

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
April 21, 1981

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

THE CLERK: — On Thursday last, Mr. Berntson presented a petition under routine proceedings. I am required under rule 11(7) to examine the petition and report to the Legislative Assembly if it is irregular. Under rule 11(1), 11(5) and 11(6), I am required to ensure that the petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly, that it has a prayer, that it has at least three signatures on the page containing the prayer and that the member presenting the petition has signed the petition.

I must report to the Legislative Assembly that the petition is irregular under rule 11(1), 11(5) and 11(6).

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. PONIATOWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, it is with much pleasure that I introduce to you, and to the members of the Assembly today, 50 young hockey players, their coaches and chaperones. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are currently participating in what is called the "Open Canada" cultural exchange program which is sponsored by the Secretary of State. Mr. Speaker, 25 of the hockey players are from that fascinating city of Montreal, Quebec, and play for a team there. Also, there are 25 hockey players from Saskatoon who play with the Eastview Flyers. The coaches of the Montreal team, I am advised, are: Mr. Bob Doggett, and Jean Paul Zappa. Coaching the Eastview Flyers, we have Mr. Ron Parker. Also assisting, by way of chaperoning, are Michael Mudrey, and Mr. Al Livingstone. The bus driver is Mr. Ron Cathcart.

I understand that besides today's trip to Regina, the young gentlemen, among other activities, have visited the potash mine near Saskatoon. Tomorrow they plan to visit and tour the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon. I have further been advised that, for the members from Montreal, this is their first visit to our province of Saskatchewan. I sincerely hope, and I am sure all members join with me in that regard, that their stay here will be both educational and enjoyable.

In a couple of days, the Eastview Flyers will be going to Montreal to spend several days there visiting Montreal and area. I know all members will join with me in wishing you an enjoyable day in Regina. In particular, we hope you find your visit to the Legislative Assembly interesting.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. NELSON: — Monsieur le President, moi aussi je voudrais offrir une chaleureuse bienvenue aux visiteurs de Quebec. Nous sommes tres heureux que vous etes ici. Nous esperons que votre visite sera tres agreable et tres interessante, dans notre province et dans notre Assemblée.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, I would also like to join with my two colleagues in extending a hearty welcome to these people. Some of the young people are from my constituency. I know one of the coaches, Mr. Michael Mudrey, who is from my constituency. I hope that they have a very enjoyable stay in Saskatchewan. Subsequently, next week or the week after that, our boys will have an enjoyable journey to Montreal. I wish them well and hope they have a very educational exchange program.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

Constitutional Conflict

MR. LANE: — I would like to direct a question to the Premier, in light of the rather summary rejection of the Premier's position by the Minister of Justice for Canada, Mr. Chretien. It indicates that the federal government is simply not prepared to listen to the provinces and that no matter what kind of proposal you put forward, it won't get a fair hearing. It looks like we're now down on this constitutional crisis to the last three days in parliament and then the Supreme Court of Canada.

Would the Premier, in light of that, be prepared to take the exceptional step and urge his federal counterpart, Mr. Broadbent, to withdraw his support of Trudeau's unilateral patriation of the constitution?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I think that it's unlikely that the Government of Saskatchewan would have any particular persuasive powers with respect to the New Democratic Party of Canada. I know the hon. member wasn't directing the question to me as Leader of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party because he would know that that question was out of order.

MR. LANE: — I call to the Premier's attention efforts made by him and others to convince members of the federal New Democratic Party to support a position at that time taken by the Government of Saskatchewan. So I would therefore ask the Premier again, as Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, to urge the Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada to withdraw his support of the unilateral patriation of the constitution.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I take note of the hon. member's request.

MR. LANE: — I'm disappointed in the he lack of action. I am also a little surprised at press statements, and I am sure the Premier would want to correct the record, where on numerous occasions the Premier of this province and the Deputy Premier have indicated to the people of Saskatchewan that our resources are not negotiable. We see, as a result of press statements, that the question of resources was set aside. This is the second time during your tenure that you have put resources on the bargaining table — the first time being the energy bank proposals. My question to the Premier . . .

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

MR. LANE: — My supplementary to the Premier: would you now be prepared to admit that as far as you are concerned, based on the actions today, that your previous statements that the resources are not negotiable is in fact false and that

Saskatchewan resources as far as you are concerned are negotiable?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I would not agree with the statement of the hon. member. The press report indicated that eight premiers had agreed that in all the circumstances in Canada today the best course of action for Canada and for Canadians was to patriate the constitution with a simple amending formula and that all other amendments be made in Canada pursuant to the new constitution and the new amending formula. This would necessarily mean that items such as equalization, resource management and control, charter of rights would be dealt with by Canadians pursuant to the new constitution. It was in that sense and in that sense only that I have indicated that in the interests of getting agreement with seven other premiers, I would at this time agree that that which went to Westminster need not contain any provisions with respect to resources but could be restricted to patriation and an amending formula. Indeed it need not go to Westminster but could be done on a straight “made in Canada” basis. That was the position taken by the Government of Saskatchewan and I’m frankly surprised that members opposite criticize that position.

MR. LANE: — The difficulty we have is that you keep taking our positions. If you would have done it last September or last June you wouldn’t be in the mess that you’re in. Let me give you another example by way of supplementary.

We had a debate in this Assembly a little earlier this year wherein the Deputy Premier waxed eloquent about our stand on an opting-out provision and how much he opposed it. I note on press statements that you are now prepared to defend the opting-out proposals and in fact did so. I wonder if the Premier cleared Friday’s position or Thursday’s position of the government opposite with his Deputy Premier, who earlier this year had basically said no way to an opting-out provision, and that it was the Conservatives who were proposing a checkerboard Canada. I wonder how the Premier jibes that with his statements of Friday?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I think hon. members, at least some of them, will have a better recollection of what the Attorney General and Deputy Premier said about an opting-out formula. He made rather clear, I think, that that was not his first preference, but he did not in any way suggest that in no way would the Government of Saskatchewan agree with that.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Qu’Appelle was pointing out that an opting-out proposal was previously put forward at the September conference. The opting-out proposal which is being put forward now by eight premiers is significantly different than the previous one. Because it is significantly different, and because there was, in my judgment, a clear desirability for eight premiers to agree on a proposal, our government agreed to it. It is not our first preference. I venture to think it is probably not the first preference of any one of the eight governments involved. But because we believe that the time has come for Canadians to build the broadest possible consensus to have a “made in Canada” constitution with an amending formula which represents the broadest possible support all across Canada, we have agreed to this proposal which we think would be satisfactory in all of the circumstances.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — I think one has to admire the wisdom of some of the federal civil servants of nine months ago when they prepared a position paper which subsequently became

known as the “leaked document,” to see how correct they were in their assessment of events. Given the statements in the so-called leaked document which indicated a deep concern on the part of the federal government over a united western front, and its need for a western ally (and you were the natural ally) would the Premier now admit that his fence-sitting, his lack of stance over the months prior to February was the wrong position to take, was the wrong decision to make and further that we really wouldn’t be in this mess if you had shown unanimity with the West last fall?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, only the member for Qu’Appelle could have the quaint notion that the Prime Minister of Canada would have been dissuaded by anything said by any provincial premier at any time during this entire exercise. It seems altogether clear that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada propose to proceed. It was my view then, and is my view now, that what ought to be proceeded with is that which has the broadest possible basis of support across Canada. When the Prime Minister announced in early October that he proposed to proceed, our government adopted the course of action of seeing whether or not we could get changes in the proposal which would attract a broad basis of support across Canada. I wish we had been successful; we were not successful. We started on the trail which ought to have been pursued; we were unsuccessful in achieving that. In no sense was it unwise to do so because then, and now, what Canada should proceed with is that which has a broad basis of support across Canada. The eight premiers last week indicated the proposal which has the broadest possible support across Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Borrowing of Money on the European Market

MR. ANDREW: — My question is to the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). Mr. Minister, I understand the government has approved a process of borrowing \$125 million on the European bond market for some undisclosed Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation venture. Could you advise the Assembly as for what you are proposing to borrow the \$125 million? What project do you have in mind?

HON. MR. COWLEY: — Mr. Speaker, if we’re indeed borrowing money on the European money market, it will be borrowed by my colleague, the Minister of Finance. The proceeds from that will be disbursed by the Department of Finance to the various government agencies and Crown corporations involved. I think it would be more appropriate if you directed that question to the Minister of Finance.

MR. ANDREW: — I’ll just redirect the question to the Minister of Finance.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, we have not placed any borrowing on the European Market. That is an option which we always leave open. Our preference, as is well-known, is to borrow Canadian, but if we could get funding at some future time on the European market, which would be advantageous from a point of view of the terms we could get, we would consider it. At the present time we have no specific plans to borrow on the European market.

MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Minister, you obviously are looking at borrowing \$125 million for an SMDC project. Can you advise the Assembly as to what you are looking for this \$125 million?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, I cannot advise the Assembly of that. We have indicated in the budget speech that we will be borrowing a certain amount of money on the market, as well as using self-generated money in the Crown corporations, and that is something we obviously have to prepare ourselves for. There is no specific reason, at the present, as to why we might be borrowing money, but we have to know where the best market is and, therefore, we are exploring them all.

MR. ANDREW: — New question. With the fact that you would like to have the people of the province believe that our heritage fund is bulging with money, can you advise the Assembly why you are looking at borrowing on the volatile European bond market?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — I'm not sure as to how the member can define the volatile European bond market. I have already said we are not, at the present, borrowing anything on the European market. The last time that was done was several years ago; I can't remember when, but it was about 1976 or so. We have not gone to that market, although we have always been looking at what the market is like. At the present time we are able (as we did just a few weeks ago) to borrow Canadian on some very good terms. As a matter of fact, we borrowed at 13.375 per cent, which was better than the 14.75 per cent at which B.C. Hydro borrowed on the same day. As long as we can get those kinds of terms, we have no need to go beyond the Canadian market.

MR. ANDREW: — I further understand, Mr. Minister of Finance, that the proposal would be to borrow in U.S. currency from the European bond market. Does that indicate your confidence in the Canadian dollar? Is that one of the reasons you are moving to borrow in U.S. currency?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — I think the best way I can answer that question, Mr. Speaker, is to indicate once again that we are not borrowing on the European market. We always look at all of the markets — the American market, the European market, the Canadian market. If an opportunity presents itself, which would be of benefit to the people of Saskatchewan, we would have to make a decision at that particular time.

MR. LANE: — A question to the minister. You've just indicated that you haven't borrowed on the European market since '76. Are you trying to tell this Assembly that you're taking the power unto yourselves to borrow \$125 million and you don't know what for?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I need to repeat myself. We have not borrowed any money; we are not at the point where we're about to borrow money. If we are going to, we will at that point in time decide where we will borrow, the kinds of terms at which it would be best for us to borrow, and that will be made public then. At the present time we are not in the process of borrowing. We just floated a loan of \$125 million, which I referred to earlier; and that's carrying us through fairly well.

Loan Subsidies for Low-Income Groups

MR. TAYLOR: — Question to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, as you are no doubt aware, the inflation rate has reached 12.4 per cent — an all-time high. Many groups within Saskatchewan and Canada are asking for some protection from the ravages of inflation. In our own province, as you probably are aware, 15 per cent of the people live below the poverty line, whereas in Canada 12 per cent do. Of those 15 per cent, 37 per cent are unattached singles, many of them being senior citizens. You've indicated that

you are borrowing money at 13.75 per cent. Mr. Minister, my question to you is: when will you take action to make money available to the people of Saskatchewan so that they can borrow money at 13.75 per cent, or do something to help people who are being cut up by the ravages of inflation?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, I do not want to make light of the problems which confront us because of the way inflation is today. But I want to point out to the members and to you that inflation is a national and international problem. No solution is possible without strong national action, which has been sorely lacking in this country for quite a number of years. I also want to make the point that we have provided in this budget a significant amount of relief for those who are hardest hit by inflation. If anyone opposite would take the time to explore all of the provisions in the budget (and the list is very long), I think any fair-minded person would have to admit that we have done a great deal to reduce the burden of inflation on a wide range of people in this province.

You can start with such initiatives as we have taken in day care programs, which will help a lot of people who have to work and yet are on low incomes. It gives them an opportunity to send their children to day care. We have provided increased funding for revenue sharing for municipalities in order, as much as possible, to keep the increase in property taxes lower. We have provided major initiatives in the agricultural sector and FarmStart does an excellent job in assisting farmers — a lot of young farmers — get started and expand operations. As well, for low income people, we have very dramatically expanded the family income plan program, which is providing assistance to working families, along with a tax cut which will provide assistance to everybody who is earning an income and paying taxes.

MR. TAYLOR: — Supplementary question. With your indulgence I'd like to quote a little bit, Mr. Speaker. This came out after your budget. It's dated April 14, 1981, and it's a brief from the Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture. In regard to your concern about it being a federal problem, and also that you've been satisfying the various groups in society, I don't think it agrees. It says:

The provinces have done a lot of buck passing to the federal government when it comes to taking on any responsibility for the problems of inflation. It is not illogical to suggest to provinces, who have control over their resource development, that they should put in place supplementary and complementary policies and programs, which would help to control or buffer the inflation spin-offs of their own provincial activities.

That's the question I'm asking you. When are you going to grapple with this situation and put into place some complementary or supplementary programs which will help the people out there who are facing inflation today?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tell the member that we are acting now. We are not considering what we might do in the future; we are acting now. I think if the member were to take a look further in that brief he would find, or if he has had a chance to discuss it with the Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture that they would acknowledge the programs which we have. FarmStart provides loans at subsidized rates to farmers; a program such as the landbank provides an opportunity for young farmers to get started in farming; programs such as Sedco have provided loans at 14.5 per cent — far less than could be obtained at the market. These are all indications that we are acting now in order to assist individuals to cushion the impact of inflation.

I want to also remind the members, Mr. Speaker, that when comments are made about provides having an impact on inflation, it is true that in many cases that is the way it is. Fortunately, in Saskatchewan, we have chosen to balance our budget. Balanced budgets do not cause great increases in inflation. Deficit budgets, such as that which came down in Alberta about a week ago, contribute a great deal to the increase in inflation.

Reduction of Tax on Farm Fuel

MR. PICKERING: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Agriculture. Farmers are concerned about increased costs because of inflation. The farm fuel reduction program has been discontinued. Would the minister not agree to reduce the tax to the farmers for fuel at their source of supply which we have been advocating for a long time?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member, I don't think the farmers pay a tax on farm fuel. There is no change with respect to the policy there. I think the hon. member puts his attention on the farm cost reduction program which was eliminated for 1981. I think the policy of the government in this area is very clear, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we wish to address (because we think it is important) the issue of supply, rather than the issue of price, and this budget builds in a number of components as we address the issue of supply of energy to farmers.

Reconvening of Select Standing Committee on Agriculture

MR. PICKERING: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier. The other day the member for Moosomin put a motion before the Assembly to have the select standing committee on agriculture reconvene, and this was turned down. In light of that, and in light of the drought and inflation of today, making these times about as tough as any, would the Premier now not agree to have the select standing committee on agriculture reconvene, since it hasn't sat since January 13, 1926?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I would be rather surprised if the legislature had turned that down. I have been reading my whites and I haven't noticed it, so I don't really know what the hon. member is asking me. Certainly, it is not up to the Premier to decide for the legislature when its legislative committees meet, and I'm sure the House will make the appropriate decision.

Government Mortgage Funds for Home Buyers and Builders

MR. LANE: — A question to the Minister of Finance. Given your attempts, or your consideration of borrowing overseas at certain interest rates, would the Minister of Finance now reconsider the Conservative proposal that the Government of Saskatchewan supply mortgage funds to the people of Saskatchewan at the government's borrowing rate, or perhaps 0.25 to 0.5 per cent higher than that, so that first time home-owners in the province of Saskatchewan will be able, in fact, to finance new homes? This would have two purposes. Firstly, it would assist the house building industry and, secondly, it would make shelter more available to the people of Saskatchewan.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, a calculation which I have had an

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opportunity to make of the Conservative proposal indicates that that would provide an assistance of about \$3 million to Saskatchewan home buyers or home-owners. The program which we have now, called the mortgage interest rebate program, returns to Saskatchewan people who have mortgages something in excess of \$12 million. I might also add that we have other programs such as the co-op housing program which is now being extended to farmers and provides a very significant subsidy to people who become involved in it up to the extent of \$150 a month.

When I consider all that is now available to Saskatchewan home buyers and home builders, I certainly would not want to exchange that for the Conservative proposal.

Education Grant Formula

MR. SWAN: — Question to the Minister of Education. Some time ago, I raised with you the concern that I had about the level at which you established the support to the school boards of the province this year when you quoted the 12 per cent increase in the pupil grant. Now, I find that on average the mill rate in rural Saskatchewan, and across Saskatchewan generally, has increased in excess of 10 mills. In some places, it has gone as high as 20 mills. I'm wondering if you're prepared to admit that your grant formula was not compensating for inflation? Will you do something to assist the boards in the province to deliver education at a reasonable cost at least?

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Speaker, I think, as the hon. member well knows, the level of financial support provided by this government to education is practically unequalled anywhere in Canada. If you take into account the grants which we provide directly to school boards, the fact that the provincial government covers all of the costs of superannuation funding, plus the property improvement grant, which is a relief against property taxation for education, you will find that in this province the proportion of education costs covered by provincial grants is in excess of 75 per cent.

With regard to this year's increase in funding, I would point out to the hon. member that it is my belief that this year's funding is generous. There will no doubt be cases where school boards, because of decisions they have made, will be increasing mill rates above the amount that might be anticipated, but those are decisions which school boards are making. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in this province education is a good buy. It's a good investment in our young people who are, after all, the most important people we have. I have no apologies either for the contribution the provincial government makes to education, nor for the contribution provincial taxpayers, through the property mill rate, make to education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 74 — An Act to amend The Income Tax Act

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a bill to amend The Income Tax Act.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 75 — An Act to amend The Family Services Act

HON. MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. minister, in his absence, I move first reading of a bill to amend The Family Services Act.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 76 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Assistance Act

HON. MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a bill to amend The Saskatchewan Assistance Act.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 77 — An Act to amend The Rehabilitation Act

HON. MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a bill to amend The Rehabilitation Act.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 78 — An Act to amend The Housing and Special-care Homes Act

HON. MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a bill to amend The Housing and Special-care Homes Act.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 79 — An Act to amend The Veterinarians Act

MR. MOSTOWAY: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a bill to amend The Veterinarians Act be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly

MR. SPEAKER: — I want to lay on the Table the final report of the special committee on review of rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly dated April 21, 1981.

MR. BANDA: — Mr. Speaker, before moving a motion of concurrence in the report, I just want to make a few comments. The rules and procedures committee has had a number of meetings. It has looked at many procedures and operations in other jurisdictions, as well as the procedures and workings of committee in the United Kingdom. I think the committee has brought in a very good report — one which brings in some new initiatives and changes in the operation of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I think the majority of the members of the committee support the report. They have worked hard in their deliberations to bring forth the recommendations which we have tabled before us. One of the changes of interest to the members of the Assembly is the setting up of the new committee which has recommended TV in the House and the changes which go along with that. We are establishing a board of internal economy which is a first for the province of Saskatchewan and one which has

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been adopted in some other jurisdictions and is working well. We will be changing some of the debates on private members' day by bringing in a 75-minute debate which would alternate between opposition and the members on the government side of the House. This is to take place every second week. Certainly, the debate will take place on whatever the members want to raise and I know it will make private members' day more interesting and probably more learned.

We are also bringing in some changes to other areas which I think will help to make the committees better structured. We will change the numbers on committees so that the members find themselves with more time to do other work and so that we don't have such a large number on some of the committees. I think one of the other new initiatives which you will find in the report is the power to set up new select committees subject to a budget being approved by the board of internal economy. These select committees will be able to study specific subjects which they choose and which they feel are necessary, and make recommendations to the Assembly.

I think, all in all, it is a very good report, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move, seconded by the hon. member for Weyburn, Mr. Pepper:

That the final report of the select committee on the review of rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly be now concurred in.

MR. PEPPER: — Mr. Speaker, the rules and regulations committee, as the mover stated, had the opportunity to study and to review the regulations governing this Saskatchewan Assembly. In doing so, we visited other Houses in Alberta, Ontario and the British Commonwealth and we were able to make many comparisons between their regulations in committee structures and ours.

True enough, as a committee, Mr. Speaker (like all committee which meet), there is not unanimous agreement as to how and what changes should be made. But I do think that a reasonable compromise and advancement in rules and regulations governing this House has been made and is now, today, tabled in this report. As time progresses, Mr. Speaker, perhaps other changes and a future study may have to be made, but until that time, I am pleased to second the motion of concurrence that was now presented by the member for Redberry, Mr. Banda, and I ask all members to support and adopt this motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ANDREW: — As a member of this committee, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks with regard to the report to advise the members of the Assembly that this committee, of which I was a member, held (I don't know how many) a large number of meetings and did a fair amount of travelling and a fair volume of research on this whole report. I think most of the members of the committee approached this with a want or a desire for a unanimous report.

At this point I would like to compliment three members of this committee — the member for Regina Rosemont, who did an excellent amount of work for the government caucus, the member for Moose Jaw North and the member for Saskatoon Centre. I believe we did have a unanimous report of this committee which we referred to as the fourth draft; that was in early March just prior to the opening of the session. That, of course, was pretty much agreed on by the members of the committee; it certainly had close to unanimous support.

The report which is presently on the Table, however, broke down, as far as I'm concerned. It is referred to in the rules committee as "the fourth draft revised by the government members of the committee." Therein lies the serious problem which I will address in a few minutes with regard to this report. I sought, along with the member for Maple Creek and the Leader of the Opposition, to have a unanimous report. As a result we gave in a lot of areas, and we felt we did have that unanimous report, only to be undercut, I suppose. I think the blame has to rest on the House Leader, the Attorney General. So, I refer to this report as the Romanow report and not the report of the rules committee.

I will talk about this, in this regard. I think if you go back and look at the matters raised by the member for Weyburn . . . We have television in the House; that's granted, and that was through the rules committee last fall. Quite frankly, it was brought in because of the pressure of the media. I think that is the most honest way that we, as politicians, can address the question. That was brought in last fall, and to my knowledge, there still has not been an order placed to acquire the television equipment. As the members of the committee have been advised and are aware, once the order is placed we are probably looking at a year of lead time before we, in fact, have television.

I think that delay has been as a result of the cabinet delaying approval of the funding. The committee unanimously agreed; the House unanimously agreed in the fall session; still there is no action on it. The net result is that there will be a delay on the televising at least until the fall session in 1983; that's the earliest there will be television in the legislature.

I agree with the member for Weyburn that we have taken some positive steps. We have the committee of internal economy. Now, that is not going to improve the lot, if you like, of the people of Saskatchewan. What it is is a committee of the legislature to deal with matters relating to the Legislative Assembly. From that point of view, I think it is a positive step forward. We copied this from the Ontario situation; I think it also exists in seven out of the other 10 provinces. It will deal with matters relating to the Legislative Assembly spending estimates, that type of thing. We are also proposing, in conjunction with this, that certain estimates that we'll call non-controversial estimates will not be handled in the House or, with unanimous approval of the House, will be delegated to an estimates committee. Personally, my preference is that type of approach has some merit for a lot of estimates but, at this point, we're dealing with non-controversial estimates and the estimates of the committee of internal economy.

I think the position on private members' day is that we are concerned as a committee that private members' day did not obtain very much coverage by the media. It was sort of a non-event, not very interesting, and as a result we felt we had to look for ways to make private members' day a more interesting forum, both for the media and particularly for the members from the back benches on the government side. The proposal put forward and adopted initially was that we would have a 75-minute debate every private members' day in the legislature. Each member would be allowed to speak for 10 minutes and the debate would go back and forth. At the end of the 75 minutes — and this was the key and important factor — there would be a mandatory vote on that motion. One week the motion would come from the government side; the next week the motion would come from the opposition side. I would just like to read the resolution of the minutes of February 3, 1981 meeting. And here is what it says:

The committee reviewed ways and means of improving private members'

day. The committee agreed to recommend to the Legislative Assembly that each Tuesday there shall be a 75-minute period set aside after oral question period, in orders of the day, for a special debate on a topic as chosen by the government one week, and the opposition the next. The rule would be written so as to allow the mover of the motion 15 minutes in order to introduce his remarks or an accumulated total of 15 minutes to introduce and close the debate, plus 10 minutes for other members speaking in the debate to a maximum of 75 minutes, with the speakers alternating back and forth from the government and opposition sides, and that the motion or potential amendments would come to a vote at the conclusion of the 75 minutes.

That was agreed unanimously by the members attending that committee meeting. Of course, what you see now the rules committee report, as put on the Table today by Mr. Speaker, is that will not happen every week; it will happen every other week.

The mandatory vote provision has been eliminated from the rules. There is no mandatory vote, so we're going to have a situation where you can simply speak the matter out every other Tuesday. My view is that it's a cop-out by the members of the committee not to go along with the proposal originally agreed upon that we would have a 75-minute debate each private members' day.

The other thing which I think is probably the most positive part about the entire report is that we have adopted the system in place in Great Britain as it relates to committees. Those are what we refer to as the select committees. What it means is that the members of the legislature, roughly broken down according to proposition in the House, can choose any topic that they wish when session is not on. They may wish to investigate the crow, uranium development or the problem in the provincial penitentiaries of whatever it might be. As long as the members from either side, such as the member for Saskatoon-Sutherland, the member for Rosetown-Elrose and five or six other people, put a proper proposal before the members of the committee, they can study that. They can also be given research and travelling allowances, etc. I think that is perhaps the most significant part of this report. It is significant if the members of this legislature are prepared to look seriously at that particular problem, as the members of parliament for Great Britain have. It is exactly that type of committee that Mr. Kershaw (in the Kershaw report — through a select committee exactly the same as this) chose to investigate the whole question of Canadian constitutional problem.

The impact of the Kershaw report in this country has been very dramatic. That type of situation is there for us. It is there only if the members of the legislature are prepared to take a topic. I think the recommendation of the committee studying this is that it is valuable if the topics chosen are not the current political topics of the day. To do that, you simply polarize into one line or another of political views. Hopefully, those committees will be studying things in advance of government policies and will come in with recommendations in advance of government action. In that way, the members of the back bench as on the government side can have more input into the process of government, and also have an opportunity, with the potential media coverage of this committee during the time when the session is not on, to deal with current questions with a view toward the future and, in that sense, hopefully, impact on the future policy that the government can have.

Those are the questions with which the committee dealt. My view on the question of parliamentary reform is that our system must look at parliamentary reform in a much

more aggressive way than we have in this report.

What we have done in this report is to take some of what we could see in other jurisdictions and apply it to our situation — given the fact that we have a small number of members relative to most Houses of parliament, when you look at Great Britain, Ontario and Ottawa, where more of the reform is coming through.

It is difficult to simply superimpose those policies on the province and on the legislature of Saskatchewan, because of our size and because of the fact that perhaps one-third of the members who sit in the Assembly are members of the treasury benches. I think we have to look at those types of things. From the report, I would say there is some good to it. But the problem with the report in the end, the way I see it, is that many of the members on the government side voted according to the directions of the cabinet, and not according to their own views. To me, that is one of the most serious problems that this entire Legislative Assembly faces. It is clearly the most important problem that the new select committees are going to face. If we aren't prepared as members to get away from simply arguing the political line of one side or the other, then our credibility with the public is going to diminish more than it is today. I think that is the thing that we have to address.

Perhaps the most eloquent way this was put during our committee investigation was by George Cunningham, who was a well-known parliamentarian and a member of the Labour Party in Great Britain. He said that democracy is entrusted to the members of the back bench on the government side. I think that is very close to being true. He said that if you are going to make your decisions behind closed doors in the caucus room and vote clearly and simply on party lines, then you might as well shut the front door and send everyone home, because that is how relevant and how important you are.

I don't think it is that serious, but I think what he is saying is very true. We in Canada seem to be boxing ourselves in so much closer to government or to political party policy in every respect. What I would like to make is a submission I made to the committee which, I think, covers some of the areas I would like to have seen the committee move in.

Number one, and I think perhaps the most important area of political or parliamentary development that we need, not only in this province but in this entire country, is in the area of freedom of information. I know the Attorney General has expressed his views on that on several occasions. But, without that information flow from government through to the legislature and out to the people, parliamentary reform is very difficult. You need the information first before anything else can take place.

Another proposal I would like to have seen happen is the new procedure being developed in Ontario. I think it has a lot of merit. What it does is take the present estimates, what we call the estimates of the committee of finance, and refer them to a committee of finance and economic affairs. That committee of finance and economic affairs would be dealing with the fundamental question parliament is geared for, and that is to control the public purse. That would be held outside the Legislative Assembly Chamber. There would be a fair number of research and development people working with that committee, and we would be dealing with the study of government's future spending as set out in the Lambert report. To replace the present situation, Ontario is bringing in what is called a committee on policy, so that each department of government would come before the legislature — just like we do in our estimates. It would then be open while questioning the policy of that given department or Crown

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corporation, supposedly, in Ontario. I think there is a fair amount of merit to moving in that direction because that's what we found happening in our travels in all jurisdictions — not only in our province but in every other jurisdiction.

Where they dealt with estimates they were dealing with the questions of policy back and forth, whether it be labor, whether it be environment, or whatever it might be. I think that's important for the members of the Assembly to be able to have that back-and-forth discussion. But I think it's very important to deal with the entire question of economic and financial development. That, I would propose, should have been out into a committee. That committee would be tied very tightly to the public accounts committee. During our travels, we heard from the public accounts committee of Ontario, the public accounts committee of Ottawa, and the public accounts committee in Great Britain. The question that was put to them, I think first of all by various members of our committee, was the question of being open to the media. Bear in mind that in each of those public accounts committees the form was the same as ours. It would be deputy ministers or anyone else that they wished to call who would appear before that committee.

Ontario was the first place we talked, and I think the best statement was made by the NDP House Leader. I forget what his name was. He was absolutely amazed that, in fact, public accounts would be sitting behind closed doors. He said the only value of public accounts is that you can have some exposure to the media to bring the government to account by that impact. The people in Ottawa, in all political parties, were saying exactly the same thing. It is absolutely ludicrous to be thinking that you should be appearing behind closed doors. The final one, and I think perhaps the most significant, was Great Britain, because, as some of you might know, they only moved toward open public accounts in 1977. The question was put, I believe, to the former vice-chairman of the public accounts committee who was a Conservative at the time. We asked him, "Do you regret having moved away from being in camera to being open?" His comment was, "Well, I was sort of the guy who was leading the charge to keep the committee closed, and to keep the committee behind closed doors." I have to tell you people after proceeding with the open committee for the last two years, that nobody now supports the concept of a "behind closed doors" public accounts committee. That was the information that we as a committee found. At not one juncture did we find anybody outside of this province in favor of closed public accounts committees, not one. That's the information we had. Their committees are run the same as ours, yet, the motion being put, nobody supported it other than the opposition side. I think that this is somewhat unfortunate.

With regard to Crown corporations committee, the committee voted to do nothing with it. Again, I think that is unfortunate. I think the Crown corporations committee is another committee which could use some upgrading. I don't say this as a person who has sat on that committee, because I have not. It seems to me that when you are dealing with that much money, when you are dealing with complex financial involvement, I think there should be more accounting of those Crown corporations. I think it should be done through additional research and the type of approach taken by the province of British Columbia.

I did also submit the question of investigative committees and, to the credit of the government members, the way it was presented in the report did not tamper with the presentation. I think that that is positive and the best thing we have seen there.

The one other area that I submitted, I think, addresses what I see as one of the

fundamental questions of parliamentary government in Canada, and perhaps in the Commonwealth. I think all the documents which were submitted to us, all the academic writing, whatever it might have been, basically set the problem of parliament in perspective. What has happened is that the growth of the executive branch of government has increased dramatically and there has been no corresponding increase in the balance of it for the legislature. So what we are having, as some have described, is a presidential system without the checks and balances of the United States. I don't think that is quite right, but I think everybody agrees that the massive growth of the executive branch of government has been without any offsetting control the other way.

One area which I believe we could resolve that with, and resolve the question of the backbench member not having the profile, not having the input that should be there is, to study the whole question of proportional representation for the province of Saskatchewan. I think the proposal put forward by the Canada West Foundation as it applies to the entire country or our parliament could be clearly adapted to the Saskatchewan situation. What I would like to see and propose for consideration of the members of the Legislative Assembly for further study, into the question of proportional representation, would be a split proposal where you would split your vote. In other words, let us say we moved the membership of the Assembly up — take a figure of 80 members as an example — 40 of those members would be voted on a provincial-wide basis; 40 of them would be constituency people. So every person going to the poll could say, "I want to vote for party A to be the government in Saskatchewan, but I would like to vote for this fellow down here who belongs to party B because I think he could do a better job as a member." So the person could vote for the party of his choice, but also vote for the member who he felt could do the better job in the Assembly. What we would have here, I think, is really addressing the reality of what politics has come to and what the parliamentary form of government has come to.

By half of the members being elected as constituent people, you would address the question of a more independent approach being taken by the various people who are elected on a constituency basis. They would then have support staff, but they would also be elected — more for who they are, rather than for which party they happen to belong to. That's the reality of what we face today, if everyone wants to be serious about it, and I think that would have some merit.

As well, each party would then put up a slate which, I propose, would be regulated by its various political party organizations. It would probably represent the whole gamut of the province, territorially, so that, perhaps, the ruling party would have 20 members of the slate elected, plus, perhaps, another 20 or 25 members of the constituency elected. The second and third parties would elect their top officials and that would represent better the positions of the political parties. It would also strengthen the idea of the private members in the legislature — the members elected on a constituency basis.

That's a proposal that was advanced. It received no support from either the Conservative members of the committee or the members from the government side. I think it's somewhat unfortunate that we couldn't study that matter a little bit further, because I think there is clearly some merit in that whole approach.

So, looking at the basis of the report, I think that we failed as a committee to really address the question as well as I thought it should have been addressed.

I suppose it's hardly an authority on parliamentary reform, but I would like to read into

the record some of the quotations from Alvin Toffler's book on the third wave, which I think some of the members opposite would certainly agree with. One area where I think that Toffler addressed the question, perhaps more meaningfully than anybody in this Assembly has, goes as follows:

Today in every sphere of social life, in our family, our schools, our businesses and our churches, in our energy systems and communications, we face the need to create new third-wave forms. A million people in many countries are already beginning to do so. Nowhere, however, is obsolescence more advanced or more dangerous than our political life, and in no field today do we find less imagination, less experiment, less willingness to contemplate fundamental changes.

I think that is very true. But what is happening in our whole system, when we look at this, is that the members opposite are basically covered by this situation: "We're here, we're in power; we got here under this particular system; therefore we don't need to reform this institution." That's really the attitude that is being taken by the members opposite.

Hopefully, the select committees can have some merit and can work. The only way they can work is if the back-bench members opposite are prepared to stand on their own two feet, are prepared to stand for some of their own views and not simply mouth the views of the members of treasury board. So it's my hope that we can have some progress with that. Without that, quite frankly, I think the views of George Cunningham are true, and in fact this institution is becoming less and less relevant. People are looking more and more cynically at the institution of parliament and, I think, for a valid reason they probably should. Given that, I think the report has some good parts in it. There are some parts which are lacking.

I have one other comment to make. The committee originally recommended that we get rid of the committee on agriculture, the committee on education and the committee on municipal affairs. The reason we figure we might as well get rid of them is that they haven't sat since 1926 and we are bringing in new select standing committees. I will particularly look at the member for Weyburn because he wanted to maintain the committee on agriculture.

Here is the logic and here is why cynicism should be directed toward this institution. He wanted to maintain the committee on agriculture so that politicians could tell their constituents that we are, in fact, sitting on the committee on agriculture. That is the rationale and the reason for it and I think that is very unfortunate. That is the rationale for keeping the committee and that is why there should be cynicism directed at this institution. If we are going to send out to the constituents letters saying, "I sit on the agriculture committee," when that committee hasn't sat in 50 years, then we don't deserve any more than the insults which are being directed at this institution. That is clear if we are not prepared to address the question of parliamentary reform. If we are not prepared to look seriously at that question, then we deserve no such thing.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to say a few words, basically as a result of the words of the member for Kindersley.

I want to start off my remarks by saying that in the several years I have been in this legislature I have seen opposition and government members come and go. Some of us have commented over the last few years on why it is that the Conservative opposition,

as it is presently constituted, apparently seems to be so aimless (or if you will misdirected) with respect to its general legislative thrust. I believe, Mr. Speaker, the answer is seen in the speech just delivered by the hon. member for Kindersley — a speech which indicates a pitiful lack of understanding of how the parliamentary process works, not only in Saskatchewan but also in our country, Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I reject, outright, the proposition that this institution is viewed cynically by the public of Saskatchewan or by the public of Canada. I reject, outright, a basic proposition or a fundamental thesis which divides MLAs into two categories of people: those MLAs who should somehow do constituency work only and those MLAs who should somehow do only government work. This is the proposition which the hon. member advocated; or, if you will, he coupled it with some form of a philosophy by Toffler not even relevant to the Canadian situation. It is a philosophy which talks about no public respect or confidence in the political process. Mr. Speaker, if there is any more cynical, bitter view of this great institution, this parliament, than that expressed by the member for Kindersley I have yet to hear it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — I want the members of this House and the people of Saskatchewan to contemplate what it would be like if we had a Conservative government and how the rules of this House would look. Mr. Speaker, we would have elected certain categories of MLAs as I have described. The hon. member talks about a certain number of categories of MLAs who would do constituency work only — the true work of the private MLA. Then you would have a category of MLAs (and I don't know to whom they would be responsible), who would deal with all of those unimportant issues. They'd be spending \$2.6 billion of the budget each and every year. They'd be making expenditures on Crown corporations of billions of dollars each year. They'd be passing legislation from the Executive Council point of view each year. How would they be elected, Mr. Speaker? They would not be elected by a constituency. They would, presumably, be elected by some general, amorphous province-wide slate — a slate election business. How specific names would be chosen is unclear. Who would be asked to serve; who would be the leader or the deputy leader of the operation, presumably, would be unknown. The members of the slate would get together in the backroom or at some appropriate time and choose those categories of MLAs to do the unimportant work of government as opposed to the important work of ordinary MLAs.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no more cynical nor more misdirected approach to what parliament is all about. As I said at the very beginning of my remarks, if there is anything which I have seen in my last four or five years in this Legislative Assembly, it is the operations of this opposition. This Conservative opposition is uncomfortable with the democratic parliamentary system and, more importantly, it knows absolutely nothing about the way the democratic parliamentary system operates. To propagate a point of view that there is going to be two categories of MLAs is absolutely the most false and spurious kind of notion that can ever be perpetrated on the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I frankly resent (and the hon. member can describe it any way he wants; if I were a member of this House, I would resent it) the accusation that the report belongs to one member — Romanow report or however it works out. If there is any one member who is political in all of his dealings in this Legislative Assembly, I want to tell the

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members of the House, it is the hon. member for Kindersley, bar none. I just want to indicate one thing which would emphasize my point. Take the public accounts committee . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, my dander is not up. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the hon. member for Moosomin that I will tell him when my dander gets up so that he can be present in the House to experience it.

I want to tell the hon. member opposite for Moosomin about this member for Kindersley and his position with respect to public accounts. The hon. member takes the position that the public accounts committee should be open. If the public accounts committee should be open, then I want the hon. members opposite to tell me how that's consistent with having an appointed official do the public responding for public policy in a public forum. The Legislative Assembly has had an open public accounts committee. If it is going to be open again (in the sense of the hon. members opposite), if the elected politicians whose job it is to promote Mr. Devine, whose job it is to promote the Conservative policy every step of the way, whose job it is on an elected basis to propagate the propaganda of their party, will ask us as a government to unfairly bind ourselves by the limitations to which an appointed civil servant must obviously limit himself in responding to questions, I say that's an unfair and a spurious suggestion of the way the public accounts committee should be set up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — The member for Kindersley would have this kind of situation take place. In the full eye of the press, he and his colleagues would get before the public accounts committee and put forward the specific propositions that the Conservatives have advocated on this specific electoral policy platform. They would put it in the most partisan and political fashion and expect that an appointed deputy minister or some other appointed official should be able to respond in time. I say, Mr. Speaker, that it is a shocking and unfair accusation which is unworthy of an opposition. Not only is it shocking and unworthy, it is a deliberately designed proposal to politicize the public accounts committee.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the best example of politicizing a public accounts committee is what took place apparently a few days ago while I was in eastern Canada: the resignation of the member for Kindersley as chairman of the public accounts committee. Mr. Speaker, there have been parliamentarians of this legislature who, I would say, were every bit as good as the member for Kindersley.

I think of Mr. J.H. Brockelbank, who was the chairman of the public accounts committee. I would name other chairmen of the public accounts committee who worked in that capacity in opposition with a closed public accounts committee, who called up the deputy minister, who called up the officials if necessary, who dealt with the provincial auditor, who dealt with all of the records and tabled all of the records, and never once resigned in supposed frustration.

Mr. Speaker, if there ever was a blatant political act, it is that. If there is anything which is equally as blatant, it is the speech given by the hon. member for Kindersley along those lines. you can't have it both ways. If you want to have the public accounts committee public and open to the press, then you have to give the politicians on the government side the same right to defend from the public accusations. To suggest anything else by any other member, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely spurious and political.

I say to the hon. members opposite that the hon. member for Kindersley perhaps can

fool the hon. member for Rosthern or the hon. member for Moosomin; maybe he can fool all of the PC members about how he proposed, in a non-partisan way (supposedly), the idea of a public accounts committee which is apolitical. But I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, he is not fooling the members on this side of the House, or the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says that the committee report is of questionable value. I ask the members of this House to contemplate what the committee has done, or what it recommends doing. It recommends television like an electronic journal styled on the House of Commons method, here in Saskatchewan.

What do the Conservatives in Alberta recommend in their style of House rules and House administration? They don't have that. What do the Conservatives in Manitoba have as their style of television? They don't have that. And that hon. member has the audacity to accuse us — having an opening to a closing electronic journal system (probably the best, next to the House of Commons) — of being inadequate. I say nothing could be more . . . (inaudible) . . . than the hon. member opposite.

The hon. member says this is not a recommendation of the committee. He pulls out of the blue a statement that the government . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The Hon. member for Moosomin apparently likes the Alberta mechanism. The member for Moosomin likes to have the Alberta PC and the Manitoba PC mechanism for having the House televised. That's a very simple mechanism. They will bring in the private television cameras, focus them toward the government and take snatches of TV flips for 25 or 30 minutes a day, facing one way only. That is what the member for Moosomin would want us to have.

I am saying to the member for Moosomin that the work done by this committee in that area alone is sufficient to support the recommendations of this committee on television, and I challenge any member opposite to deny that.

Mr. Speaker, what about the business of committee on committees? I'm not afraid of television. I wish we had had television here to have recorded the seven hour strike by the Conservatives three weeks ago. I'm looking forward to television in this Legislative Assembly. I'm looking forward to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! I wonder if we could have some order? When the previous speaker was on his feet, the House was very quiet and attentive, and I wonder if we could give the same kind of attention to this speaker? Possibly, if there is a further speaker, we could extend it even to that person.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I was saying that I welcome television, and I only wish that we had had it three weeks ago when we saw the Conservative strike of seven hours. I was making the point, before the hon. member for Qu'Appelle came in, that if there is anything which has proven to me the awkwardness of this Conservative opposition with the parliamentary system, it was the speech made by the member for Kindersley today.

If there is anything which would further verify that statement, it's that six hour, seven hour strike I have talked about. If there is any further evidence required, it is the other strike taken by the member for Kindersley. The member for Kindersley doesn't like the way the public accounts committee is structured. So what does he do? He doesn't try to make the system work; he doesn't continue the valuable work of all of those

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predecessors of his who made it work. He doesn't make the parliamentary system work to his advantage. No, what he says is, "I'm going to take my baseball bat and I'm going to take my baseball and I'm going to quit as chairman of the public accounts committee, because they're not going to play by my rules."

Mr. Speaker, this is from the members of the opposition who would have the press and the public believe that somehow they stand for true parliamentary reform. Mr. Speaker, there is a major job to be done on public accounts. I want the people of this province to see on television the member for Thunder Creek, the member for Qu'Appelle and the other members of the Conservative opposition show their contempt for the Legislative Assembly by being thrown out time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, you tie up all of the evidence that I have articulated, the evidence of the seven-hour strike, the evidence of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle having been thrown out the numbers of times that he has (and also the member for Thunder Creek) and the resignation, the strike taken by the member for Kindersley. I would like the hon. member for Kindersley to tell his people in Kindersley how they justify his refusing to do his job as a member of the Legislative Assembly as chairman of the public accounts committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — How does he justify that? Mr. Speaker, this television approach is exactly what needs to be done for this Legislative Assembly. We're not afraid of seeing this. I would like to see the people of Saskatchewan witness the divisions in that Conservative caucus as they see the would-be leader, the member for Qu'Appelle, struggling with the other would-be leader, the member for Thunder Creek, both of whom are struggling against the leader who will never be leader in this Legislative Assembly, the member from nowhere, Mr. Devine. I want television to show that kind of an example to the people of Saskatchewan. I know it. All I have to do is take a look at the backbenchers around. I can see the divisions that are being played on when the member for Qu'Appelle gets up on a follow-up question. Invariably every question of every member from the PC caucus is supplemented by the member for Thunder Creek or by the member for Qu'Appelle. I want the people of Saskatchewan to see that on television and the sooner the better, Mr. Speaker. That is a major recommendation (I say to the members of this Assembly and to the public) that doesn't justify being thrown out.

We've set up a board of internal economy. It's not the board that the member for Kindersley would want but it is a major board of internal economy and the principle is established. It is a committee of the members of the opposition and the government. They will now be making recommendations. They will be putting forward proposals on space, on budgets and other matters. Mr. Speaker, would the Conservatives throw that out as well?

Mr. Speaker, there is another major recommendation dealing with the 75-minute debate. The member for Kindersley doesn't like that. He apparently wants it done away with. The hon. member for Kindersley quotes from minutes of February 5, 1981. I say that he quotes from those minutes knowing full well it's against the procedures and the rules of this House to quote, out of context, minutes such as he did today.

I say the member for Kindersley knows full well that when we dealt with that report on a

page-by-page, line-by-line basis, the position taken by all the members of the committee (including the member for Kindersley), as late as three weeks ago, was that no aspect of the report had yet been finalized and that we were able to look at all the specific proposals. He knows that to be the case and I will ask the hon. member for Maple Creek to get up and to deny that when I take my place. I want the member to deny it because it was there at the meeting of March 25 or 26 and it was put specifically by Mr. Chairman at that time. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Kindersley is playing footloose with the members' privileges in this House when he takes the position which he did with regard to the 75 minutes. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, what makes him angry about this is not the principle of 75 minutes. What makes him angry is that there is no vote at the end of the 75 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, in no jurisdiction anywhere is there a vote after the 75 minutes — nowhere. Only in Saskatchewan do the Conservatives want it. Only in Saskatchewan do the Conservatives want to put private members' day aside totally. They want to put aside, Mr. Speaker, the various private members' resolutions which appear every Tuesday. There happen to be seven motions put on by seven backbenchers, both government and opposition, on private members' day, ranging over all kinds of topics. They want to put that aside. They want to put in a 75-minute emergency motion which, in effect, negates all the work done by the individual back-bench MLAs. This comes from the member who said that the role with respect to a Legislative Assembly depends upon the strength and the importance of the back-bench MLAs. Here we have the back-bench MLAs advocating their particular motions and their resolutions. The member now turns around and says that it is not good enough. The member says that what he wants is to put those back on the back burner and come to the 75-minute special motion — not only that, but to a binding vote, something which does not exist in any other jurisdiction in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I say that is a phony argument by the hon. member for Kindersley.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we also have installed the question of the committee on committees, which is a significant step forward. I, frankly, don't know how this committee on committees will work. One will see if the United Kingdom experience, which apparently is the basis of this idea, can be translated to Saskatchewan. In a 650-member House of Commons, which has a variety of individual back-bench MPs with the time and expertise to deal with specific topics, that system may work. Whether it does in a 61-member House in Saskatchewan, time will prove. But the fact is, that is another major reform.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that there are four major areas which, by any yardstick any Legislative Assembly would be proud to endorse: television, the committee on committee, the board of internal economy, the establishment of the principle of the 75-minute debate — a compromise between that and allowing the individual MLAs to have their individual motions debated. Mr. Speaker, that is a good report. It is not a report which justifies a philosophy of cynicism, a philosophy of skepticism, which is the philosophy of the doom and gloom boys opposite, not only with regard to this report, but with regard to the province of Saskatchewan.

I say to the hon. member for Kindersley, and to all of the PCs opposite, it is time to grow up, it is time to mature as a political party and as an opposition. Just because we are not going to agree with everything you agree to doesn't mean that what is agreed to by compromise by everybody should be thrown out. Just because we don't agree with your philosophy of how parliament is viewed by the public doesn't mean that we need to have a report predicated on that. I say to the hon. member for Kindersley and to the

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Conservatives opposite that what the people of this province want is political maturity. They don't want people saying that because they don't get it their way, they are going to walk out for seven hours, or they are going to walk off the job of the public accounts committee, or they are simply not going to do the public's business. Mr. Speaker, that is a childish and unwarranted attitude worthy of condemnation and rejection by this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, let me close by saying that I had not intended to enter into this debate. I did so only because of what I believe to be the very, very partisan and unfair observations of the member for Kindersley. It doesn't surprise me, because he has been doing that all along with public accounts, with television, pulling out some imagined treasury board report which says: no television until 1983.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Not imagined, real.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — The member for Qu'Appelle says it's real. I want the hon. member for Qu'Appelle or the member for Maple Creek, after I sit down, to table that treasury board report. Mr. Speaker, I say that the members opposite have no shred of evidence whatsoever, with respect to television or any of these other matters. They simply pull these accusations out of the air; they manufacture something out of whole cloth; then they hope the press will be gullible enough to print it, and to then peddle that misconception and that untruth around the province of Saskatchewan.

I say to all members of this House: let's for goodness sake, get on with the job. Let's stop this petty gamesmanship. If you talk about the role and the respect of this parliament, it doesn't come from speeches like the member for Kindersley, nor does it come from the shenanigans of the members for Qu'Appelle and Thunder Creek, nor does it come by the seven-hour shenanigan of the Conservative caucus in walking out. It only comes about by all of us standing up and doing a responsible job, the best way we can, in this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MRS. DUNCAN: — Mr. Speaker, that was quite an entertaining speech by the Attorney General, but it has little relevance to the topic at hand. What we are discussing is the final report of the special committee on rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly. I believe that many of the points listed by the member for Kindersley are true. The Attorney General got up and went on a tangent talking about television. He said that the PCs do this and they do that in Manitoba and in Alberta. I can tell the Attorney General that as a member of the rules committee, members from this side supported an Ottawa-style electronic system for Saskatchewan. In fact, I think I made the motion and it was accepted unanimously. I might add that it was probably accepted unanimously because the Attorney General didn't happen to be at that meeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MRS. DUNCAN: — I could also wager, Mr. Speaker, given the sequence of events since last fall and the acceptance by this House of our interim report, that TV will not even be in this House for the next session., I would further say that it will be up to us on this side of the House to get TV in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Attorney General, who does not sit on the public accounts committee, has very little idea of the duties of that committee. We were charged by this Legislative Assembly when we filed our report last spring to study in detail comprehensive auditing. For the Attorney General to say that the past chairman talked of comprehensive auditing as a political thing is absolutely ludicrous.

We were asked by this Assembly to study comprehensive auditing in detail, I might add. We were to call witnesses; we were to call papers; and we were to call anything we deemed fit. I would have to ask if the Attorney General is questioning the function of the committee when we are trying to carry out the duties we have been charged with. We have asked for papers. We went to Ottawa and met with the public accounts there; we met with the public accounts committee in Toronto. We came back to Saskatchewan. Several names, of course, come up when a person speaks of comprehensive auditing because it's a fairly new process in Canada. We have suggested the names of Robert Andras and Mr. Macdonell. I'm sure everyone is aware they are probably two of the foremost experts in the field of comprehensive auditing. I found it extremely regretful that the members of the government side of public accounts refused to have expert witnesses called before our committee, and I think it is actually a dereliction of what they have been charged to do.

Getting to the reports, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that we spent many long hours discussing the third draft of our report, and many, many recommendations were put forth by all members of the committee. I must say that we did hammer out a unanimous report, and it was the third report of the committee. Clearly, for myself I can say that I was utterly dismayed when we came back to go over the final (the third) report to find that yet another report had come.

When we were in Britain it was stated to us very clearly that somehow their committees work very smoothly and very well, and partisan politics do not enter into their committee system. But I must say, Mr. Speaker, that here in Saskatchewan, partisan politics always enter into all committees. We seem to have a government bloc voting one way, with the odd opposition member supporting it. I think one of the things we discussed was proportional representation. Perhaps the member for Kindersley is enthused with that idea, but when we discussed it, it was rejected by everyone except the member for Kindersley. He did give us food for thought, and he put a lot of work into his report.

But to vote without using your commitment, or your personal principles (as the member for Moosomin said), I think is more of a dereliction of duty than to rubber-stamp something that obviously was changed by the Attorney General. I can echo the remarks of the member for Kindersley. We have made a fair number of very good recommendations. A lot of the recommendations that were carried in the third report were brought forth by negotiation with government members, and I only wish that the third report would have been tabled as it was.

MR. SKOBERG: — Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a few words in regard to the final report of the special rules committee. I think first we should remember that each and every one of the members at the meetings, whether in Regina, in England, or in Toronto or Ottawa, did a remarkable job in attending every meeting that was held.

I would like to personally say that the hon. member for Redberry did a magnificent job in putting together the draft that we are now talking about. He put together for us and our caucus many of the things that we have now spoken about this afternoon. It is rather

remarkable, when you really think about it and when we talk about parliamentary democracy, to suggest a special committee be selected to deal with a subject, come back and make a report, and then suggest that it shouldn't be discussed by the other elected members of this legislature, because that is really what makes parliamentary democracy work in this House or any other House in a democratic country.

I also suggest that it is very naive for the hon. member for Kindersley to suggest that he didn't go back to his caucus and get direction. It is very naive indeed for anyone to suggest, on either side of the House, that we do not talk to each other to decide whether or not we can agree as a party within this House that we have here. Anyone here knows very well that that has to be the way it operates, and that's the way it will have to be operating throughout any time of history that any of us can think about. When anyone suggests this report was an individual report of an individual person and that the committee was directed entirely by the cabinet, he is entirely out to lunch. I'm sure that the hon. member for Maple Creek would agree with that. There is no doubt in my mind that there has to be compromise in any report. That's exactly what happened in this one. I believe that all members of the House and all members of the committee recognize the fact that this report is a generally acceptable report of which all of us should be proud and which we should not take exception to in any particular area.

We have heard all about the public accounts, but let's not fool ourselves for one minute to think that because Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction which has public accounts in camera, that's wrong. We've tried and we've experimented on a number of things in Saskatchewan, and we find that we do have a good way of doing it. There's no reason why public accounts shouldn't remain in camera, the way it is at this particular time. As far as getting into what has happened in public accounts, I am sure that when the report is tabled it will then be thoroughly discussed.

Really, when we look at some of the areas we have dealt with in the table of contents (the hon. members for Redberry and Weyburn have made references to some of these), there are a couple of areas that really mean something in so far as the public of Saskatchewan is concerned. One of them is the private members' bills, and I am sure that many of us have run into the situation where private members' bills can only be introduced at one particular time of the year. Now it's being suggested (with the passage of this) that they be introduced either at the commencement of the fall or the spring portion of the session of the Legislative Assembly. That is a real benefit to the people of Saskatchewan, and for many of those who may not think that means very much, ask the people out there who are trying to put together a private members' bill to be introduced in this House.

The other one that is of some major impact is the fact of when a member shall be suspended from this House. We all recognize the embarrassment of having to do that but now, at least, when the member is named he is automatically suspended from the service of the Assembly for the remainder of the sitting day. I think that's an advancement which has been approved by the members of the rules committee, and it has been one thing which has been brought about in the balanced report we have at this time.

I listened to the hon. member for Kindersley talk about the independence of the backbencher. I might suggest to those opposite if they haven't had the opportunity they'll find out (I don't think they ever will find out, but if they did have the opportunity of finding out) that there are a goodly number of independent motions and motives which can be used by backbenchers. There's no question in the world that the influence

backbenchers have on the cabinet or on departments is tremendous, and that is the purpose of having our system of government. I don't think there's a question in the world that those opposite will never have the opportunity to try to bring about change in the direction of government in this province.

All I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that I believe the contents we have before us should be (and I believe they generally are) accepted by all members of the House. Sure, there's some fine tuning, possibly, which some people would like to do with some of the table of contents and some of the recommendations we have before the House; but the fact remains that it's a start on a new system in a goodly number of areas. I am sure that the hon. member for Kindersley will agree we can start small and make amendments but, at least, let's start with some of the amendments we have now — some of the recommendations in the generally accepted report which I say is to the benefit of all members of this House and all of the public of Saskatchewan.

MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on this report. It's not my first experience with the rules committee. I sat on a previous rules committee struck, I think, in late 1975 or early 1976, in which there were several meetings and some small degree of success as it related to changes in question period. The final report was to deal with renovations to this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

I recall, in that committee as well, that I thought things were going to happen. There was unanimous support for the final report out of the committee. It had to do with some rule changes and renovations to the Chamber, but it fell on its face here in the House because some of the cabinet members decided that the carpet shouldn't be green even though everyone knows that the green would fit very well with the decor here. Because it wasn't their particular party color they voted it down. That's a fact, and the record will show it. I didn't happen to support the idea that it should be blue either. I didn't happen to support it at all, as a matter of fact. There were one or two Liberal members on the committee at that time, and I think they supported it more because it fit with the decor of the House than because it happened to be their particular political color. But some small-minded individual on the other side of the House decided the carpet had to be red. The report was pulled out, thrown into the garbage, and what happened? The Department of Government Services came in and did the renovation anyway without any recommendations from anyone.

I felt, to a large extent, the committee spun its wheels for the years it was sitting, and served no real, useful purpose.

We had another election and a new committee to look at the rules again, and perhaps modify some of the committee structures to make the place work a little better. I thought the thing was really going to work. I think that everyone on the committee, as a matter of fact, put his heart into it and decided that this time it was going to work. There were going to be some changes and streamlining in the House.

The Attorney General says that we are going to get TV. I sincerely hope we do. The member for Moose Jaw North says that we have some modification in the rules of suspension. I agree with those. I think they're wonderful.

I didn't go on the London trip. I attended, I think, every other meeting with the exception of the one last Wednesday and perhaps one other one (it might have been Thursday — I don't know what day it was), but my record isn't that bad as it relates to sitting on this

particular committee.

What happened is that we had unanimous support in that committee for a report, which was somewhat different from what is before us today, only to have it go back to the NDP caucus. It was then watered down, brought back out and watered down, with the strongest argument for that watering down being: "Well, we want to have the committee on agriculture because it's good to mail that information out to the constituent." It doesn't matter that it hasn't sat since 1926, but it's good to be able to mail it out to your constituents and say, "I sit on the committee of agriculture." That was the strongest argument for watering it down . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Why? So you guys could get up and rant and rave, holler and scream and vote against it anyway? We moved, in the committee, on more than one occasion to have these things included.

Last year, I sat on the public accounts committee. We tried to get the issue of comprehensive auditing before the public accounts committee. The public accounts committee said, "Well, what we should do is put it before the rules committee, because they are more properly able to deal with it." So the rules committee then said, "Well, let's put it back before the public accounts committee; let them look after their own committee." I understand . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's for sure, and I'll give you an illustration of that. I understand that the most intelligent argument advanced against comprehensive audit was, "Well, I went to a comprehensive high school once, and that wasn't very good, so I can't see how comprehensive audit can be very good either."

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General knows full well that he put the muzzle on the committee members and brought in his own report. I don't like the way the system works, and I will not be supporting the motion.

MR. JOHNSON: — I believe that the discussion on this particular report which came in this afternoon of the special committee on the review of the rules and procedures has strayed a bit in different directions. I would like to take the opportunity before I adjourn the debate to correct a few misconceptions which seem to be held in the minds of the members opposite.

First of all, I would like to start with the member for Kindersley and the approach which he has taken in regard to both the final report and to other committees on which he has sat. In my mind, Mr. Speaker, he has adopted a policy that you would find relevant to the United States. To some degree, I don't believe this Assembly should find that odd if one takes a look at where the leader who found him to become an MLA presently sits.

Mr. Speaker, when you take a look at comprehensive auditing and some of the items which are being discussed, I have stated before and I will state again, that the term "comprehensive auditing" is to some degree a euphemism. It has been stated in this Assembly this afternoon that it is a new process, and that the investigation of it should bring forward some individuals to present this new process. Mr. Speaker, I contend that it is not a new concept. It is a very old concept which has been around in the management of large organizations for years. It simply is not an auditing system in the sense that it is being presented by the members opposite who are presenting it in a political fashion. They are doing this simply because they are unable to organize the information which is available to them to present a political argument to go in any other direction.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would like to move to adjourn this motion.

Debate adjourned.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 23 — Rural Natural Gas distribution System

MR. MUIRHEAD: — As everyone on this side of the House knows, our party is greatly concerned about gas distribution throughout Saskatchewan, but we can't seem to get a move from the government side on this. My motion is for implementing gas distribution throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

In the 1940s and 1950s, this province was able to supply power to the farms. The same government is in power now. Maybe we could have called them a good government then, but they are not a good government now.

It is my contention that in 1981 we must develop a gas distribution system. This is why I have introduced this motion:

That this Assembly recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan consider designating and implementing, as soon as possible, a rural natural gas distribution system to extend to all rural residents of Saskatchewan the opportunity to have access to natural gas.

It is a well-known fact that large areas of this province do not have access to natural gas. Gas reserves are building significantly, while oil reserves are declining. Gas prices are rising at a slower rate — about 75 per cent lower than oil. Future supply prospects are more positive for gas than for oil. Rural energy increases related to households will be significant.

Mr. Speaker, in the province of Alberta most of the towns and villages have natural gas. In the province of Saskatchewan, 41 per cent of the towns still have no natural gas. I say to the members opposite that this is not a good thing for Saskatchewan farmers. In Alberta 80 per cent of the farms have natural gas, while in Saskatchewan less than 10 per cent have natural gas.

Saskatchewan must harness its full energy and industrial potential through a rural gas system. We have missed opportunities for many parts of this province and indeed have forced higher implementation costs for future generations who are left with the burden of providing essential energy services.

Shared-cost approaches have proven successful in the past in other provinces, with the lion's share of the capital costs originating from the provincial treasury and regional planning responsibility resting with municipalities and local co-operatives. The energy space-filling program would provide all Saskatchewan residents, whether they live on farms, in hamlets, villages or towns, with some heating energy supplied continually. It would facilitate a wide range of industrial food-related activities throughout the province, such as irrigation, pumping, grain drying, greenhouses, livestock water heaters and intensive agricultural processes such as alfalfa dehydration, pelleting and lumber drying.

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This is so important in the 1980s. I think it is time we caught up to the rest of Canada and North America. I have travelled throughout Canada, the United States and other countries of the world, and I have seen that we are behind in Saskatchewan in having natural gas available to farms, and especially to small towns, villages and hamlets.

When the last government was in power, Mr. Speaker, there was a different policy. In 1969, when the gas line went into the town where I lived, the government paid the full cost of bringing the lines to the town; all the people had to do was hook up. This policy has changed with the present government. Since 1971 you will find there have been very few hamlets and towns and almost no farms where natural gas is available. The Minister of the Environment, who says he has natural gas on his farm, is one exception.

I would like to note for the record that since 1971 there has been a 52.9 per cent increase in gas pipeline distribution in Alberta. Here in Saskatchewan, we have had a 29.3 per cent increase. In Alberta, that meant 14,228 kilometres as opposed to Saskatchewan's 1,496 kilometres.

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government in Alberta made a commitment in '71 to expand the provision for natural gas to rural Alberta at reasonable costs. Out of this came the Alberta rural gas program. The Alberta government enacted the Rural Gas Act in 1973. The act provided capital funding based on the premise that it would be economic for each rural consumer to contribute \$1,700 toward building the system and the balance, which would cost up to \$3,000 per consumer, would be covered by the provincial government grants. Customers in hamlets or similar relatively densely populated centres were given status as urban in recognition of lower per customer cost. To serve such areas a contribution of \$600 per customer was required and the balance of costs up to \$1,000 for urban service would be paid by government grants.

It was not expected the system costs, averaged over all services, would exceed \$3,000 per consumer for rural or \$1,000 per consumer for urban service. So, initially, the government expected to contribute up to 44 per cent of the system's cost. Inflation became more severe in the 1970s and it became apparent that the average cost in most areas would certainly exceed the limits. The rural gas program policy was revised several times to permit greater grant assistance in order to keep down the cost charged to the customer through either the initial contribution or financing to be repaid in the gas rebate.

On an individual distributor basis, grant assistance has sometimes exceeded 80 per cent of the total system cost, where difficult terrain has resulted in high construction costs. Overall, to mid-1980, government grants have covered 65 per cent of all construction costs incurred in the rural system program since its inception in 1973 — total of \$153,000 in grants.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just give an example of my own constituency of Arm River as to what the demands are from the people wanting natural gas brought to their towns. We'll take the area from Outlook to Elbow where there have been petitions several times. They are taking a petition in that area now — even their little towns do not have natural gas, let alone the farmers. From Saskatoon to Craik, in 1969, there was a gas line brought down and it has never moved since 1971 when this government came back into power. Now the people living in the next towns continuing on to Regina — Aylesbury, Chamberlain, Findlater, Bethune — cannot understand why their towns can't have the same gas that was implemented by the government preceding.

Now these people in these towns have shown such concerns in my area and also my seatmates; they have had the same pressures put on by the people in their areas. I'm sure the members across must have farmers in small towns in their areas saying the same thing. It cannot just be the people in our areas that want natural gas; it has to be the people in your areas as well. So if this government has so much money to spend (it says that it has done well and it is a wealthy government), Mr. Speaker, I just say that we must do something and we must advance and not be one of the provinces in Canada that is far behind other provinces in gas distribution to our small towns and to our farming communities.

So with that I ask, Mr. Speaker, that we adopt a similar plan in Saskatchewan as they have done in Alberta. I know the government opposite always say that we're always comparing Saskatchewan to Alberta, but why not when they have something there that we haven't and it's better? Why can't we compare? I just hope the government opposite will agree with me on this motion. I urge the Assembly to pass my motion, seconded by the member for Rosetown-Elrose, Herb Swan.

MR. JOHNSON: — Mr. Speaker, the motion being put forward by the member for Arm River is an interesting one, and one that if the costs were effectively laid out would probably be acceptable to everyone. But looking at particular areas in the province (I have asked for and looked at the information), it in effect would be cheaper for the community of Saskatchewan as a whole to pay for the total fuel costs (using oil) of the individual who has his home in that particular area. One of the things the member opposite is suggesting is that we implement a natural gas line to serve all of rural Saskatchewan for no other purpose except that it is an alternate source of energy. Mr. Speaker, natural gas is not an alternate source of energy. It is a petroleum product, and not an alternate to petroleum as some people think. Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate. I think there will be some other members who wish to comment on it later.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY CASH OUTFLOW

AGRICULTURE

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 1

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Would the minister like to introduce his staff?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right is the deputy minister of agriculture, Dr. Gerry Gartner; behind, the associate deputy minister, Marj Benson; the assistant deputy minister, Stu Kramer; Morley Machin from FarmStart; Jim Campbell from crop insurance; Gib Wesson from land bank.

Item 1

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, I would like to raise a few questions with you, dealing with the agricultural estimates. I would like to start with the irrigation area. I know that we have had two or three meetings and have discussed matters and have a proposal from you dealing with irrigation on the west side of Lake Diefenbaker. I still have a major

concern with the proposal that you put forward. I think that the farmers out there are going to find it difficult to raise the \$370,000, or approximately that figure. They have had poor crops for the last few years in that area. They can perhaps raise the amount of money that is needed to put the pumps in, if that's the requirement. But the question then arises: what do they do for money, when it comes back to their own farms, to put in the major capital expenditures that it takes to begin the irrigation system?

So my question to you is: are you prepared to take a further look at your request in the area of the Outlook west side development and, as a department, bring in sufficient capital funding to put the water in the ditch?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the hon. member, I think that the arrangement with the farmers on the west side of Lake Diefenbaker is one that has come about as the result of a good deal of negotiation by the department, the farmers, the hon. member opposite and me. I think even the Premier, a year ago, got into the discussion. What we have arrived at as a result of the negotiation is, I think, pretty much of a 50-50 split on the costs. Our estimate is that it will cost about \$375,000 for the provincial government, which is really taking care of the ditch. The costs to the farmers will be approximately the same amount for the pumps and getting the water into the ditch. So we have, I think, struck a deal and a fairly reasonable deal. Certainly, we went further than we originally thought we would a year ago. I think that has come about as a result of the efforts of the member opposite and the efforts of the farmers. I think it is clear where we stand with respect to that.

With respect to how the farmers will deal with operations on their own land, we have a program in place of a maximum of about a \$2,850 grant, PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration), in addition to providing the engineering services, have also increased their grant from about \$600, as I understand (as a result of a recent announcement), to \$2,000. The engineering service plus a total of close to \$5,000 is available to each of the farmers from both the provincial and federal governments.

I am aware of the request put forward to PFRA for assistance in the main water area which, unfortunately, was not forthcoming. But I think that is an area which we might still try to pursue, although negotiations with PFRA are not what I would like to see at the present time.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, I think you perhaps have a tentative deal. I am not saying that you haven't. But I think you are breaking an original deal. I would like to read to you just out of part 4 of the original agreement dealing with Gardiner Dam in Diefenbaker Lake and the irrigation works. Under 13.1, it says:

Saskatchewan will assume responsibility for and undertake the construction, operation and maintenance as part of the project of all main canals, secondary reservoirs, distributaries, pumping stations and equipment, and all other works required for the conveyance and distribution of water to all lands to be irrigated by the reservoir, hereinafter referred to as the irrigation works, and further agrees to proceed as rapidly as practicable to the construction of the said works.

So I think, at that time, the Saskatchewan government and the man who signed this original agreement agreed that it was the responsibility of the Saskatchewan government (and this happened to be Tommy Douglas's signature on this particular contract) to provide that capital expenditure to put the water out where the farmers

could make use of it. So are you saying now that the Government of Saskatchewan is not willing to live up to this original agreement? Are you going to welsh on that portion of the agreement?

AN HON. MEMBER: — Or were you not aware of it?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, we were getting along fine until the Leader of the Opposition interrupted the debate which was going on between the hon. member for Rosetown-Elrose and me. No, we don't feel we have not lived up to the agreement or lived up to our obligations. We believe, in fact, that we have. I think the hon. member will recall a discussion we had during question period when I outlined that. On the whole Diefenbaker development we're well ahead of the farmers, in terms of farmer response to the development which is already in place. Taking into account the fact that we're well ahead, we felt it really reasonable to strike a deal in so far as the west side is concerned. This, in fact, is what we have done.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, you didn't answer my question with respect to this particular portion of the contract. Regarding the commitment of the province to provide capital equipment, including the pumps, to put the water in the ditch, how do you account for the fact that originally the Government of Saskatchewan agreed to this, but today you're asking the farmers to pay for their own pumps? The two just don't add up for me. I'd like to have your answer.

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, if the hon. member will recall the discussion, he raised the issue of the 50,000 acres and what was required under the agreement. That, in fact, has been achieved by the province. It's in place. I indicated that about 33,000 acres have been picked up, of the 50,000 acres that are in place. So, we have lived up to the obligations of that agreement with respect to the clause relating to the 50,000 acres.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, this clause does not relate to 50,000 acres. This clause relates to the irrigation project and the 500,000 acres which are available for irrigation under that project. It doesn't relate to 50,000 acres. So, would you tell me what equipment is needed to put water out in the country to make full use of the irrigation capabilities of Diefenbaker Lake?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, now we're breaking away here. I argue that we've lived up to our obligations under the agreement. The hon. member argues that we have not. He puts his argument in the sense that all of our dollars would go toward Diefenbaker. I would argue that that's not the case. We have lived up to our obligations at Diefenbaker. The farmers have yet to respond to the development which has been put in place. That we should sacrifice the overall provincial program in order to respond to the farmers on the west side, I simply don't agree with. I think we have to respond to the farmers right across the province as best we can. This is what we are attempting to do this year in this budget, as well as providing some significant development for the west side to the tune of \$375,000. I think we've gone a fair step to assist those farmers to get some irrigation and, at the same time, we've tried to provide some development right across the province.

MR. SWAN: — I don't think that I'm diverging from the issue at all. I'm staying strictly on the issue. The contract signed here said that the 50,000 acre figure was to be attained within the first three years. Then, it goes on to state that the other irrigation is to take place one step at a time. I agree that you have gone a portion of the way by putting in the

\$375,000 worth of equipment on the west side. What I'm talking about is the balance of the equipment necessary to put water in that ditch. I believe that the Government of Saskatchewan has an obligation to the people to pay that other \$367,000 (I think that is the actual figure) to put the water in that ditch to make use of the existing canal which has been laying idle catching weeds and grasshoppers for the last number of years. I believe that I'm right on course. You have taken a half step, so to speak. If you take the rest of the step the farmers out there will have irrigation and I will be content.

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, it seems unreasonable to me to provide the capital on the west side when the east side is not fully utilized. It doesn't seem reasonable to do that and sacrifice the overall provincial program. The hon. member might argue that we should have used some of our budget money for west side development instead of introducing beef stabilization or doing research, and he can make that argument. But I don't follow the argument that he is putting forward. Nor do I blame the hon. member for trying to get the provincial government to pick up all the cost. I do become concerned because a reasonable deal was struck with respect to development on the west side. It was struck in this legislature, and I indicate to the hon. member that we went well beyond that deal in order to assist the development and use of water for farmers on the west side. We did go beyond that. I think, as I indicated to the farmers in my letter, that it is as far as we can go this year.

MR. SWAN: — I bring you back once more to the actual signed agreement. If I, as an individual, had signed an agreement like that with you and you didn't live up to it, I would be tempted to sue you. Now, a group of farmers are probably not going to do that, but I think that as a government, when you sign an agreement such as this, you have an obligation to keep that agreement. I think you are breaking that agreement. I believe, Mr. Minister, that you should pick up a copy of this agreement and read it again, because I think you are breaking an agreement signed by the Government of Saskatchewan. You should change your mind on this particular issue and put in the money that is needed.

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, what I will do for the hon. member is have the department research the correspondence between the province and the federal government with respect to that agreement. That correspondence indicates that we have, in fact, lived up to our agreement.

I would ask the hon. member, in terms of agreement, to consider agreements that were made here with respect to developments on the west side in the same light.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, in this House we had no agreement for dollars at any time. We had a discussion of dollars, and you put the figures on the table. You didn't give any opportunity for negotiation when you met with the few people from the area at a meeting in Saskatoon. It was your suggestion that put the dollars forward. That's the only time dollars have been mentioned, really.

I think if you read *Hansard* you will find that there were no dollars put out at any time — rather, it were left loose. This particular agreement is very firm in what it says. It doesn't say "if," "maybe," or anything like that. It states very clearly that the Government of Saskatchewan is supposed to do just what I'm telling you. It says:

. . . pumping stations and equipment, and all other works required for the conveyance and distribution of water to all lands to be irrigated by the reservoir.

Now, I don't think it can be written much more clearly than that. I come back to you once more and ask: are you willing to sit down and read this original contract and then tell me if, indeed, you feel that as a government you are living up to that contract? I don't think you are.

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, I responded earlier to the hon. member. I would be glad to read the contract as well. I will provide the correspondence between the province and the federal government with respect to that contract. I ask the hon. member, when I table it for him, to read that correspondence as well.

MR. SWAN: — I will appreciate receiving that correspondence and I will, indeed, read it.

I believe, Mr. Minister, that the grant structure which you have put in place for irrigation is not keeping pace with the times. You spoke of a grant per farmer of \$2,850. Certainly, that is of some assistance. But it is a very small grant, indeed, when you are looking at the size of capital investment that we are talking about here.

If a person put one-quarter of land under water, even if the water were in the canal, he would be still looking at something in excess of \$70,000 per quarter. A \$2,800 grant is a pretty minimal grant to be looking at.

Are you and your department prepared to sit down and take a look at this and bring the grant into today's terms, rather than leaving it at the same level it has been for a number of years? I think the change this year is minimal. I know it's been changed, but I believe it has been changed by only \$10. It is a very insignificant change upward. Is your department willing to look at this grant with the idea of bringing into line the figures which you are using for irrigation?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, the maximum grant has gone from \$1,750 to \$2,850. That is an increase of \$1,000 which is a fair bite in one particular year. Now, the hon. member can argue that it should be more. Certainly, as we review the irrigation policy, increases in grants will be an item which will be considered. But, to have an increase of this amount, I think, is pretty beneficial to the province in a general way. So it is a significant increase.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, I would like to ask you one more time about this contract. I've read it a couple of times. If you like I'll send this copy over; I can get another. Would you be willing to live up to what the contract says, after you read it? That's my question. I'm concerned that as a government you are not living up to it. Are you willing to?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — I'm glad to see the farmer from Qu'Appelle here joining in the debate.

Mr. Chairman, we will read this contract, and the revised contract between the provincial government and the federal government and will table the correspondence between the two governments, as I indicated we would. We will live up to our obligations as we understand them to be, as a result of the agreements and the correspondence.

MR. SWAN: — When will you provide copies of the agreement? Can they be available this evening at 7 p.m.?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — if we can round them up quickly enough, if not, we will be able to have them in place by tomorrow.

MR. SWAN: — Do you have a copy of the original agreement in your office, or do you want this one?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — There will be agreements in the office, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, I would like to touch on the assessments which are taking place. You are going to tell me that that is not in agriculture but is in municipal affairs. But I believe, as Minister of Agriculture, that while we are dealing with the irrigation issue, you should begin to address and think toward what is happening in reassessment across our province. The reassessment in the irrigation area is causing a lot of concern in Saskatchewan, and is not being applied equally throughout the province. As the assessing crew went through the district where I live, they assessed those who had purchased irrigation equipment, but the man right beside them on identically the same type of land who just didn't have the initiative to buy equipment were not reassessed. When I say they were reassessed, some of them had up to a 300 per cent increase of assessment. It is not an incentive type of thing. It is a disincentive toward irrigation development in the province. I'd like to know: is the Minister of Agriculture prepared to take a look at what is happening with the reassessment of farmland, and to have some input to put this thing on track?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member raised this in question period, and my understanding is that there are a number of parcels of land right along the lake which are being reassessed. I believe that's the area of concern. I would assume the system is that the R.M. calls for the reassessment, and then the staff at the assessment branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs, in fact, does the reassessment. Then there is the process of appeals.

If the hon. member is asking the Department of Agriculture to look into this conduct, I think we would certainly be prepared to do that. But certainly, the hon. member should be raising it as an issue (with which I think he agrees) in the Department of Rural Affairs and the assessment branch there, rather than with the Department of Agriculture, since it's really a relationship between the rural municipality and the department — this area of assessment. Obviously, they are assessing on productivity, and it probably is indicated that the productivity has increased significantly as a result of the investments made in irrigation.

MR. SWAN: — I will be raising it again in rural affairs, but I believe it would be beneficial if the Department of Agriculture would also be taking a look. Indeed, it's a municipal-wide reassessment and what they are doing is discriminating against the people who had the initiative to embark on a very high capital-intensive investment to improve their productivity. It's not a normal productivity-type of thing. Basically, what they are doing is assessing the people for equipment placed on land, and I don't think that's right. For that reason, I'm asking you if you will take a look at it and perhaps have some input as a cabinet minister into what is happening in that reassessment program.

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, I try to equate this as best I can on the basis of other improvements on land. Certainly, if I have a parcel of land which has been in grazing over a period of years and has never been broken and I break it and put it into crop production and it produces pretty well, I'll expect the assessment on that parcel of

land is likely to increase because of the increased productivity even though I made a capital investment in that land. Likewise, if I clear a quarter of bush and put it into grain production, I will expect the assessment on that parcel of land to increase because of the productivity. I suppose when you argue with assessment people and the rural municipalities, they will tell you that those who make investments to improve productivity should have a reassessment done. I think that, in fact, is likely what is going on.

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Minister, I agree that if you break a piece of land or clear the brush and so on, you change the topography of the land. Then, it is fair to say that the assessment should go up. But the land we are speaking of has been under grain production for many years, and the only change which has occurred is that these people have spent \$70,000 or \$80,000 for a piece of irrigation equipment.

Now, if the same farmer had gone out and bought a new tractor and spent \$70,000, his assessment wouldn't have changed, but when he bought an irrigation pivot and put it on that land, the assessment changed. It didn't change on the piece of land right beside him, which was also in grain production, but that farmer hadn't purchased any equipment. So, I see quite a difference here in the situation where you break land, clear brush, remove stone or some of these things. I know that creates an assessment increase, but I see quite a difference when you are just looking at a piece of irrigation equipment being placed on that particular piece of land. The same farmer could remove that piece of irrigation equipment and then we'd be jumping assessments up and down. I think it's the wrong approach. that's why I'm raising it.

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — I don't want to belabor this but, I suppose, based on my argument, if I let the land go back to pasture, obviously they would look at reassessment. If I let the bush go back, obviously they would look at reassessment. You can make the same argument. I suspect that the assessment people (and the hon. member should discuss it with them rather than with me) are trying to provide some equity in the system. In looking at that, they've increased assessment on the irrigated land over the land that's not irrigated. The hon. member has asked the department to discuss this issue with the Department of Rural Affairs. Certainly, we're prepared to do that.

MR. SWAN: — All I could expect you to do is discuss it. I would hope that your input will be meaningful because it's a real concern out in the country. As a matter of fact, I expect that you're likely going to see court cases over it. The appeal process hasn't worked. The people tell me that that's the next step they're going to take. It's unfortunate that we have to proceed in that manner.

I'd like to touch just a little on the family farm improvement branch. We've been receiving some complaints from the people in the plumbing business around the province, particularly the smaller plumbers who provide the service in rural Saskatchewan. The concern which they raise is that the family farm improvement branch supplies pumps, pipes and a variety of things for farmers to use to put in sewage systems on the farm. I think most farmers have appreciated having that lower cost supply line. The thing that's being raised by the small plumbers out in the country is that they're now being asked to provide the service and maintenance to this equipment — equipment which they didn't sell. They're finding it a real burden. The profit from the sale of the equipment goes to the family farm improvement branch, yet they are expected to service it. They didn't sell it, yet they have to carry parts in stock. If the initial step of putting sewage and water in the rural communities of Saskatchewan is pretty

much completed, is there still the same need to maintain a supply service for pumps and things in Regina like there was 10 or 15 years ago, or do you feel that that service is still being called on enough to be needed?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, there is still a good deal of activity in FFIB (family farm improvement branch), with something over \$2.3 million worth of equipment being purchased and provided to the farmers. And I say “provided,” because the hon. member, I think if he recalls, said that FFIB is making a profit. It is not, in fact, making a profit. All it does is make a volume purchase. Obviously, there must be some significant benefits in that and then providing it to the farmers or the small communities at cost.

The point the hon. member is making is: does a time come (if it is not already here) for FFIB to really be out of the purchase providing business and leave that to the private enterprise? Certainly, I have met with representatives of the plumbing people or the people who work in this area. They have said it is time. It is not felt that, at this level of activity, it is time. There were some 80 communities served last year through this program. So there is clearly a community need. I would argue with the hon. member that, for the time being at least, we should keep the existing program in place based on the level of activity.

MR. SWAN: — You said that you had met with members of the plumbing group. I hope you heard some of the concerns which they raised, because many of them tell me that they are finding it very, very difficult to finance the parts stock for things which they didn't sell. Yet if they are going to provide service to the communities which they live in, they pretty near have to carry that parts stock. Now, I don't know whether FFIB is prepared to carry all the parts for service, but even if it is, it is, in many cases, too far away to be reachable by much of rural Saskatchewan. What recommendation then did you make to the people with whom you met from the plumbing community? Did you advise them then that it was just their tough luck?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Chairman, I did meet with them. They asked us to review our policy. In fact that review took place. I believe it was more than a year ago that I met with the group during office hours in Saskatoon. A review took place and it was felt desirable, in light of the activity, to continue with the program which has been in place for many, many years and has worked, I think, very, very well. The program was introduced in the mid-1950s. So it has been around for almost 30 years and it is still providing an excellent service. Other than the meeting which we talked about, the response to FFIB from the communities and farmers with whom I have talked is very, very positive.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.