

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Second Session — Nineteenth Legislature

March 24, 1980

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

On the Orders of the Day

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

Mr. Speaker: — I want to ask the members of the Assembly to join with me today in welcoming a very important group of students from the constituency of Saskatoon Westmount. They are 47 Grade 8 students from Bishop Klein School and they are situated in the Speaker's gallery. They are accompanied today by Mr. Dick Nieman, their principal, and Jerry Weinkauff and Lyle Hassen. I'll be meeting with the students later on and hopefully I'll be able to answer any questions they may have about what went on in the Assembly today. I hope that the students from Bishop Klein have an interesting and educational day in the legislative Chamber and I wish them a safe journey back to Saskatoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. J.A. Pepper (Weyburn): — Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly. I would like to welcome and introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the members of the Assembly, a group of Grade 8 students, some 77 in number, from the Weyburn Junior High School. I understand that they are sitting in both the west and the east galleries. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Jim Nedelcov and Mrs. I.O. Powell and their bus drivers, Mr. Lloyd Johnson and Mr. Grant Hanning. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking on behalf of all of us when I say I wish their visit here in their provincial capital and their Legislative Building proves educational and pleasant. It's just another way to celebrate Saskatchewan's 75th anniversary. I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to meeting with this group of students at about 2:45 p.m. I'm sure that you will all join with me in wishing them a very safe journey home.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. J.L. Solomon (Regina North-West): — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly this afternoon 40 students aged 14 to 18 years, in the west gallery from Halifax, Nova Scotia. They group of students are basketball players and they have come to Saskatchewan. They are affiliated with St. Peter's Church in my constituency. They are accompanied by Peter Fougere, Hugh MacDonald and Jack Phillips from Regina and Halifax coaches, Cheryl O'Shea and Susan Cosh. I welcome you on behalf of the members of the Chamber. I will be meeting with the basketball team after the tour of the Legislative Assembly at 3 p.m. for pictures, refreshments and a question-and-answer session if they so desire. I hope you enjoy your stay in Saskatchewan and I wish you a fair amount of success, depending on who you are playing or course. I hope you have a good time in Saskatchewan, I hope you enjoy the proceedings this afternoon and I wish you a safe and quick trip home afterwards.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. D.W. Cody (Minister of Telephones): — Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to all of the people in the Assembly a very important group of people throughout Saskatchewan. They are the board of directors of a great little corporation, that being the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. We had a very successful board meeting this morning; we'll have a successful year again with STC as you'll note when I table the annual report today. They are seated in the east gallery and they are Walter Mysak from Canora, Muriel Johnsson from North Battleford, Wilf Tootoosis from Cut Knife, Dallas Tenold from Weyburn, Con Stan from Lipton, Steve Prestie from Melfort, John Sadler from Regina with CIC (Crown investments corporation) and the general manager, Dick Suggitt.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. A.E. Blakeney (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, may I add my words to the words of welcome from the member for Regina North-West to our group from Nova Scotia. As some of them may know, while I was not born in Halifax, my wife was. I was born in Bridgewater and went to school there and university in Halifax. I graduated from Dalhousie as did my wife. We have very many fond connections with Nova Scotia and we particularly welcome the group from New Scotland to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

Hon. R.J. Gross (Morse): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and members of this Assembly 29 Grade 8 and Grade 9 students from Cabri. They are accompanied here today by Mrs. Haugen, their teacher, and by their chaperone, Mr. Ernie Moen. I understand I will be meeting with them later, and I'm sure that members will want to welcome them to the Assembly and wish them a good stay.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

Freight Rates on Cattle

Mr. W.C. Thatcher (Thunder Creek) — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Premier, recently the railways have announced a 12 per cent increase in freight rates for the shipping of live cattle to eastern Canada, and that's primarily calves, feeder cattle. Mr. Premier, since the feedlot industry in Saskatchewan is at a very low state and there's hardly a market for our cow-calf producers to market their product internally and since feed grains are already taken out of this province at subsidized crowrates for use in eastern feedlots, may I ask the Premier why there was no protest on the part of his government at an action which is obviously going to depress the price of calves this fall? What I'm saying is that freight rate will simply have to be taken off the calves as the eastern buyers are purchasing them this fall and therefore they are going to have to sell for less money and less return.

Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I will take notice and ask the Minister of Agriculture to give a more complete answer.

Mr. Thatcher: — Supplementary to the Premier . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, I'll take a new question — I can't take a supplementary.

Concern of Livestock Industry

Mr. Thatcher: — New question, Mr. Premier. Since there is some concern in the livestock industry on that, can you give us some indication when you could deal with that? That question has been asked by a variety of livestock groups to the minister and he has not responded.

Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I'll do my best to have the Minister of Agriculture or some other member of cabinet, who is more familiar with the calf business than am I, make a reply as soon as possible.

Saskatchewan Hog Killing Facilities

Mr. E.E. Berntson (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, question to the Premier in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture. As you know we are now shipping 150,000 live hogs a year to Alberta. We are also shipping a considerable number to Manitoba for lack of kill facilities here in Saskatchewan. What programs or incentives will your government take to see that we have some class A hog killing facilities, some incentive to get these things going in rural Saskatchewan for the benefit for all?

Hon. A.E. Blakeney (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that hon. members opposite would not wish the government to become more involved in the hog slaughter industry than we now are. Certainly the member for Regina South has been particularly critical of government involvement in industry and all members, I believe, opposite were critical of our obtaining a portion of Intercontinental Packers, which action in my judgment has been instrumental, indeed I think has saved that industry for Saskatchewan. The members opposite suggest that other packing houses have left. They indeed have left this province and they've left Brandon, they've left Edmonton, and they've left a good number of other places. It is only, I think, because of the intervention of our government that we have a major class A hog slaughtering operation in Saskatoon now. We would like very much to have even more hogs slaughtered in Saskatchewan. I cannot hold out to the hon. member that there are steps which are likely to produce that result, but certainly it's an objective of our government which we will continue to strive for.

Mr. Berntson: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, if things are so rosy in Saskatchewan I wonder if the Premier could tell me why 200,000 plus hogs are going out of Saskatchewan every year. My supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is: it takes about three to four weeks for hog producers in Saskatchewan to be paid for hogs going to slaughter houses in Alberta and Manitoba; what steps are you prepared to take to ensure that hog producers in Saskatchewan, in light of the cost price squeeze which exists today, receive prompt payment for their hogs?

Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, on that subject which is clearly one of the internal management (I would suspect) of the Saskatchewan Hog Marketing Commission, I will ask the Minister of Agriculture to give a more complete replay.

Mr. Berntson: — Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Premier would indicate whether this whole hog program, which is obviously not working well, is intentional? Is this government policy to facilitate the wish of the Minister of Agriculture

who wants to see us go into straight grain farming in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Blakeney: — The answer is no; it is not government policy, nor is it the policy of our government to have this province go into straight grain production. We are strongly of the view that we should have a diversified agriculture in this province with a strong livestock industry. We will continue to support the livestock industry as we did in the past with major contributions to hog producers when hog prices were low, major contributions to beef producers when beef prices were low and continued efforts through FarmStart to get new young farmers into agriculture and particularly into livestock production.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Radon Levels at Fond-du-Lac

Mr. R.L. Andrew (Kindersley) — A question to the Minister of the Environment. On Friday, Mr. Minister, you indicated during the question period, the review of the radon level at Fond-du-Lac was clearly within federal jurisdiction. Further because it was a natural occurrence or occurring by way of nature rather than through a mine, your only vehicle to deal with the environment, you would seem to have indicated, was the mine's control, or mine's pollution control. Does this mean, Mr. Minister, that in fact the Department of the Environment is not involved in the testing or will not become involved in the further testing or radon levels in various residences in the North?

Hon. G.R. Bowerman (Minister of the Environment): — Mr. Speaker, I attempted to clarify for the hon. member last day that the occurrence of radon gas or the objections thereto or the investigations which were being made by the federal government were on the basis of reactions from the teachers on the Indian reserves at both Black Lake and Fond-du-Lac (although I am not so sure that there were teacher objections on the Indian reserve at Fond-du-Lac). The reason that the Department of the Environment is not there is basically because of the Indian reserves and the federal responsibility for gas levels in other areas of the province. As we do not, or the province does not in many other areas deal with matters related to Indian reservations, so, in this case, it would be likewise, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andrew: — Having said that, Mr. Minister, I take it then that you are prepared, under the Department of the Environment, to investigate this. As a result of the Fond-du-Lac question, where there was obviously a level of radon gas far in excess of what appears to be safe, is the Department of the Environment looking, and are you prepared to advise the Assembly, as to whether or not there are policies in place or about to be put into place to approach this problem or to address this problem as it happens in the future?

Mr. Bowerman: — Mr. Speaker, not with respect to Indian reservations as I tried to point out to the hon. member. He has some difficulty in trying to strain that through. But I say yes, in any other areas of the province the department is available and ready and participates in those, as I indicated to the member last day, in Uranium City. But not in the case of the Indian reserves — if we get an invitation from the Department of Indian Affairs we would probably assist, but we would not take the initiative. I think it would not be the responsibility of the Department of the Environment to take the initiative in that situation. We will respond. I would suspect that we would respond favorably to an invitation either by the atomic energy control board or the national

Department of the Environment or the Department of Indian Affairs, whichever is responsible in that area and would extend the invitation to environment Saskatchewan to assist. In that case we would quite likely respond favorably. But we would not take the initiative on Indian reservations in the North or in the South in that regard.

Mr. J.G. Lane (Qu'Appelle): — Is the minister in fact stating that Indian reserves in northern Saskatchewan are exempt from the Department of the Environment's investigations or supposed concern about uranium mining and possible effects there from? I think that is the new statement of policy from the government.

Mr. Bowerman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the hon. member for Qu'Appelle can really paint with that wide a brush, nor do I see how my answer reflects in any way upon the questions which he asks. With regard to Indian reservations, I will try to state it again; the first responsibility is a federal one not only in matters relevant to environment but also in matters relative to game, housing or any of the programs instituted on Indian reservations. The same would apply in this case with respect to the Department of the Environment, Saskatchewan. It is not a new policy. We are not articulating a new policy; we are simply attempting to answer the question the members have asked.

Coverage by Medicare for Accident

Hon. H.H. Rolfes (Minister of Health): — Mr. Speaker, last Friday I took under advisement a question directed to me by the member for Arm River in regard to a constituent of his by the name of Clifford Watkins, and an air ambulance bill he had incurred. Mr. Speaker, at the time the question was directed to me, the member asked me two things: one, when would I get in touch with my executive assistant and my staff re the matter and secondly, when would a letter be sent to him personally and to the member of his constituency. I informed the member I was in touch with my executive assistant last Friday and I was also in touch with my officials this morning. Last Friday, Mr. Speaker, when I answered the member I did not recall that a letter had been sent out under my signature on March 11 with a carbon copy to the member for Arm River. In that letter — and Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the member for Arm River, because I did not recall having sent it — I think our policy is explained and also we indicate to the constituent that he would have to incur the expense of the air ambulance.

Mr. Lane — Supplementary to the minister. The minister in his response in Hansard on Friday indicated that he had not been made aware of this particular incident — those are your exact words. Are you not stating that you were, in fact, aware of the incident previously and had signed the letter?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, of course I had signed the letter but I think it has to be understood that as the member for Arm River indicated, I had been away on vacation and when I came back I noticed there were hundreds of letters on my desk to sign. I did sign all those letters, Mr. Speaker, and when the letter was brought to my attention by my executive assistant on Friday, I read it over and did recall at that time having sent it, of course. But when it was directed to me in the House I did not recall having signed the letter and I certainly would not have misled the member for Arm River since a carbon copy of it was sent, Mr. Speaker, it was not my intention to mislead the member or the House but I must admit at the time I did not recollect that particular problem or having sent a letter to the individual.

Mr. Thatcher: — Mr. Minister, with all due respect, your statement just now is not consistent with your comment made on Friday. With Mr. Speaker's indulgence I would be very happy to read those comments. I won't ask him for that indulgence, because I think we're going to talk at length and mention it later. But I ask the minister to make a very definitive statement right now. Mr. Minister, are you prepared to completely disavow your comments of last Friday? I'm sure that you know what they are. I'm sure you've looked at the Hansard. Are you prepared to say that you misled the House either deliberately or otherwise on Friday, or exactly what are you saying Mr. Minister?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the House at the time the question was directed to me that I could not recall having sent a letter to that individual. If I had recalled, Mr. Speaker, it wouldn't have made sense for me to attempt to mislead the member for Arm River since a carbon copy of that letter had been sent to him. I have the letter before me, showing clearly, in any case, at the bottom, cc Mr. Muirhead, MLA Arm River. Obviously, if I wanted to mislead the House I wouldn't do it by sending a carbon copy to the member who is directing the question to me. I indicated just previously today that at the time the question was directed to me, I could not recall the situation and therefore, make it very clear to the House at the time that I wasn't aware of the situation. And I want to indicate also, Mr. Speaker, that I had not previously discussed this problem with my officials or with my executive assistant, but I did find the letter and will take full responsibility for that.

Mr. Andrew: — A question to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, I take it from what you have said now, that immediately after question period you became aware of the fact that what you said in the House was wrong. Why is it you waited until today, and did not make a move on Friday where there was obviously ample time at which to bring that to the attention of the House.

Mr. Rolfes; — Mr. Speaker, as far as I understand the rules of the House, I have no opportunity to bring it to the attention of the House until the next question period. It was my intention today to bring it to the attention of the House and to apologize to the member for Arm River for not having been able to recall that particular letter. This is my first opportunity and I am here to say to the member for Arm River that I apologize for not being able to recall at that particular time. I don't think they should be able to expect one to remember every letter of the hundreds that are sent out. Mr. Speaker, what I should have said to the member is that as far as I can recall I am not aware of the situation, but at that particular time I couldn't recall it. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think I was completely honest with the member for Arm River when I said I would look into it and discuss it with my officials.

Mr. Lane: — A new question to the Minister of Health. Do you deny saying to the member for Arm River that in fact the reason you denied any knowledge of the incident was because you did not want to embarrass him or the individual concerned who was in the gallery.

Mr. Rolfes: — Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. I never discussed this at all with the member for Arm River in that regard and I totally and categorically deny it.

Mr. G.S. Muirhead (Arm River): — Do you deny, Mr. Minister, that you talked to me in the back of the House? Do you deny that? A half hour after question period you said that very statement to me.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. I think we're getting astray from the topic.

Mr. Thatcher: — A supplementary question to the Minister of Health, Mr. Minister, did you in fact meet with the member for Arm River behind the rail after the question period and did you in fact discuss the content of the question period, the question that was directed to you?

Mr. Speaker: — I'll take a new question.

Mr. Thatcher: — Mr. Minister, did you, after the question period last Friday, meet with the member for Arm River behind the railing and discuss the question?

Mr. Speaker: — Order. I'll take a new question.

Minister's Failure to Remember Air Ambulance Request

Mrs. J.H. Duncan (Maple Creek): — Mr. Minister, you stated you had hundreds of letters sitting on your desk. Are you saying that you would not remember this particular incident? It was a very unusual incident, a request for \$600, and involved some unusual circumstances as the member for Arm River indicated to you on Friday when he explained the circumstances. Are you saying that you get so many requests such as he raised that you couldn't remember this particular incident?

Mr. Rolfes:—Mr. Speaker, that is exactly correct. At the time the question was directed to me in the House I could not recall having been made aware of this particular incident and I stand by that statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Duncan: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, how many requests do you get for an out-of-province air ambulance to fly someone out to have a limb reattached?

Mr. Rolfes — Mr. Speaker, I don't recall how many I get but, Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the House when the question was directed to me from the member for Arm River, I could not recall at that particular time having been made aware of that particular situation. For that, Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the member that I apologize to the House and to him.

Mr. Thatcher: — Mr. Minister, the member for Arm River has indicated to you in this Assembly during the question period regarding a conversation purportedly held between you and the member for Arm River after the question period on Friday. Do you confirm or deny that conversation . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. I'll take a new question.

Mr. Thatcher: — A new question to the Minister of Health. Are you, in effect, by denying the question from the member for Arm River where he asked you . . .

Mr. Speaker: — I'll take a new question. Order, order.

Mr. R.L. Andrew: — A question to the Minister of Health. The previous statement made by the Minister of Health would indicate to me that what you are basically doing is alleging the member for Arm River was in fact telling a lie. Are you accusing the . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. I'll take a new question.

Handling of Misleading Statements

Mr. L.W. Birkbeck (Moosomin): — A question to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, are you attempting to suggest to this House that it is an acceptable practice for a minister of this government, or your government, to make a misleading statement one day and come back a couple of days later and make an apology? This is a simple question.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, I have already admitted to the House that I made a human error. For that, Mr. Speaker, I don't apologize. I do apologize, Mr. Speaker, for not having been able to recall at the time the question was directed to me that I had signed the letter and had sent a carbon copy to the member for Arm River. Certainly, I wish I had recalled it; at the time I didn't. Mr. Speaker, I simply have to stand by that statement I have made.

Questioning of News Statements

Mr. Lane: — The Minister of Health on news broadcasts in Saskatoon over the weekend subsequently reaffirmed his statement in the Assembly, ignoring the alleged intervening act that you have announced today. Now, which story is in fact correct: the statements that you made on Friday saying you did know, which were confirmed in your press statements over the weekend quoting yourself, or your about-face today?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, can the member elaborate on a press statement that I made? I made no press statement over the weekend on this particular matter.

Mr. Thatcher: — Do you deny repeating almost word for word what you said in Hansard on a tape recorder and on tape? Do you deny making that statement.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, I don't recall speaking to the press in Saskatoon on this particular matter. They did call me over the weekend to talk to me about other matters but this particular matter was not raised with me.

Mr. Lane: — A very pointed question was asked of the Minister of Health by the member for Maple Creek, and that was the number of incidents of this nature brought to your attention: and, in fact, you cannot remember when some individual, in this case, had a thumb torn off and had surgery done in Edmonton and was requesting payments for air ambulance. How many such incidents came to your attention in the last year that you can't remember . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order!

Mr. Muirhead: — I say to the Minister of Health, in light of this very serious situation — when we talked about this after question period, you showed me the letter and said you were sorry that I did not get it. You said you did not want to embarrass me . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order!

Mr. Andrew: — Question to the Minister of Health. You understood the question put to you by the member for Arm River; you understand his allegation.

Points of Order on Question Period

Mr. Thatcher: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a question with you in terms of the question period and I would like a very definitive answer from you, if I may. I thought I asked a very legitimate question to the Minister of Health and you recall what the question was. I think it was germane to the situation. I think it was current. I tried to ask that question three or four times and I was ruled out of order on each occasion. Mr. Speaker, I think I have every right to demand a ruling from you now as to precisely why. The question was urgent and of a very current public nature, as you know.

Mr. Speaker: — The rules under which we operate this question period were set down at the beginning of this experiment which is now a routine practice of the Assembly and the rules quite clearly state that some of the basic guidelines are as follows: questions must not repeat in substance a question already answered or to which an answer has been refused. Now . . . Order! . . . the member for Thunder Creek has repeated the question a number of times and I believe some other members repeated it as well, so under that ruling. I ruled the question out of order.

Mr. Thatcher: — Mr. Speaker, with all due respect that is not the case. As you know the question . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order! The member can't argue my ruling. I've given my ruling and I've given him the citation. If he's arguing my ruling he's arguing with the precedents that have been established and the rules by which we run this question period. I can't permit the member to do that: otherwise we'd be probably in interminable discussions about whether my rulings were right or wrong. The members realize that I have to make judgments during a question period, which is a fairly fast-moving part of the day's activity, and I've made my judgment and that's it.

Mr. Thatcher: — Mr. Speaker, may I ask you a further question? The question which I am referring to — I asked several questions — so there is no question as to the one I am referring to, was the initial time that I asked the Minister of Health, and I say the initial time, whether he had had a conversation behind the rail with the member for Arm River, which at that point, Mr. Speaker, I believe the record will show, was fairly germane and quite relevant to the situation. You ruled me out of order and I am asking you what that initial question, specifically, was ruled out of order.

Mr. Speaker: — There were a number of questions at that time. I will have to ask the member to allow me time to examine the record because there were a number of questions that came very quickly and I was, in my mind, making a number of rulings dealing with those questions. The member will recall there were a number of times when I ruled questions out of order and I had in my mind reasons for each of them. But in order to be accurate I would have to examine the record and, if I'm given that time, I'll come back to the House later with some kind of ruling on the matter.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Congratulations to World's Ladies Curling Champions

Hon. E.B. Shillington (Minister of Culture and Youth): — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might with leave, before the orders of the day, ask all of my colleagues in the legislature to join me in congratulating the world's ladies' curling champions.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — I am sure that all members are aware that Marj Mitchell and her rink won Saturday in an extra end over Sweden. They've brought great honor not just to themselves but to all of Saskatchewan as well.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. J.G. Lane (Qu'Appelle): — I would like to respond to the minister's statement and join with him in congratulating the Marj Mitchell rink. Saskatchewan has had a great deal of success this year in curling. I would like to suggest to the minister and the Premier that at some point, some convenient time to those involved during this session, in honor of Celebrate Saskatchewan, we invited all the provincial curling champions here to the Assembly. Then we, as legislators, may recognize their contribution to curling and those who were national world champions may be recognized by all of us. I know we appreciate their efforts. We respect what they have contributed. We thank them for their entertaining curling during the year.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Apparent Misleading by Minister of Health

Mr. G.S. Muirhead (Arm River): — Mr. Speaker, before the orders of the day, I rise under Rule 17, on a matter of urgent public important, for which notice has been filed with the office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. The statement of the matter is as follows:

The apparent misleading of this House by the Minister of Health on Friday, March 21, 1980, during oral question period in response to a question from the member for Arm River, (refer to page 912 of the Debates and Proceedings, March 21, 1980).

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Members will be aware of the fact that I am proceeding under Rule 17, Priority of Debate. The member has in fact given me notice of this matter and has abided by the rules. I am not going to ask whether the member has leave of the Assembly to proceed.

Hon. R.J. Romanow (Attorney General): — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: — What is the point of order?

Mr. Romanow: — I believe under Rule 17(6), on page 14 of the green book, that I have, it may have been amended since 1976, I read the following words:

He (referring to the member) then hands a written statement of the matter proposed to be discussed to Mr. Speaker, who, if he thinks it is in order and of urgent public importance, reads it out and asks whether the member has the leave of the Assembly.

My point is, Mr. Minister, that the procedure established in this House is that Mr. Speaker, first of all, has to think that it is in order and of urgent public importance,

before asking for the leave. You have not done that, Sir. While I am on my feet (I am not going to make the argument now) but I simply say that it does not fall within that test by a long shot.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order! The Attorney General is correct that I did not follow the procedure exactly. I have received a written statement from the member for Arm River. It is as follows:

Dear Sir: This is to give notice of our intention to move that a matter be given priority of debate under Rule 17 of the Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan being a definite matter of urgent public importance.

The statement of the matter is as follows:

The apparent misleading of this House by the Minister of Health on Friday, March 21, 1980, during an oral question period in response to a question from the member for Arm River (refer to page 912 Debates and Proceedings, March 21, 1980).

It's signed by the member for Arm River.

I find the matter in order, of urgent public importance. I ask the Assembly, does the member have leave of the Assembly to proceed?

There is a question as to whether he has leave to proceed. I would ask all those who are in favor of proceeding with the matter to rise.

May I ask the members to be seated. If 15 or less members rise at this occasion, then the question is forthwith put without debate and determined if necessary by a division. That is Rule 17 sub 8.

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you'd be kind enough to outline for the House, because this is germane obviously to the vote which is coming up, the reasons why Mr. Speaker finds the motion to be in order and of urgent public business, keeping in mind the various precedents of November 30, 1973; March 5, 1974; November 29, 1974; March 10, 1975; March 13, 1975; and March 23, 1976. The essence of which is that the matter must be of such urgency, Mr. Speaker, as to put aside the ordinary course of business, immediate attention, and to have no other opportunity in which to debate or raise the issue, like question period of even a private member's motions. When you look at all the urgencies that have been put on the house in its history — grain embargoes, grain strikes, hospital strikes, things of this nature — all of which have been virtually ruled out of order, with this exception, I would appreciate understanding what the basis for Mr. Speaker's ruling is.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. I understand that the position of the Speaker is to rule the matter in order and of urgent public importance, according to what is set down in the rule book. If the member will follow me through 17 sub 10(a) to (f) are the reasons why I've ruled that it is in order. On that basis we're proceeding.

Mr. Romanow: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, just so that I may understand on the point of order, if under sub 10(a) to (f) by your ruling, am I given to understand therefore that henceforward the November 30, 1973 ruling, which among other things, takes about six points:

1. It must be of urgent and of public importance;
2. It must be one specific single matter;
3. It must not be worded in general terms or covering a great number of cases;
4. It must not be offered when facts are in dispute or before the facts are known;
5. It must not involve hypothetical circumstances;
6. A motion for priority of debate must involve the administrative responsibility of the government and it must be so pressing (I'm quoting from the ruling) that public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention. This Assembly cannot give attention to matters over which it has no jurisdiction. I continue from the ruling. A priority of debate cannot take place on a grievance that is continuing. The fact that new information has been received regarding a matter that has been continuing for some time does not in itself make the matter one of urgency, and I note these words from Mr. Speaker, as follows:

A motion for priority of debate is also out of order if the matter can be debated in the ordinary manner with a proper notice, or in a major debate such as address in reply on the budget speech.

That order of November 30, 1973 is not surpassed by simple compliance with points (a) to (f).

Mr. Speaker: — I think it is quite clear that the points (a) to (f) are the framework in which the decision is made.

I might just cite Beauchesne to help to reinforce the remarks which I have made up to this point. Beauchesne, Fourth Edition, Citation 100(3), notes:

Urgency within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but it means urgency of debate, when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

And I cite (2) as well:

The definite matter of urgent public importance, for the discussion of which the adjournment of the House may be moved under Standing Order 26, must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention.

I take the subject matter put forward by the member for Arm River to be the apparent misleading of the House. I think that is a matter that is important and urgent, if it in fact is the decision of the House that a minister has been misleading the House in an answer

which he has given. Now it is not up to Mr. Speaker to make a judgment as to whether that is right or wrong. I understand the debate will show whether that is right or wrong, if in fact a debate is to follow. So consequently the matter which we have before the House is that the Speaker decides if the matter is in order and is of urgent public importance. And that is what I have done.

Mr. Blakeney: — I would like to raise a point of order just on your last remarks. The material which was presented to you by the member for Arm River was also presented to me in accordance with the rules. There is a simple allegation of an apparent misleading. Keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that every single answer, by every single minister, or virtually every single answer by every single minister, can be the subject of an equal allegation that there was an apparent misleading. If it is the ruling of the Chair that every allegation by an opposition member that an answer was apparently misleading can be the subject of priority of debate, without any substance as to whether or not anybody was misled, then we are in a very difficult situation and the government will find itself in the position of having to argue with the Speaker on many occasions. Now no government wants to find itself in that position. As far as we are concerned on this occasion hon. members are going to have full opportunity to make their charge stick. I am not talking about this occasion, but rather the ruling which says an allegation by a member that an answer by a minister is apparently misleading raises, per se and without any substantive evidence, a matter of urgent public business — we could have on every day and we could have one on every answer. I just suggest that that is a ruling which is going to give this House difficulty and I want to raise that very urgently with you, Mr. Speaker, not particularly on this occasion but for the precedent it will create.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order! Are there any further comments on that particular point of order before I attempt to finalize?

I have made a further investigation into rulings made which are precedents for this case, and I will cite rulings of April 22, 1977 and March 29, 1974, which was before I became Speaker, and the subject of another ruling by another Speaker, and that one in 1974 acted on the basis of a 'report.' The ruling in April 22, 1977 began by speaking of the potentially illegal use of influence, etc. I have to take the position at this time that I have made my ruling and I don't think that's a proper position for me to be in. I think it's up to the House now to make their decision on my ruling. The House has the right to accept or deny the motion that is before the House at this time. On that basis, I feel I have to proceed. The question then before the House is, does the hon. member have leave to proceed? Pardon me, I've already taken that question.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division:

Yeas — 13

Berntson
Larter
Pickering
Katzman
Lane

Thatcher
Rousseau
Garner
Duncan

Birkbeck
Swan
Muirhead
Andrew

Nays — Nil

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. G. Muirhead (Arm River): — Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General has made the statement that the decorum of this legislature has dropped and I have to agree. This is a sad day for Saskatchewan. The evidence that I'm about to table in this House will go down in history as the first precedent in the history of our province. We checked across Canada this morning and it looks like the first one in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I will give my evidence. Mr. Speaker, the question asked by myself, the member for Arm River:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Health. I am asking the minister in light of the fact that one of my constituents, by the name of Clifford Watkins of Aylesbury, lost his thumb in a power take-off accident. He was rushed by ambulance to Saskatoon. The doctor threw his thumb in the basket. Mr. Watkins pulled the thumb from the basket and pleaded to save it. They phoned an Edmonton doctor who indicated he would perform an operation if they could get him there as soon as possible. Saskatchewan air ambulance flew him to Edmonton where the operation was performed. He now has his thumb; the operation was successful. The Saskatchewan air ambulance has charged Mr. Watkins \$600 for transportation by air to Edmonton. Mr. Watkins is in the Speaker's gallery now.

I ask you, Mr. Minister, in light of this matter being in your hands for several weeks now, is your department going to pay this bill for Mr. Watkins or not?

Answer from the Hon. Minister of Health:

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member for Arm River that I have not been made aware of this particular incident, although he claims it has been in my hands. I have not received a letter, nor have I received any notice or any inquires from the member for Arm River or from my officials in this regard. If the member wishes to make some request to me as the Minister of Health, I will certainly take that under advisement.

Supplementary by Mr. Muirhead:

Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago I informed your special assistant who said you were away on holidays, and that when you came back the next morning it would be in your hands and there would be a letter coming to Mr. Watkins and a copy to me, immediately. I ask you now, why are you not in touch with your staff? Why are they not in touch with you?

Mr. Rolfes answered:

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my earlier answer to the member I have not been made aware of it. If the member wishes to discuss the matter with me I will be pleased to sit down with him and discuss the matter and I will take it

under advisement as I indicated to him. If he had been in contact with my staff I will certainly make that (and it looks like he was nervous because it's all mixed up here) known to my staff and if they have given any promises to the member for Arm River that a letter would be prepared for him and that they would be in contact with me. I will take whatever measures I think necessary in the particular incident.

Mr. Speaker, at that moment I was quite satisfied. But the evidence I am going to give now, or the statement, Mr. Speaker, I will swear is the truth, I will swear on my honor. I will be taken down to the police station and use a lie detector, because I swear that what I say is the truth. I was contacted by the member, Mr. Rolfes, approximately a half hour after question period and these are his words: Gerry, I knew all about the Watkins' accident. I did not want to embarrass you in the House and your member in the gallery. Did you not get my letter? I said no, and he showed me the letter. I said, no, I didn't receive it. He said he would have copies sent to me immediately. When I walked away I started thinking to myself, boy, there was a little misleading in the House this morning. I couldn't believe it, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't believe the misleading. I had to leave the House at that very moment. I told some of the members that I had to go to an agribition board banquet.

I came back. The Attorney General and Mr. Taylor were talking in the House. The two letters were sitting here on my desk. I picked them up: one to Mr. Watkins, one to myself, I opened them up. It was the same one he showed me this morning at the back of the House, about two hours earlier, the same letter — only this was a photostatic copy. He showed me the original; it was a blue and a green. The two, I swear it, right there in the back. Mr. Speaker, I was just absolutely at wits end. I couldn't believe what was happening, and I wish to table this letter.

As I stood here in the middle of the floor in this House I was having a discussion with the Attorney General and Mr. Taylor, who is not here today because of illness. I made the statement to the Attorney General, when he attacked me on using small items of no importance to the floor of this House, what do you do with a letter like this? He shook his head. You've got no choice but use that, but don't use the other tactics you have been using in this House. I swear these words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health is the minister of medicare. If he answers questions the way he did the other day in this House, misleadingly, how many more times had it happened in this House? How many more times? We don't know; we hope that it hasn't yet. Mr. Speaker, when I got home on the weekend I got a call from Mr. Watkins. He said when he got his mail the original letter was there. It was there. Mr. Watkins has the original letter at home in his safe. He did not know it when he sat in this gallery but when he went home his parents had the letter. He was shocked and he phoned me and said, yes, I have got the letter. The original letter is home in the Watkins' safe.

Now an issue such as this, if it had been brought to my attention 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 20 minutes ago, I could never have forgotten. Never. It would be an impossibility. My last remarks are, Mr. Speaker, that if such a thing as this ever happened to me if I were a cabinet minister, if it were ever proven as the evidence has proven today. Then we would not have to go through an issue such as this. I could not face my people in Arm River and I would automatically resign.

Here is my motion: moved by Gerald Muirhead, seconded by Bob Andrew:

That the matter of the Minister of Health apparently misleading the House on Friday, March 21, 1980 be given priority of debate under Rule 17 of Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. Regina, March 24, 1980.

Debate continues on the motion.

Mr. R.L. Andrew (Kindersley): — Mr. Speaker, and members of the Assembly, I believe the previous statements just made by the member for Arm River are in fact a very, very serious accusation and I wish to, at this point in time, direct our attention to three questions that we must face here. Number one, was there in fact a misrepresentation? Number two, what is the significance of that? Number three, what punishment should the offender have if he in fact is found guilty of that. Now, I suggest at this point in time we are not in a position, in my address, to deal with that first question of misrepresentation. The evidence is there. I think the challenge is there from the member for Arm River. But what I wish to do is to talk about the significance of a member of the Assembly misrepresenting the House and as I believe somebody said prior, that this is not a very common occurrence. As we search through the records, brief as they might be in the legislature of Saskatchewan and other legislatures, and in the Parliament of Canada, we were unable to find just exactly where there was anything on that given situation. However, prior to getting into further comments with regard to the history of misrepresentation in the legislature, I think anyone who has any feeling for an institution — whether it's the legislature, whether it's the church, whether it's a family, whether it's a business — that underneath everything fundamental to the whole concept, is clearly truth and that becomes the most important . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . if the Attorney General wasn't to talk about something else. What we're talking about is a situation right here. We are not talking about some other thing he wants to talk about. Truth, truth . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. I wonder if the member would allow the member for Kindersley to continue.

Mr. Andrew: — The question that we are talking about is the determination of what is in fact truth. It is the foundation of our system. It is the foundation of our democratic system and the vehicle by which we enforce our rules, surely, is the fundamental thing by which our system works. I say to you, the truth is not only morally important, it is the backbone of the total system. When we come to the history . . . and at this point in time I wish to caution the people in this Assembly, that the question I say, Mr. Speaker, when you start looking at the matters in which this matter has come up before, and I wish to make it clear to the speaker, that by making reference to previous cases does not mean to put this particular case into that category . . . The most celebrated case of a misrepresentation in the parliamentary process is in 1963 in the British House of Commons, which as everybody will remember, is the famous Profumo scandal.

Now we must clear, Mr. Speaker, that what we are dealing with is not the question of the Profumo scandal, or whether there was someone carrying on with a mistress. That is not the question. Perhaps it caught some of the press headlines during the 1962 debate in the British House of Commons on the Profumo scandal. The fundamental question behind that whole thing was the matter of a minister of the Crown standing in the House of Commons in London and telling a mistruth. That was the basic problems behind it. That is the thing that we, as legislators, are fundamental — it is fundamental to our system and that we must, looking at that precedent, bear in mind the key fact and

not be carried away with the press descriptions of this or the fancied things of that.

The other one is that it's fundamental — and again this is not even significant or in that classification — but surely is the question of Watergate, and Watergate had break-ins and Watergate had this and Watergate had that, but again what Watergate was, was a man misrepresenting, misrepresenting a man in government. That is fundamental. That is a fundamental process of our total system. That must be borne in mind because if we cut down, if we can take lightly a minister of the Crown misrepresenting the House, or anyone for that matter misrepresenting the House, or anyone for that matter misrepresenting the House then surely if we are to accept that and say . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . it's nothing here, then in the end what loses? Who loses? That is the parliamentary system and if the parliamentary system loses, we all lose. From that point . . . he laughs, oh yes, it's funny. The Attorney General takes everything so lightly except when it comes down to that as to whether or not . . . Now I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, in the lack of precedents in this total field, that one other field which we can look to for guidance as to the seriousness of this matter is a case of the criminal law. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker, the question of the criminal law is clearly different. But let me read to the members of the House the definition of the word perjury which has an analogy (it's not the same but it has an analogy). Here is how it reads:

Everyone commits perjury who, being a witness in a judicial proceeding, with intent to mislead gives false evidence knowing that evidence to be false.

What do we have different in the analogy with perjury? What do we have different from the analogy of perjury and the question of a misrepresentation of an allegation of misrepresentation in the House? What we have, Mr. Speaker, is a different institution. Surely if we are to say that does not apply, that the analogy is not there as the member for Quill Lakes would like us to say, then what we are saying is simply that there is a difference of institutions. Therefore, the institution of parliament, the institution of the legislature, is somehow less than the institution of magistrate's court or the institution of every other court in our land. If we are to say that, then again I say that parliament has lost, the legislature has lost because of the importance we place on that.

Clearly, fundamental to the whole issue is that we must have a system where truth is all important. If we ever lose sight of that then our institutions are worth nothing anymore, just as our courts would be worth nothing if we were to say that perjury can go unchecked. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of this Assembly, this is indeed very serious. This is fundamental to our system.

We come to question one. Was there a misrepresentation? If there was? The member has alleged there is and has produced evidence to say that.

Two, is it serious? I think anybody who is a legislator must agree that it is indeed a very serious matter, a very serious allegation. If it is, Mr. Minister, then we face the third problem; what do we do? There you must look at the minister and there you must check what are the motives. Clearly that has an effect; that has something to do with it. But it still becomes, as perjury becomes, fundamental and just as we approach the case of a man who would be prepared to misrepresent a court, then we must approach the problem of a man who is prepared to misrepresent a legislature. It is fundamental, it must be dealt with seriously. The allegation has to be proved one way or the other. But if it is proved, Mr. Speaker, I say that it is incumbent upon this legislature to deal with that and it is incumbent upon the Premier to deal with that in a very serious manner. For that reason I am supporting the motion of the member for Arm River.

I say this is a very serious situation and cannot be dealt with in any other way. I support the member for Arm River.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. H.H. Rolfes (Minister of Health): — Mr. Speaker, just a few words in this debate. First of all, I want to say that if a member of the House has spoken an untruth, particularly a minister of the Crown knowingly speaks an untruth, it is certainly a very, very serious matter. I want to tell the House that you can only tell an untruth if you purposely take knowledge which you possess and then mislead someone with that particular knowledge.

I have indicated in the House today that at the time the question was directed to me I could not recall having sent a letter under my signature, or having been made aware of that particular problem at that time. Mr. Speaker, I stand by that.

Mr. Speaker, I know if I had orally discussed this or verbally discussed this with my executive assistant or with any of my officials, that I would have recalled. I know that. I want to say to the member for Arm River, it doesn't make any sense, logically speaking for me to attempt to try to deceive the House under those circumstances or to attempt to deceive you under those circumstances, knowing full well that you had a carbon copy of a letter that was sent to Clifford Watkins.

If, under your logic, I was intentionally trying to deceive the House, what an apparently embarrassing situation it would have been for me after the members had directed the question to me, and I had told him that I was not aware of the situation, if he had pulled out this letter in the House last Friday, and had said, Mr. Speaker, what's the Minister of Health talking about? I have a copy of the letter that he sent to my constituent and a carbon copy to me. Why would I want to take that risk, under those circumstances, to attempt to deceive the member for Arm River? I'm not that foolish, Mr. Speaker, to put myself in that predicament.

I stand on what I said in the House earlier today, that at the time when the question was directed to me, I had no recollection of having signed that letter. Certainly after the question was directed to me, my executive assistant went to his office, because he was aware of the letter, and brought it to me. After question period I went back to my office and discussed it with my executive assistant. I said to him, look, when was this letter sent? He said, we have it right here, March 11. In discussing it further with the member for Arm River, he told me in this House — as far as I can recall these are the things which he said to me. He was talking, Mr. Speaker, to our whip. They were standing right back here and I interrupted. I said, Gerry, I would like to talk to you about that question. Gerry said to me, Herman, I certainly did not mean to embarrass you. My response to you was, Gerry, I didn't mean to embarrass you either by the statement that I made in the House. Now, I then said, yes, having this letter, I recall now signing the letter. I said that to you, having read that letter, because it was brought to me. Then I did recall it; certainly I did. I went back to my office and we sent a copy of that letter to the member, Gerry Muirhead, and to your constituent.

Mr. Speaker, I stand by what I said in the House today, that I did not intentionally mislead the House or the member for Arm River. I suppose, in retrospect, I would have done exactly tomorrow as I did on that day, because I could not recall at all having signed that particular letter. I suppose in the future I should not rely so much on my

memory. When a question is directed to me, Mr. Speaker, in the future, I will be very careful to say to the members opposite, as far as I can recall, or as far as I remember, I am not aware. In that way maybe I would have to protect myself. I hold the institution of democracy very highly. Mr. Speaker, I take it very seriously at any time, under any circumstances, if someone lies or does not tell the truth. I don't care whether it is in this House or outside of this House Mr. Speaker, I stand by what I said, that I told the truth as far as I knew it under those circumstances. You people will have to deal with it accordingly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to add a few words to this. I am somewhat disturbed by some of the comments of the member for Kindersley.

I believe I understand the nature of the allegation which is being made. I believe that nothing in the evidence in any way suggests that it is appropriate to raise the instances from history of Profumo, or Watergate, or from law of perjury. I think those are so far from the facts of this case that simply to raise them is to bring its own level of misrepresentation into the debate. That obviously is a question of judgment in which I very much feel that I am right as the member for Kindersley may feel he is right.

No, what is before us? The allegation is that the member for Buena Vista has misled the House. Now, put in those terms, that somebody says in this House something that is inaccurate, I am sure there is not one of us who has not said something in this House which is inaccurate, and that of course is not the allegation. It cannot possibly be the basis of this type of a proceeding that a member, be he a minister of the Crown or otherwise, has said something which is inaccurate — something which may have misled the House, all of us I am sure have been guilty of inaccuracies.

The gravamen, the hub, of this allegation is that the minister knowingly, deliberately, misled the House, and if that is so then it is a grave allegation. Now what is the evidence which is offered? The minister has offered as his explanation that he has a lapse of memory, as you have, as I have, as we all have, and that he believed he could not recall this in the correspondence which he had, and that he later did recall it, having seen the correspondence.

We have heard the comments of the member for Arm River, the comments of the member for Buena Vista. What does the record show? The Hansard record and the record of the letter is totally inconsistent with what the minister says. It is also consistent with what the member for Arm River says, so we get no help on deciding whether anybody deliberately misled anybody from anything that is written down. Nothing that is written down suggests the minister misled anybody, and I am going to come for a moment to suggest that the letter rebuts that. The letter is inconsistent with the minister deliberately misleading anybody else is the verbal comment of the member for Arm River of his recollection of a conversation, which is not the same recollection as that of the member for Buena Vista.

Now a number of possibilities arise from that circumstance: that either the member for Arm River is not telling the truth, or the member for Buena Vista is not telling the truth, or that they have a different interpretation of the same conversation. Those are the three possibilities. Those of us who have, at one time or another done some of this sort of thing for our living, know that these possibilities are always present: that someone is

not telling the truth on the one side, someone is not telling the truth on the other side, or they are both honestly telling the truth and they both have a different recollection. Those are the three possibilities.

The member for Arm River alleges that the minister deliberately misled. Clearly, as the minister points out, if he tried, in this House, deliberately to mislead the House and the member for Arm River, he chose a very strange time to do it when he had already sent the member for Arm River a letter, which for all he knew was in the hands of the member for Arm River, and could have been subject to a contradiction at that time and even if that was not accurate was bound to be the subject of a contradiction as soon as the letter arose. The member for Arm River is therefore alleging that the minister is not only deceitful but stupid. No other conclusion is possible. No other conclusion is possible. No other conclusion is possible. The minister is either both deceitful and stupid or the member for Arm River is deceitful or there was an honest misunderstanding.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with the member for Buena Vista. I regard him, both in this instance and in previous instances of my dealing with him, as totally trustworthy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — I don't know the member for Arm River so well, but I don't have any reason to say that he is other than totally trustworthy. I'm not saying that at all.

An Hon. Member: — Except old Grant Devine is putting him up to the dirty stuff these days.

Mr. Blakeney: — I want to say to the member for Kindersley that he better not press too hard the proposition that if there is something wrong with what the minister said the most severe measures have to be taken, because if there isn't something wrong with what the minister said, there's something radically wrong with what the member for Arm River said and then the severe measures ought similarly to be taken.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — Maybe old Devine will have a chance to get into the House.

Mr. Blakeney: — However I take a different view of this. I take the view that the member for Arm River honestly raised this matter but is mistaken as to the substance of the conversation. I take the position that what the minister has said of the conversation is his best recollection of it. To do otherwise would suggest not only that the minister was prevaricating but that he was prevaricating in a most silly and stupid way and I simply don't believe that to be the case. The internal evidence is such that there is no earthly reason for the minister to have knowingly misled this House when he knew he would be caught out within 48 hours. That is simply not a reasonable proposition. It is not consistent with plain common horse sense of which he has displayed a considerable amount. Accordingly, I take the view that the member for Arm River and the member for Buena Vista have had an honest misunderstanding of what took place behind some rail — that the evidence on the record, the Hansard, and the letter — the Hansard is totally consistent with either position. I suggest the letter lends a little credence to the position of the member of Buena Vista.

I say that we are facing here not any deliberate misleading of this House. We are dealing

with a situation exactly as defined by the member for Buena Vista — that he did indeed give wrong information to the House. He did indeed do it from a lapse of memory. He has indicated that to the House and the matter ought to rest there. If, however, people wish to press it, we will be more than happy to press it by any means that is suggested appropriate but we would want the chips to fall where they may in that case because we do not take kindly to allegations of impropriety on the part of our members when the member evidence, at least in our judgment, is so insubstantial and the attack on the integrity of a member is made on the basis of information which, I say, is not sufficient to attack publicly the integrity of a member of this House. I say that it is inappropriate. We are perfectly willing — I for my part am perfectly willing to place my reliance in the member for Buena Vista, and I suggest that members opposite better mount some further and additional evidence before they further attack the integrity of a member of this House, who until this time, both in this House and his professional and family life, has had a reputation which has been unblemished at any time since he has been of adult years in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — I, therefore, suggest that we deal with the matter in the way I have indicated. However, members opposite will have their opportunity to move their motion and we will then deal with it when the time arises.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. W.C. Thatcher (Thunder Creek): — Mr. Speaker, I think many of the points made by the Premier are well taken. I would ask the Premier to recall a debate a couple of years ago. I was involved in it. I was one of the reasons for it; so was the member for Qu'Appelle. We weren't the principal characters at the time. The principal characters in the scenario were the Attorney General and the former leader of the opposition, the present member for Nipawin.

Mr. Premier, many of the points that you have made in reference to both the Minister of Health, the member for Buena Vista, and the member for Arm River, are valid. Your suggestion that it has been an honest misunderstanding may very well be precisely what has happened. Certainly I've known the member for Arm River long before either one of us were in politics. I think everybody in this Assembly knows the member for Arm River is an honest man. He has his own style. But when he believes in something, he believes in it very passionately.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Thatcher: — I believe that the member for Arm River has presented the case as he views it.

Mr. Premier, I do not know the member for Buena Vista nearly as well. He plays the game hard. As do we all — he asks no quarter, he doesn't give it. That's the way most of us play the game in this Assembly. You know him better than I do and probably it's best for all concerned if we accept your version of it. As I know him, beneath the fairly rough exterior he's got, I think there's not a bad guy there. I don't know him as well as I know the member for Arm River. What I want to say to this Assembly and to anybody else — I believe the member for Arm River believes implicitly in what he says, and I accept your assurance that you believe the same is true with the Minister of Health.

Mr. Premier, I don't accept your premise that today has been particularly a wasted exercise. I indicated that a couple of years ago I went through an exercise here. I suppose it could be termed the Berntson letter, the kangaroo court affair. As I indicated I was involved but I wasn't one of the primary characters. The primary characters were the Attorney General and the present MLA for Nipawin. Mr. Premier, if you suggest that today was a wasted exercise, I recall all too vividly about three days of this Assembly's time being wasted in terms of whether kangaroo court was an offensive term to members of this Assembly. Now a decision was rendered on that and let's not go back to rehashing it.

Mr. Premier, I want to say to you that I believe the member for Arm River had every right today to express his concerns. I believe he had every right when he genuinely and honestly believes it. I believe that there were, at the time this motion was put before the Assembly, sufficient things present to make this a credible and responsible procedure on his part. I think the Minister of Health must have thought so too because he did get up in the question period, and he did clarify things from his point of view. Mr. Premier, as the motion was already in, we had to proceed in this fashion. I think it's fair to point out that the Minister of Health considered he had a valid enough point that he had to defend himself in the question period, and I don't say that in any sort of a disparaging fashion to the Minister of Health at all.

Mr. Premier, I think your points are well taken, that we have perhaps seen a misunderstanding on the part of two very strong-willed individuals. Perhaps we should accept it as such. At the same time I hope that the government and I hope that the premier recognizes the validity of the concern that was raised by the member for Arm River, because I want to emphasize that I do believe, and I think everybody in this Assembly believes, that the member for Arm River truly believed that he had just cause for raising this matter in the fashion that he did. The Minister of Health has made an explanation. You apparently, Mr. Premier, on the basis of discussing it with the Minister of Health, accept that explanation. Perhaps, Mr. Premier, we should accept the Premier's version and say it was an honest misunderstanding by two very strong-willed individuals who both believe they are right. Unfortunately they don't see it the same way, and I guess that's what the world is made of.

Motion defeated.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH — VOTE 32

Mr. Chairman: — Order. We are dealing with the Department of Health. If the minister wishes I call on him to introduce his officials.

Hon. H.H. Rolfes (Minister of Health): — Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure at this time to introduce the officials who are with me here today. Seated to my immediate right is the deputy minister, Ken Fyke. Seated to my immediate left is the associate deputy minister, Duane Adams. Further to my right is Clem Reid, associate deputy minister. Seated directly behind me is Lawrence Krahn, director of administrative services and Wes Mazer, budget officer, directly behind the deputy minister. Seated in the back behind the rail is George Loewen, executive director of SHSP (Saskatchewan Hospital Service Plan) and Gerry Patchett, executive director of MCIC (Medical Care Insurance Commission).

Item 1

Mrs. J.H. Duncan (Maple Creek): — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see the total budget for your department is in excess of \$500 million, an increase of over \$53 million, Mr. Minister. I think we are going to get right at it. We want to have a fairly thorough scrutiny of this department this time around. To begin with, I would like a breakdown of the revenues your department will be receiving. What amount do you receive as a result of federal funding?

Mr. Rolfes: — In response to your initial question, I have to indicate to the member that the question should be directed to the Minister of Finance since 1977 the federal funding was changed. It is no longer under cost sharing, as you know; it is now under the EFP program (established finance programming) and therefore it goes into the consolidated fund directly to finance. They would be able to tell you what we would get from the federal government in that regard. I can tell you and I think you probably are aware that the federal government in 1975 or 1976 decided they would turn over or transfer a certain number of tax points to the provinces. The rest would come to us in block transfers, but it wouldn't necessarily go to the health department but would go directly to the provinces and they could put it into their consolidated fund. So I can't tell you as Minister of Health what we get from the federal government in that regard because there is nothing specific for health; it simply goes to the province. There are some minor items that add up to \$7.5 million that I could read to you but those aren't the major ones you are interested in. If you are interested I could go through those. For example: on general administration we get \$174,750; air ambulance we get \$50,000; community health services (for plumbing and miscellaneous permits) \$26,680; Saskatchewan Hearing Aid Plan for hearing aid sales (this is not federal) we will take in \$503,000. But those are not the things you are interested in. What you wanted to know was what we get in general from the federal government. That question should be directed to the Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Duncan: — When you're working out a budget for the year, surely you have some idea where the moneys are coming from to run your department, do you not?

Mr. Rolfes: — Yes, from the consolidated fund.

Mrs. Duncan: — Could you tell me how much money you expect to generate within the department this year?

Mr. Rolfes: — \$7.5 million.

Mrs. Duncan: — How many employees in the Department of Health?

Mr. Rolfes: — 2,357.

Mrs. Duncan: — How many of them are permanent out-of-scope personnel?

Mr. Rolfes: — Approximately 259 is what we estimate will be the out-of-scope this year.

Mrs. Duncan: — How many are temporary positions?

Mr. Rolfes: — We have been given, in the 1980-81 budget, 170.8 man-years. That's for non-permanent.

Mrs. Duncan: — In these little yellow cards you sent out to residents of the province, you say 'More Saskatchewan tax dollars are spent on health care than any other sector.' If you really don't know where the moneys are coming from, how can you make a statement like that?

Mr. Rolfes: — We do know where the money is coming from — exactly. I told you it came from the consolidated fund. If you want to know where the Minister of Finance gets it, then you will have to direct that question to the Minister of Finance. I know exactly where my money comes from. It comes from the consolidated fund.

Mrs. Duncan: — A major portion, I understand, of the health care in Saskatchewan comes directly from equalization payments from Ottawa. I would say that statement is misleading, to say the least.

Mr. Rolfes: — No, I disagree with the member entirely. Because we happen to be a province of Canada, there are certain rights we have. I suppose some day Saskatchewan, when it becomes truly a have province, will probably transfer money to other have-not provinces. So, we have a right to that. Certainly the member opposite wouldn't suggest that the \$575 million we contribute to eastern Canada, not at our willingness, from export tax and oil — that because we give \$575 million to the federal government we shouldn't therefore get something back in equalization. Not at all. It's the Canadian taxpayers; it's the transfer of funds, some from the provincial government to the federal and some from the federal to the provincial government. Those are agreements made by the first minister and I think they change from time to time depending on what the economic situation is in the province.

Mrs. Duncan: — Well that's your interpretation. Could you give me a breakdown of the types of requests made for out-of-province air ambulance service? I believe in the annual report of last year you had 20 out-of-province services. What were they for?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, the 20 trips — if the member turns to page 2 — we haven't got the breakdown for you but we can get that for you. But those are the types of disease for which air ambulance services are used, on page 2, but we don't have that here. We can get that breakdown for you if you want, but we don't have it here right now. Did you want that breakdown?

Mrs. Duncan: — Yes.

Mr. Rolfes: — Yes. O.K. We have marked that down.

Mrs. Duncan: — I would also like the amount charged to each separate case. I don't want the names. Do you ever intervene with ministerial consideration, say as a hardship that these air ambulance costs might incur on a patient, especially if they are being transferred out of the province for medical care not available here in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Rolfes: — No, I haven't.

Mrs. Duncan: — Do you think you could consider it?

Mr. Rolfes: — Yes.

Mrs. Duncan: — When?

Mr. Rolfes: — When the next one comes up I'll consider it. To be serious, certainly I would. I think I have to deal with each individual case, and I think if a good case can be made to me I will be willing to listen to it. However, I do want to indicate that I don't want to get too far off the present policy that we have which I think is a fairly good one. There are some exceptions, as you know, to the air ambulance where we do pick up the total cost. I'm not sure that I want to open that up too much but I'll be willing to consider others.

Mrs. Duncan: — I would like to talk a minute on the Swift Current Health Region. What role does it play within the whole health system scheme? You are probably aware that people living within this region, unless they pay their health region premium cannot see a doctor in the region, and yet you say health care and accessibility to physicians is free in this province. Could you just comment on that?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, first of all the member is correct in that people are told that they have to pay their health care premiums before service can be given, although legally, that is not correct, as they can get health care without having to pay their health care premiums. Now they must pay the dental tax for the 14 to 18 year olds, in order for them to get care because we haven't up until now, covered it provincially. Therefore it is service that is not available to the people at large in the province, and they would have to pay the dental tax there in order to qualify for that, but not for the first one. Even though some people tell them they must pay, it is not necessary legally. I have written to someone in the Swift Current district on that particular matter. I was concerned that the impression was being left that they had to pay their health care premiums before services would be rendered, and I asked them to take care of that matter.

Mrs. Duncan: — Well I had an inquiry from a constituent who went down to Minneapolis for some radiology treatment and I think MCIC picked up the cost of the X-ray but they sent her the consultation bill back and said she had to collect it through Swift Current. But she had not paid her Swift Current fee; therefore she was out \$80 — the consultation fee by the doctor. They refused to pay it.

Mr. Rolfes: — Would the member be able to tell me — it would make a difference how old the individual was. If she was over 65 we would pay for it; if she was under 65 it should have been picked up by the Swift Current Health Region regardless of whether she had paid her health premiums. If she is over 65 we would pay it. If she is under 65 then Swift Current should have picked it up.

Mrs. Duncan: — Even if she hadn't paid her premium?

Mr. Rolfes: — That's correct. Maybe you could give my officials the case and we will look into it for you.

Mr. W.C. Thatcher (Thunder Creek): — Mr. Minister, in the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, I was . . .

Mr. Rolfes: — May I ask the member to ignore my colleagues over here.

Mr. Thatcher: — At the minister's request, consider yourselves ignored.

Mr. Minister, despite the fact that we got sidetracked on the question on the constituent from Arm River, could you tell the Assembly what the basis is for the decision on the air ambulance not picking up the bill? Is it not the policy of the medical care commission to

pick up the costs of work which cannot be done in Saskatchewan? Now it was my understanding of the case (and the member for Arm River isn't here) that the night the gentleman who lost his thumb got to the hospital in Saskatoon they informed him they could not do it there. Somebody (and I do not know who that was) phoned Edmonton and they said, yes, we can do it. Now this whole thing came about, as the member for Arm River asked you, before we got sidetracked over why the air ambulance tab was not going to be picked up to take him there. My understanding was that that evening the doctor in Edmonton told him, yes, we can do it if you get here in a hurry and if you keep your thumb under certain conditions. Therefore, Mr. Minister, does he not have a legitimate claim under your existing policy to have that transportation from Saskatoon to Edmonton picked up in light of the fact that he was told (and I am subject to correction here, Mr. Minister, but assuming he was told) by that doctor in Edmonton it could be done if he got there in a hurry?

Mr. Rolfes: — First, I think the member is aware that the air ambulance service is primarily for conveniences within the province. I think you are aware of that. Secondly, we are subsidizing. It costs us about \$1.42 a mile. We charge \$1 a mile. So we are subsidizing. Thirdly, the individual involved was told at the time that it would cost him \$1 a mile both ways and he agreed to that.

Now I know what the member is saying: can't you extend the medical services so that people are covered in the province for outside the province if it is not available in Saskatchewan? So far we have not done that. We haven't got those reciprocal agreements between the provinces. They just aren't there. But I have some empathy for what you are saying. It is not that I am totally in disagreement. I think, however, that would have to come under discussion among the provinces when next we meet to see if we can't extend the services which we have in the reciprocal agreements. Not all of the provinces are in. So if you go to one or two provinces you're not covered at all. I have some empathy for your position. I will certainly give it some consideration within the framework of what the costs might be.

Mr. Thatcher: — Well, Mr. Minister, I don't know the individual involved. I am sure he is appreciative of your sympathy but I think he would rather have some cash, with all due respect. To put the matter to rest, could I, therefore, ask the minister, in light of all the circumstances could the minister review that situation and the circumstances, could the minister review that situation and the circumstances (forgetting what's happened over the weekend)? Could you review that situation? I put it forward this way to you. He was told you have to get here in a hurry. Commercially he couldn't get there in time to save his thumb. It was probably pretty unlikely that he could get a commercial flight on that short notice. After all, what is the air ambulance for? Granted, maybe his life was not in danger, but none the less we have ambulances, probably, for a heck of a lot less than a mission like that. Therefore, may I ask the minister if he would review the case, review all the circumstances, the conversations between all those people who were involved that particular evening, perhaps on a humanitarian basis? We hear the word humanitarian used a lot these days. I'll leave it at that. Would the minister consider a review of that case?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, let me first of all say that what has happened here in the House will have no bearing at all as to whether or not I will consider it. Certainly, as Minister of Health, I should be open to suggestions. I can assure you that I will review this particular case, as I will any other case if it's brought to my attention, and look at the individual circumstances which are involved. I do want to say to the member, however, that what you are asking me to do is change the policy to include or to pay for all transportation outside the province for medical services which are not available within

the province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I know it's one case but I don't think as a minister of the Crown I can do that. I couldn't do it unless there was an extreme financial need involved. That may be something we could look at. But I can't do it for one individual, then say no to another individual. I don't think as a minister of the Crown that I could do that. That's not within my right. Having said that to the hon. member. I will review it in light of the fact of some of the things you have said; there maybe have been some statements made to him that I could take into consideration and I will certainly do so.

Mrs. Duncan: — We are not asking you to provide this service for everybody but I think each case has its own merits, especially in a case of limb reconstruction when time is of the utmost importance. A lapse of one-half hour can mean either success or failure in these delicate operations.

I would like to touch on the psychiatric services branch for a minute, if I could. I know you have stated that our situation in Saskatchewan is not unlike situations across the country. What I would like to know is how many positions are you currently advertising for? How many rural positions, as compared to urban positions? What paper and what countries do you advertise in? How many applications have you received to date?

Mr. Rolfes: — Would the hon. member go on to another question while my officials are digging up the answers to those. As soon as we have it, I can go back to it. Would that be all right?

Mrs. Duncan: — O.K. Another area I wanted to touch on was the public health regulations as formulated by your department. I don't know if you are aware but a lot of grants available to community centres, skating rinks and such in smaller areas are dependent upon certification by the department of public health and usually the fire regulations. I think quite often the demands made exceed the moneys available in these smaller centres and cannot a time period be given to them? For example, our curling rink in Maple Creek — by the time we finished with the department of public health inspector our plans didn't look at all like the original plans. We were required to put in six bathrooms. Then you can drive out to Cypress Hills Park, which is a provincially run facility, and the ladies' bathroom there has two stalls. They don't comply with the regulations you expect other people to comply with. Our curling rink — probably you wouldn't find more than 250 people in it, whereas at the park they handle in excess of 600 a day.

Mr. Rolfes: — I can appreciate the concern which the member expresses. However, as Minister of Health and as a Department of Health, I think our primary concern must be the public health of the people. We have some disagreements with the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources. We're asking them to upgrade to meet the standard we have set, to meet the regulations rather than downgrading ours and downgrading the regulations. My officials tell me that just a few years ago we had a complete review of the regulations and SARM and SUMA and other organizations were involved. They knew what the regulations were going to be and were in agreement with those regulations. I think that at this particular time we don't intend to review the regulations and, let's say, downgrade them in order to meet some other standard. We feel these should be the standard in order to meet my responsibility as Minister of Health. Unless some further evidence is coming forth, I guess my answer to you would be no, we don't intend to review the regulations although we do intend to make others abide by them.

Mrs. Duncan: — Well, I think the point I'm trying to make is that these smaller

communities say where they're renovating their community hall, and public health comes in . . . Quite often the liquor commission is involved; the fire department is involved. They're usually getting a grant from youth and culture. They're not knocking the fact these changes have to be made, but they're asking, in light of the fact that most of these community halls and centres do not generate enough income over a year, that they're used very infrequently, that they're not money-making propositions . . . What they would like to see is a time span, say of two years or two-and-one half years, to comply with all these regulations so as to keep the initial cost down.

Mr. Rolfes: — I don't want to seem inflexible on this particular item, but I think I have to stand by the regulations and insist they be abided by from the initial stages of the construction period. For me to say I'm here primarily to protect the people from a health point of view, and then say it looks all right for the first two years, we'll take our chances, is inconsistent. I'm sure that if anybody contracted a particular disease in the first two years and I had not upheld the regulations, they would be soon down the back of the Minister of Health. I just don't know how I could defend myself or my department. I think if we seem inflexible it's because we are inflexible on that particular point, because I think health must come first and that must be right from the start and not two years down the road or a year and a half or whatever it may be.

Mrs. Duncan: — Could I suggest if you're very firm and not very flexible on this matter that you send your officials to check some of the provincial parks, and maybe put a padlock on a door or two until other departments within the government comply with your regulation?

Mr. Rolfes: — I would certainly put the pressure on my colleague to upgrade those and if there are any that you have in mind, please bring them to my attention. I'll certainly put pressure on my colleague to try to upgrade those.

Mr. H.J. Swan (Rosetown-Elrose): — Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask you how many patients are classified as level 4 and are on the waiting lists in the province at this time?

Mr. Rolfes: — The total number of people on the waiting list as of December 18, 1979 was 448 throughout the province.

Mr. Swan: — What plans does your department have to provide more level 4 facilities in the province so that there are not waiting lists of this size?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, I can't give you a precise answer as to what we plan on doing in that particular area. But I think the member knows that a few years ago the former minister of health made available two beds for rural hospitals to designate as level 4. A number of hospitals still have not picked that up and they certainly could do so. There's a study underway in Saskatoon to try to alleviate the situation there, which I must admit is probably the tightest in the province. We are going to make additional beds available in Regina this year, but I think the biggest one probably would be the first one I indicated to you — I think a little over half of the hospitals have picked up those two beds. Secondly, there's the study that's going on in Saskatoon for additional level 4 beds in that city. Thirdly, I think the Minister of Social Services and myself are undertaking — or I suppose the Minister of Social Services and myself are undertaking — a study on the whole reclassification of levels of care and I think that would certainly help to alleviate some of the difficulties we have with level 4. There are no major thrusts under way to alleviate the problem you are alluding to.

Mr. Swan: — Mr. Minister, I raise this question with a quite a bit of concern for the 448 people who are sitting out there classified as level 4, being maintained in a level 3 bed, and having to pay a portion of their own cost; as a matter of fact about \$700 a month. This is a sizeable chunk of money that we are dealing with. They are really classified as health patients but are being denied services by the health department because of lack of facilities. I think it's something that you should be ashamed of and should get on with providing something. Mr. Speaker, how much is it going to cost for each person in a level 4 bed in the coming season starting April 1?

Mr. Rolfes: — While my officials are getting that particular answer, I think it should be understood many of the 448 people on the waiting list are not in level 3 facilities and thus paying the level 3 charge. They are in acute care beds and pay nothing. I will be the first to admit, in some areas, it would be much better if they were not in acute care beds because then we could certainly make those beds available for those people who need acute care.

Let me indicate to the member that there will always be a waiting list and there should be. If you are going to run an efficient hospital system and an efficient nursing home system, you should have a waiting list. The special-care homes will be the first to tell you that. When they have to start competing in some areas as they are doing now for some levels of care, level 1 and level 2 for example, it makes it very difficult for them to try to run an efficient operation. There always should be a waiting list but 448 may be too large. I can tell the hon. member that it has very, very high priority for me. The Minister of Social Services and I will be addressing ourselves to that and it will be one of the highest priority for me. The Minister of Social Services and I will be addressing ourselves to that and it will be one of the highest priority items that we have on our agenda this year.

The costs — have we got the costs? We'll get the costs for you right away.

Mrs. Duncan: — Of the 448 people on this waiting list — how many presently are in nursing homes occupying a level 3 bed and how many are in acute care hospitals?

Mr. Rolfes: — Let me say to the member that this information is not available to us immediately. It will take some time to find that. I don't mind giving that to you either during the estimates if we can get it early enough or table it for you sometime during this session. It may take some time to get that for you. We will do everything we can to get it to you as quickly as we can.

The answer to the question of the member for Rosetown-Elrose is about \$75 a day — \$75 a day for level 4 care.

Mrs. Duncan: — If a person is legally deemed as being eligible for level 4 care and cannot get into a level 4 facility, does it not make sense that perhaps the Department of Health should pay that cost to the nursing home on behalf of the patient. Most of the nursing homes claim that in actuality they're becoming an extendicare facility, that they don't have the proper funding and they don't have the proper equipment. Yet you can go into almost any nursing home in the province and they will say that they are probably best suited for taking care of level 4 patients.

Mr. Rolfes: — I think, although it doesn't meet the entire cost, we have recognized that problem in part in the nursing homes. A few years ago, or maybe a year ago, when I was Minister of Social Services, we implemented a policy whereby we would give nursing homes \$300 per month up to 10 per cent of their level 3, because it came to

my attention while I was the Minister of Social Services that many of the level 3's, even though they were designated as level 4, did not want to leave their own communities. They said no; they wanted to stay there and their children were indicating that they wanted to stay in that community. So we, in discussing it with the special-care homes association, brought in the policy that we recognize that by the \$300 per month for up to 10 per cent of the level 3. I think that was a good policy. Maybe we ought to extend that sometime in the future. It will depend on what comes out of our study in reclassification

The other thing that must also be recognized is that you may well be a level 4 individual today and tomorrow or next week you could be level 3 patient again. I think the artificial classifications that we have on levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and you name it — we have to review those and we have to change some of those and get to what is known as the Matthew classification where it is recognized that a patient or resident isn't necessarily a level 3 person or a level 4 person, once they have been assessed to be that. We also need — and I hope that the Minister of Social Services and I will address ourselves to this — to recognize the difference that we now have, the financial responsibility of individuals in level 3 as opposed to no responsibility in level 4. I think once we resolve that situation, much of the problem that you are addressing yourself to will be alleviated or eradicated, I suppose. I am fairly convinced of that in my three and one-half years as Minister of Social Services. We are addressing ourselves to that. I'm hoping next year in estimates that I will be able to say to you, generally speaking, we have faced that problem and we have resolved it.

Mrs. Duncan: — Have any studies been done to look at the at the board and room concept used in other western provinces? I think this would probably be a step in the right direction where they don't have a discriminatory classification such as we have here in Saskatchewan. You opened up another area, Mr. Minister. We are saying that a lot of these people refused to be taken out of a level 3 facility. My colleagues and I have raised this many times in the House — those elderly people do not want to be moved from their home environment and moved 100 or 80 or 74 miles away where they don't have any close contact with family and friends. I think this is probably one of the most serious problems facing health care in Saskatchewan. Our senior population, the most rapidly rising segment of our population, needs close attention and something should be done as soon as possible.

How can you morally and legally require someone who is deemed to be level 4, who is in a level 3 institution . . . How can you legally make him pay for that care when it should be covered under MCIC? In fact, we had a case brought to our attention where a lady is being required to sell her property to pay for level 3 care when in actuality she is deemed to be a level 4. Now I think that's shameful.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, the only answer I can give to the member, and it's probably not a good one, is that the insured services are deemed to be in particular facilities. For example, if someone is in the hospital it is deemed that they are covered and completely insured. If they are in a level 4 facility the same thing occurs. If they are in a level 3 facility it does not occur. It may not be a consistent policy but that is the policy. I've indicated to you that I'm not entirely happy with that policy and we will be reviewing it.

I do want to say to the member, however, that I still think we're on the right track as far as the total services for senior citizens are concerned. You need to provide a number of

services for senior citizens in the communities wherein they reside. That is why, for example, we implemented the policy in rural hospitals designating two beds for level 4. That is why, for example, I also implemented the policy of \$300 per month for the heavy level 3's. That is why we implemented the policy of home care.

We recognize that just because you have been assessed at a particular level doesn't mean that one should not be rehabilitated. You can make progress; many people have made progress. They have gone from level 4 to level 3 to level 2. I think we must do that. I know there comes a time in persons' lives where maybe it would be very difficult to rehabilitate them, and if they are level 4 they probably always will remain level 4 until they pass on. But I do think that a total service such as we are providing in this province is the right direction in which to go. As you indicated, there may have to be some emphasis in certain areas and we are providing that. I, for one, would like to have our senior citizens remain in their communities as long as possible. I think by the policies we have initiated here we will be able to do that.

Certainly there are some improvements we should make and we are addressing ourselves to that.

I've got the answer, by the way, for the member for Maple Creek on the number of people in hospitals and in nursing homes. There are approximately 140 in hospitals. The rest are in nursing homes now or in their own home. I think I'm correct on my numbers that there are approximately 3,700 or 3,800 level 3's in this province. I think there are approximately that many beds. I could be wrong but I think that's correct. If you take 10 per cent of that, around 370 or 400, you will note that our policy of the 10 per cent recognition in the nursing homes generally covers those people that are designated as level 4 but are in the nursing homes and therefore there is financial assistance given to the nursing home to take care of those particular individuals.

Mrs. Duncan: — You allude to the \$300, Mr. Minister, and I'm aware of that, but perhaps you're not aware that in the majority of cases that money was not passed on to the individual but was used by the home to hire extra staff to be able to cope with excessive workloads they have — so, it's one way or the other, you know . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, they're already pay \$700.

Mr. Rolfes: — I'd just like to make a correction on that. My information is, and it's from recollection, that about \$550 to \$560 is the average for level 3. I know you will find some that will be up to \$700, but when you say \$700 that is pretty well the maximum that you're using. The average across the province is around \$550, I believe, or \$570. It will depend on when the home was built. If it's a relatively new home, of course the beds cost considerably more and the interest rates are higher. If it's an older home, the costs are somewhat lower.

Mrs. Duncan: — Could I ask you another question concerning nursing homes? Are you doing or are there plans to do a study of the existing facilities with the idea of doing some modification to enable them to have a level 4 wing, rather than sending these people elsewhere? I think with the home-care program there will be fewer and fewer level 1's and possibly level 2's. Is there any study being done on a way of converting existing nursing homes to be able to take care of level 4 patients?

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, here again I want to make it absolutely clear to the member that that will all be in the review. When you go to a new reclassification in my humble opinion, when we get through there should be no levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. We

should go to the Matthew's classification and get away from the — you know you get to the personal care and the nursing care and chronic care rather than the artificial classification we have. Your question may be irrelevant at that time because we may no longer have level 3 and level 4. I am convinced that in many of our nursing homes they could well take care of what we presently call level 4 and level 4bs; but we will have to upgrade the staff and we may have to upgrade some of the equipment. I cannot give you a definitive answer at this particular time because that will depend on what we get out of the study. I think from what I have said you will find that I don't like this business of having level 3 and 50 miles away level 4, because that is a real disruption and disorientation for the senior citizen who is involved. So, I think we have to — without getting too much involved in the nursing home, which is not my department any more. I still have some very strong feelings on it though.

Mr. Swan: — Mr. Minister, we've had some dispute about whether or not these people who are being held in a level 3 bed after the level 4 classification has occurred are paying \$500 to \$700. In talking to a number of the homes around the province it's close to \$700 for this coming year. Do you not feel this is really a deterrent fee you're charging? These people have been classified as level 4; they should be entitled to health care as a level 4 person and yet you're maintaining them in other bed facilities and they are paying up to \$700 a month for that service. This to me is a very high figure for these people to have to pay. When they are classified as level 4 it is deterrent fee and it's a saving of public money that your government is experiencing. If you use the 448 people and hold them in a bed other than level 4 for a year, you're going to be looking at something in excess of \$3.5 million.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, I have indicated this is not really the jurisdiction of the Minister of Health. We don't make any charge in our level 4. If they are in facilities for which I am responsible, there is no charge. I think the member would do well to direct that question to the Minister of Social Services when his estimates come up. I don't want to defend his particular policy.

Let me say to the member that I just got information from my officials. I have overestimated what the average cost this year is for level 3. It's \$530 and not \$575 as I had indicated. That's the average cost. Now, I know it will go up and maybe my \$575 for this coming year will be very close. In the Department of Health we do not charge if they are in our facilities. If you want to direct that to the Minister of Social Services when his estimates come up, I'll let him answer those.

Mr. Swan: — Mr. Minister, if I wait until it comes time to deal with the man from Social Services, he'll say those are level 4 classifications and they should have been in health and you should have asked it then. I don't buy that answer. I think that the figure is not the important part — whether it's \$700 or \$575; it's the method that's being used and it's the people who are having to pay after the classification has occurred. I think you are indeed not being fair to these people by continuing to charge them after they are classified as level 4.

I'd like to ask you a question in a different area. I'd like to know what the average mill rate being charged by small rural hospitals is at the present time around the province?

Mr. Rolfes: — I don't know who asked — one of you asked a question about psychiatrists. I think the member for Maple Creek. We have 14 vacancies; three are on an educational leave and will be back sometime this year. We have 10 vacancies in rural Saskatchewan, four in urban. I think it should be understood, however, that all

regions have some access to psychiatric services whether they are private or other people in the employ of the department.

Advertising — we advertise in the British Medical Journal, major daily newspapers across Canada, the Medical Post. We also use Saskatchewan House in London. The cost of the advertising — I think there was a \$10,000 budget. Responses — my understanding is that we have 44 responses so far. We are seriously looking at 12 to 13 of those.

The average mill rate across the province is 5.1 mills. That was for '78.

Mr. Swan: — Mr. Minister, can you get up into current figures and give me '79?

Mr. Rolfes: — I haven't got those here but I think we can have those for you tomorrow or Wednesday.

Mr. Swan: — Can you tell me, is there any mill rate charged for hospitals located in the cities in the province?

Mr. Rolfes: — No, there are no mill rates as such but the cities are subject to the two mills under The Hospital Revenue Act. Regina is. Saskatoon apparently isn't.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

CORRIGENDUM

The following corrections should appear in the speech by the Hon. W.E. Smishek in the Debates and Proceedings N.S. VOL. XXII, 21B Thursday, March 20, 1980, 7:00 p.m.

The first line of the last paragraph on page 869 should read:

Mr. Speaker, the first task was to determine the depth of the problem.

The sentence beginning on line 27 on page 870 should read:

During these discussions, not only are we exchanging information and ideas, but asking for a commitment to help.

The sentence beginning on line 30 on page 872 should read:

We must shortly begin planning for 1980-82, deciding what of our '80-81 package is working, what is not and considering new ideas. This is our approach, Mr. Speaker.

****Please Note:** The online transcripts for these documents have been corrected.