a look at the annual report . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, Mr. Chairman, I'm not afraid. The opposition is incompetent of doing its job in Crown Corporations Committee, Mr. Chairman, if we had a competent opposition, if we had an opposition which was worth its oats . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order! I'm interested in the remarks of the Attorney General and I'm having a little trouble hearing him. I would ask the members, particularly to my left, if they could contain themselves. I'm sure they will have some responses to his remarks which I will be equally interested in listening to.

MR. ROMANOW: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I say the job that's to be done by a responsible opposition is in the Committee of Crown Corporations on these questions. A dead equity ratio question is a question which has been asked many times not only of SEDCO but of any other Crown corporation in Crown Corporations Committee. The member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lane) is the last member in this House to say that such a question might not be ruled in order because it's not in the year under review. That's another issue. That is always open to the minister. It's open to the minister right here; it's open to the minister now; it's open to the minister in question period; it's open to the public as to whether or not he did the right thing in taking that kind of a position. That's not the issue. We're not arguing whether or not the minister has a defence of saying that it's not in the public interest. We're not arguing whether or not the minister has the defence of saying it's his deputy's fault or whose fault it is. Those are arguments you can advance.

The issue before this committee is, to what extent does a statutorily appropriated amount — I remind you, Mr. Chairman, statutorily appropriated — technically those votes would not even have to be called by this committee, not even before the consideration of the committee, technically, because they are statutorily appropriated. That has been the custom because the custom has been there to show it to the members of the House for their information, not for their debate on policy details of SEDCO.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Say you.

MR. ROMANOW: — Say I, say the proceedings of this House. It has said it for the last 12

years. I say, Mr. Chairman, they have selectively picked on SEDCO and they've done this for a very good reason, Mr. Chairman. They called SEDCO. They attacked it on point no. 1; we saw it in question period again today, Mr. Chairman. We see this kind of line of attack, in essence, it amounts to nothing more and nothing less than I say a war — a war on business, a war on small business, a war on SEDCO. They're asking all of the business people who come to SEDCO that their documentation should be laid out for the world to see. They are making a shambles of this House. They are making a shambles of this House, Mr. Chairman, because they aren't satisfied with the job that they're doing in Crown Corporations Committee. They are saying that they have to take it to the Committee of Finance as a whole because they can't do their job in the committee of Crown corporations, Mr. Chairman. I say to the House . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. I should have interjected earlier perhaps but I think we should try to confine our remarks to this particular item, Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation.

MR. LANE: — I'd like to state to the Attorney General and to the Chairman, of course, that it's another example and one of the real disappointments in this session that it is the Attorney General who must be the spokesman for a general policy of refusal to give information on Crown corporations to the public of Saskatchewan. The statement by the Attorney General that the opposition is not entitled to this information, that it is by the Attorney General that the opposition is not entitled to this information, that it is by the royal prerogative of the House Leader of the government opposite that we even have a look at this particular matter, indicates the insolence and the arrogance of the government opposite and particularly the House Leader opposite. The fact is you are asking the public of Saskatchewan to give SEDCO \$20,800,000. You're not asking, he says, we're telling you. We're telling you. We're going to take \$20 million out of the taxpayers and you have no right even to question us as to what we're going to do with it. You're telling the people of this province that they have no right to know. On that, we oppose your position. We say that you are morally wrong and we say that the argument of the Attorney General and the House Leader flies in the very face of the reason for parliament and the reason for the existence of parliament. It is a pretty sorry day in the history of parliament when that type of argument is presented before this Assembly in this Chamber. I suggest that it's not a good day for the government when the Attorney General and the House Leader tries to get up and say that the public doesn't have a right to know, that the public doesn't have a right to question public expenditures and doesn't have a right to see how its money is spent. That's the position of the government opposite. We've taken the position that our question on Crown corporations dealing with estimate expenditures are a right and proper position for both an opposition and the public of Saskatchewan to take. We don't apologize to it. As a matter of fact, I suggest to you that it is a lot more proud position to be in — to be demanding the right to know on government expenditures — than to be in a position of saying that the public doesn't have a right to know and that we will spend as we see fit and as we please without any proper accountability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — I say to you, that you have done little service as House Leader with that type of an approach today.

I am going to ask the minister responsible for SEDCO . . . you know that your chairman is in the hallway and available to you. Oh, the Attorney General wants to get back up again now. The Attorney General has spent, and I hope the press notices, approximately two hours this afternoon bailing out the Minister of the Department of Industry and

April 4, 1979

Commerce (who he won't let answer the questions on SEDCO, which is a further example of the walls being built up around Crown corporations). You get the excuse of, not in the public interest, I wasn't the minister at the time, I wasn't around, or no we won't give you the answer.

My question to the minister, is, what percentage of that \$20 million do you estimate will be used for equity redemption or equity acquisition next year?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I want to say a word or two in response to the member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lane).

I want to say to the member for Qu'Appelle and to the PC Party that it is you who is doing a disservice to parliament. It is you and your party that is making a shambles of the traditions of parliament.

I say to the member for Qu'Appelle that if you look at the legislatures of this province, the legislatures of the provinces of this country, can you show me one other legislature anywhere that has a free standing Crown Corporations Committee which has the obligation every year to table a Crown Corporations Committee report. I challenge you now to get up and tell me what other legislature in Canada has that right. With your argument that the government is denying the information . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. It seems to me that we are getting into a debate about the procedure of this particular committee. The Chairman has made a ruling on that. Both sides have been arguing back and forth about this particular item, an item I might add that isn't before us for debate. We are dealing with the Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation. I would like to deal with general questions relating to that and all other comments are out of order on that particular item.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, thank you for your ruling and we concur with it fully. Mr. Chairman, may I respectfully point out to you that the member for Qu'Appelle recently, or just a moment ago, addressed a question to the minister in charge of SEDCO. The Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) or the House Leader, chose to get up and get into this diatribe that he has . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, we were talking about repetition earlier, but he's been boring everybody since about 2:50. Now, Mr. Chairman . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. Do you have a question for the Minister of Industry and Commerce?

MR. THATCHER: — Yes, I do and, Mr. Chairman, I sincerely hope you will allow the minister to answer it this time. Mr. Minister, my question is very similar to the one posed to you by the member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lane). You are asking this Assembly under Vote 48 to borrow \$20,800,000. What percentage of that \$20,800,000 do you anticipate using for equity redemption?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — That question's out of order. I've asked for a new question.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, it strikes me that that was a rather general question. Would you tell me what the specifics are? Mr. Chairman, may I ask for an explanation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — You asked the minister for a specific answer that I don't think it would be reasonable to ask in this committee. In my view, that question should properly

be asked in the Crown Corporations Committee and not here. Next question please.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, you are asking the Assembly for \$20,800,000. Now, Mr. Minister, I respectfully submit that you must have a purpose for this \$20,800,000. You were very general in your comments about an hour ago, which was about the last time that the Attorney General allowed you into this matter . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, Mr. Minister you have a purpose in mind, I assume, for \$20,800,000, and I apologize for being specific on that figure, but that is the figure that is printed in the estimate book. Mr. Minister, my question is that SEDCO has a variety of purposes that they use their funds for. One of them is equity redemption. May I ask the minister, do you plan to follow what SEDCO has done in the past from time to time, and that is some equity redemption? Is it your plan to proceed with this, or to do this again for the calendar year of 1980, which ends next March 31? Do you plan to follow this procedure that SEDCO has done in the past and, if so, do you have some idea of what portion of the funds that we are talking about will be used for that purpose?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, I answered the question in general terms as to why SEDCO is asking for \$20,800,000. Any other question relating to a specific item, like the hon. member is asking me this time, has to be asked in Crown corporations when the officials are there.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, it appears to me that the \$21 million, or the \$21,800,000, is your figure that is presented to us. Now, we are asking you for what purposes you are going to put the \$20 million. Is equity redemption one of the purposes which you intend to use this \$20,800,000 for?

MR. VICKAR: — I have already stated and I can't give the member any more answers. He will get the specifics in Crown corporation.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, may I assume from your answer that you are refusing to answer whether SEDCO plans to be involved in any equity redemption this years? Are you refusing to answer that question?

MR. VICKAR: — No, Mr. Chairman, I am not refusing to answer those questions. I will answer them for you in Crown corporations.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, you are asking the Assembly for authority to borrow \$20,800,000. Mr. Minister, we want to know, and I believe we have a right to know, what are you going to do with the money? Now, Mr. Minister I have asked you, is equity redemption one of the purposes you are going to use the money for?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. I think there is a rule about repetitious questions. I think there has been a lot of repetition this afternoon. It's apparent that the answer isn't satisfactory to you. However, I as Chairman have no way of ensuring that answers are satisfactory to the question which are asked. I would ask for a new question.

MR. THATCHER: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the minister has finally brought it to a head under the prompting of the Attorney General. You finally brought it to a head that you are simply not going to answer any questions. Could I then, since the minister says go and get your answer in Crown corporations, suggest to the minister that the answer to that question is not available in Crown corporations for two years. Two years!

MR. ROMANOW: — Well, that's your . . .

MR. THATCHER: — Well now, just a moment. Just a moment, Mr. Attorney General. I know you're in your chair but I'll answer that question. All right, we are talking about the calendar year which ends March 31, 1980. That annual report will not be presented to the Assembly until late 1981.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order! I would point out to the hon. member that the Crown Corporations Committee and the activities which take place there are not before the House at this time. The Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation item here, \$20,800,000, loans, advances, investments, statutory appropriation — that's what we're discussing. If you could kindly confine your questions and remarks to that the Chairman would sure appreciate it.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, thank you for your ruling. I don't think I am violating any rules of the Assembly. I am merely trying to ask some questions of a minister who seems to have a great deal of difficulty answering. Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, I think the line of comment which I was on was valid, the minister has referred me to Crown corporations and I wish to point out to the Assembly that the information I'm asking right now will not be available, cannot be asked in Crown corporations until the 1981 session of the legislature. That's when the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, Mr. Attorney General, it is not wrong. And in fact, if it was asked there, and if that minister is still the minister in charge of SEDCO, we will probably not get an answer.

Mr. Minister, your action today in bringing a figure to this Assembly of \$20,800,000 for approval is, in effect on behalf of SEDCO, saying, we require \$21 million to continue or to carry on our operations for this year, and don't ask me any questions about it? Don't ask us any question on it? We're just going to simply take it and go, but don't ask any questions on it. Mr. Minister, that attitude is reprehensible. That attitude is a disgrace and there is certainly no defense for that position. Mr. Minister, your government has come to this Assembly and you have presented a budget under, shall we say, very trying circumstances and in that budget you indicated that \$419 million are going to be borrowed. Now, since you've assumed office in 1971 you have come to this Assembly on many occasions with your borrowings and when you assumed office you had borrowings of less than \$500 million. And as we stand here today, and as we go down the votes of your capital spending for your government and if we approve them all and give you that entire \$419 million . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. I've been fairly lenient as is my bent in these committees. But I should clarify something because I think some members are operating under a wrong assumption and maybe we can resolve this by explaining how this operates here. We are not voting. There is no vote for \$20,800,000. That has already been appropriated. This is information that is put into the estimates for the information of the members and in which questions, general questions are allowed. The place to ask detailed questions about this particular item is the Crown Corporations Committee. In other words, this isn't a vote as the vote for the Department of Industry and Commerce is a vote in where you ask specific questions. This money has already been appropriated — you deal with general information here and specific information in the Crown Corporations Committee.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, thank you for your comments, But, Mr. Chairman, if I might point out to you that we are not allowed to make amendments to this . . . For

instance we cannot say it shouldn't be \$20,800,000; it should be such and such. We cannot do that. The vote may already be decided. It may very well be appropriated but, Mr. Chairman, 500 years of parliamentary tradition says we have every right to question it and talk about it and we are going to take that 500 years of tradition and we are going to talk about it and we are going to question it!

If you are going to stonewall it, then I defy somebody to get up there! Get up and say, in the \$419 million we are going to borrow we are going to answer no questions. Does anybody want to get up and make that statement? Get up and make it!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I challenge the PCs to ask all the questions they want on the \$419 million if you could only find the appropriate vote to ask those questions. That's a little bit beyond this opposition. It's a little bit beyond them to understand that you ask those details of \$419 million under the Department of Finance vote. It's a little bit beyond this opposition to know that you've got a Committee of Crown Corporations.

You've been asking, and we want you to ask all the questions you want on the \$419 million. Ask any budgetary question; I support and am a strong champion and defender of that. But what I will not stand for, so long as I'm in this House, is a perversion of the practice and the rules . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order! Now, I think the members are getting a little excited and out of hand and being normally over there I probably would be, or over here I would be. But I think we have a responsibility here. I don't want to try to lecture anybody but I think we should try to stay under the business we have before us and operate under the regular rules of decorum, etc.

The member for Qu'Appelle, I believe has a general question about the Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation.

MR. LANE: — I think what we've seen is a perversion of ministerial responsibility and a perversion of public accountability in this session.

My question to the minister responsible for SEDCO is, do you have any funds allocated in that \$20 million to equity redemption?

MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Chairman, I stated previously the purpose of SEDCO, and told why we were expecting to use, and what we were expecting to use that money for. I don't have my officials with me and I can't answer that. We are not going into the estimates for it. These questions can all be answered in the Crown Corporations Committee and, as I stated earlier, I will be prepared to answer them in Crown corporations when my officials will be there.

MR. LANE: — Do you have any general policy or plans this year to acquire real property in any way?

MR. VICKAR: — Again, I'm sure that you can get that answer in Crown corporations. I don't suppose, though, that SEDCO would deviate from its normal practice of operation.

April 4, 1979

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I wonder, if there are no more general questions, if we couldn't discuss another . . . the Member for Maple Creek (Mrs. Duncan).

MRS. J. DUNCAN (Maple Creek): — As I understand it the statutory votes, or whatever you like to call it, the \$21 million is going there regardless of what we say. We understand that, no matter what the Attorney General believes. But I believe that the people of Saskatchewan do have the right to know approximately how many jobs are going to be created with the \$21 million. That is not a specific question. I am not asking you, Mr. Minister, for the names of the people who are going to get the jobs. That is a very general question. You keep saying, well we can come to Crown corporations.

Well, in 1981 it does the people of Saskatchewan no good to know that the \$21 million created two jobs or 100 jobs or whatever, after the fact has nothing to do with it. How many jobs do you estimate will be created with the \$21 million?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. I previously ruled that question out of order and I will rule it out of order again. Any more general questions here?

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, we have been on this, asking, I think by any definition, about as broad and as general questions as could conceivably be asked. We have asked question, to the minister, we have asked questions such as — well, when you ask, do you anticipate acquiring some property in the year under review, or the year we are talking about, how can you get more general than that? When we ask, do you expect to do some equity redemption during this year, when you are spending the \$21 million, how can you get more general then that?

Mr. Minister, we must obviously come to the conclusion that you are afraid to discuss the \$21 million that SEDCO plans to borrow. You are afraid to talk about SEDCO in any way, shape, or form and you are shirking, completely shirking, your duties as minister responsible. But there are broader implications.

In the case of \$21 million for you, the principle and the precedent that the government is attempting to establish here, is that the opposition has no right whatsoever to question their borrowing, despite the fact that since you assumed office in 1971, borrowings in this province have gone up at a compound annual rate of 20 per cent per year, since 1971. Do you know where that figure comes from? It comes right out of your prospectus that you submit to New York City when you do your borrowing down there. And that 20 per cent — I don't know whether it is your figure or Standard and Poor's or Goldman Sachs, but that is your figure, 20 per cent. Twenty per cent a year the borrowings of this province go up and that is indisputable.

AN HON. MEMBER: — . . . double A rating in New York.

MR. THATCHER: — Well, heavens, who hasn't got a double A rating? Who hasn't got one? We will go into that before the Chairman rules me to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, don't be ridiculous. The Attorney General very obviously knows very little about credit rating. Heavens, even Quebec has got a double A. You notice the only ones that have a triple A happen to be Ontario and Alberta, both of them happen to have, I am sure you want me to point out, Conservative governments. But now, Mr. Chairman, if I could return to the subject at hand without interruption.

Mr. Chairman, \$419 million are going to be borrowed and this government, in effect, is saying, don't question, don't question us about it, and don't talk to us about it. Then

when the votes called, when SEDCO is brought in here — oh, pardon me, I'll rephrase that — when SEDCO is brought into the corridors. The manager of SEDCO has walked back and forth I don't know how many times past that little window and the minister says my officials aren't here. He refuses to go out and consult with them. Heavens, we don't care whether he comes in. Mr. Minister, he is here and he is here for a purpose. Mr. Minister, you have the gall to come to this Assembly totally either ill-prepared or totally uninformed. I don't know which. Does it really matter? But, Mr. Minister there is a little broader implication on this. You know, Mr. Minister, you've looked pretty bad the last few days. And I must say that I do wonder, has the government been setting a precedent today? Has the government chose to set the precedent and attempt to silence the opposition when it came to questioning on capital borrowing. For some reason they chose you, Mr. Minister, to be the precedent setter. You know, Mr. Minister, I would suggest you ask the same question. When they were having the Watergate hearings in Washington . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order! I don't think you can get much broader than that; there's no doubt about that but I wonder if we couldn't try and confine our remarks to this particular item here. You know, I'm sure we would all like to get them completed. The member for Estevan.

MR. R.A. LARTER (Estevan): — Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry I was out of the House when some of these things happened earlier on and I wonder if I could have some of these questions repeated by some of our own members. We'll get around to that later. Mr. Chairman, I know that the taxpayers in the Souris-Cannington, the Estevan region and all our own regions, would be interested in where exactly this \$419 million is being spent before it's spent. I know there are some backbenchers there whose people would be concerned where it's being spent. I don't think the cabinet is concerned because it's just \$419 million, only a half a billion dollars. That's not very much. I'm just very surprised that we can't have a look . . . here's the first portion of this \$419 million and if we don't get that information here this afternoon on that \$21 million that means we don't know where it's gone for two years, because as the minister says, we can't get the information here, and we can't get it at Crown corporations. And I know the taxpayers in my part of the country, and I'm sure all our members and the backbenchers at least, want to know where this money's going right now, not after it's all spent.

MR. ROMANOW: — I'm speaking directly to the member's comments. I know that my point won't be paid attention to by the opposition and it certainly won't be paid attention to by the press, but the mockery that we've gone through this afternoon I think is epitomized by the member for Estevan's (Mr. Larter) performance just a few minutes ago. I say to the member for Estevan what he should do is take a look at the legislation which this legislature passed. Take a look at section 37, Industrial Development Act 1978. Section 37 says:

The Minister of Finance may out of the consolidated fund advance to the corporation for its general purchase purposes or purchase the securities of the corporation and pay for them out of the consolidated funds so money . . .

Then it goes on and sets a ceiling on the amounts advanced. That is what is partly known as the statutory appropriation which has given the Minister of Finance the statutory power.

When you say to this House, and ask the press, the public to believe that there is no room for examining the \$419 million advanced here or borrowed elsewhere, you are

wrong. The Minister of Finance is the minister in charge of the borrowing policies of the Government of Saskatchewan. On Vote 1, if you think \$419 million is too high or not enough, is where the issue is to be raised. If you think that the \$20.8 million advanced to SEDCO is misappropriated the place to raise that is in the Crown Corporations Committee. I say to the hon. member for Estevan, this is not a precedent setting thing for the government. No, what's precedent setting is the opposition's attempted perversion of the rules of this House. That's what's precedent setting.

Mr. Chairman, we've had this procedure of identifying for information purposes this statutory advance that I've talked about now since I've been around in 12 years. The father of the member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher), the late premier of Saskatchewan, had his estimates set out the same way. I was in opposition. I think we were a fairly good opposition. We questioned SEDCO . . . and SEDCO was a contentious issue in those days, adequately. But we did it according to the rules. We did it according to the proper procedures that there were. I welcome a \$419 million scrutiny. I welcome SEDCO being run through the wringer. Take that minister and work him through the Crown Corporations Committee, and he may not like this, for as long as you want. He may give you the answers that you like, or you don't like. It's like in question period. We give you answers, some you like and some you don't like. That's the name of the game. Sometimes the statements you make I don't like. Now that is the bald fact of the matter. Politicize those positions however you want, but those are the facts of the matter — the statute, the practice, the precedent and the history.

The member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher) says that somehow he was the precedent setter and we put the department of industry there. That absolutely, Mr. Chairman, also emphasizes what I say is the mockery of the position taken by the member opposite. I don't know. I haven't had a detailed look at these particular statutory votes or other votes that are coming out with respect to who else, ministerially, has this kind of an advance. I don't know, but I tell you that the issue arose because on vote 1, the Progressive Conservative members made an issue out of it. I think I can report this (and I don't like to report anything that is said private) but I think it was a gentleman's agreement that we would have the debate on this issue today. It has nothing to do with whether it is industry or otherwise. In fact, I say it is possible for a government not even to call that so-called vote. It was statutory appropriated. I think an argument can be made for us not to call it and you will have all of the estimates done. Just like Mr. Chairman, says in his ruling about the vote. What are we voting on?

Now, I am saying, if you think the debt equity ratio of SEDCO is bad, if you think the management of SEDCO is bad, if you think the minister has done a bad job, if you think the government is into all kinds of operations that it shouldn't be in — all of those things which I don't agree with, but you feel — please, boys, the argument is in the Committee of Crown Corporations. That is as obvious as the nose on anybody's face. For three and one-half years you people have been in opposition and you haven't raised this once. In the four years in government, from 1971 to 1975, it wasn't raised, and it certainly wasn't raised from 1967 to 1971, so I think the legitimate question that all of us have to ask now is, why is it being raised?

As I say, please. If it is because somebody's feelings have been offended because I, intemperately in an ill-considered moment, said it was a weak opposition, I withdraw all of that.

You are the strongest opposition that I have seen in the last eight years. I think that this is an opposition that has great things going for it. I think that is obvious to everybody, so

I withdraw, if those are the offending remarks. I say that's out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. ROMANOW: — They don't get anything that I say. I'll say it before somebody says it. It's the first time they've seen a windmill run by water.

Mr. Chairman, I don't want to adjourn the committee because I would like . . . we will adjourn it because there is only another 10 minutes to go and if we are not going to make any progress on the vote. But if we're not going to make any progress, we might as well adjourn it and so the end of the business of the day. If we are going to get the vote out, I don't think that anything I can say can be added to anything that the member for Thunder Creek has said.

Now, I'm not going to kill the clock, but I don't think there is any advantage to going through yet another hassle on this kind of a thing. The arguments are out. I don't know how many times the press have written down your accusations and our accusations, so I ask the House . . .

MR. THATCHER: — Will the Attorney General accept a question?

MR. ROMANOW: — I will accept the question.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, my question to the Attorney General is simply this. Since we apparently have reached an impasse on the issue of questioning a Crown corporation and since the Attorney General has suggested in his remarks that the appropriate place is for item 1 on committee on the Department of Finance, Committee of Finance, and the Attorney General agreed that it is probably appropriate then to resolve this, then let's get at it. Will the Attorney General call the Department of Finance, item 1, tomorrow and let's get at it?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I have to answer the question here in this fashion. There are two separate aspects here of the problem. My argument is that it is unfair, unprecedented; I won't say illegal. I don't mean that but it's not according to the laws of the legislature to, in Committee of Finance, deal with a Crown corporation in detail. With all due respect to Chairman's rulings, that's where I think, basically where the questions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . All right, but that's where the questions were aiming all afternoon. I think that goes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . okay, fine, maybe they weren't but whether they were or not, it is unfair for that to happen. It's unfair and it's improper and it's not the way to do it. It should go to Crown corporations.

So the extent that any questions which may be related to the Minister of Finance on the policy of borrowings and advances as they relate to Crown corporations, I take the same objection there too. I meant to get up and say to the Minister of Finance, get all your SEDCO people in here now. We want to know this and we want to know that. It's a perversion of the process of the House. That's being sheer obstructive and I think there is no other way to describe that.

If, however, the member is asking me to say, will you put the Minister of Finance on the estimates and run him through the hoops as to borrowing policies and advance policies and things of that nature (which I think he has to answer as part of his job of being the guardian of the public purse) the answer to that is yes. So I say simply put, it can't be a situation where you keep on hassling on SEDCO and if it isn't SEDCO, it's

April 4, 1979

FarmStart. Get into Crown corporations. We'll move SEDCO up if we can. Do you want to move SEDCO if the minister and SEDCO people are ready? We'll call them for Crown corporations tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

MR. THATCHER: — We're talking about Vote 48 and the \$20,800,000. That's what we want to know about.

MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Chairman, before I sit down, I've made my point and I'm tired now. I guess everybody else is tired. It says in black and white, it's not a vote. It's a statutory appropriation.

AN HON. MEMBER: — It most certainly does not. They call it Vote 48.

MR. ROMANOW: — They call it Vote 48. That is what the plain effect of this act and that setting out of the estimate is. It's a statutory appropriation and I say an argument could be advanced not to call those statutory appropriations that support the argument that it's not a question of a vote. It never has been a vote in that sense. So, Mr. Chairman, I just don't know. They won't accept that. They won't accept your ruling to that effect. You've said that all afternoon.

AN HON. MEMBER: — We're anarchists.

MR. ROMANOW: — They won't accept it. They're bound and determined. . . . 500 years of some sort of mythical tradition. They won't follow by the rules of law or by the rules of the parliamentary procedure. What else can be done? I don't know what more I can do.

MR. THATCHER: — You're afraid, you're afraid.

MR. ROMANOW: — I'm afraid. I agree I'm afraid. I'll take any answer in order to get this thing sensibly moved on, but I say, Mr. Chairman, that is the pure fact of the matter. Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise, report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.