

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
May 19, 1981

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

QUESTIONS

High Interest Rates in Canada

MR. LANE: — I have a question for the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance probably hasn't heard, but the United States prime rate went to 20 per cent yesterday. I wonder if the Minister of Finance has made a detailed analysis of the actual costs of a mortgage for the average home-owner in Saskatchewan to determine the effects of the significantly higher interest rates in the Dominion of Canada?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of concern and debate about the state of the interest rates in Canada today. It should be clear, as has been expressed by other members of this House and me, that we are concerned about that. We know that is shared by a lot of other people. There is a difference of view, depending on which perspective you have.

For example, in October 1979, I recall (in the *Globe and Mail*) Prime Minister Clark and Finance Minister John Crosbie were saying that high interest rates were needed, at the present, to restore Canada's economic health. Furthermore, Mr. Clark, who was then the prime minister, rejected suggestions that the government shield citizens from the impact of rising prices. In the October 1979 issue of the *Leader-Post*, the warmest words of support came from Mr. Grant Devine, Leader of the Conservative Party. That's a quote from the *Leader-Post*.

So, I am wondering whether this concern about interest rates is something new or whether the members opposite aren't taking the lead of their leader when it comes to high interest rates. This, obviously, is a policy of the Conservative Party of Canada. Therefore, it's a policy of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan.

I do not have an analysis with me of the increased costs which will be accrued to individuals who have a mortgage. I am familiar with what those increased costs are. My people, in the Department of Finance and other agencies concerned, have done that kind of analysis. The impact, indeed, is very severe. That is one of the reasons we have a \$12 million mortgage interest rebate program in Saskatchewan (the only mortgage rebate program in Canada). It's to assist people in order that we might, to some degree, cushion them against the high interest that is now existing on mortgages.

MR. LANE: — Supplementary. The Minister of Finance seems to forget the most comprehensive mortgage interest and property tax deductibility program which was proposed under the same budget, and also the energy tax credit which would have had significant benefits to the people of this country.

I have figures before me, just for the minister's enlightenment. A \$25,000 mortgage at 12 per cent interest would have a monthly cost (principal and interest amortized over

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25 years) of \$257.98. At 18 per cent that jumps significantly to \$366. A \$50,000 mortgage at 12 per cent has a monthly principal and interest of \$516.00. It is nearly \$100 a month higher if the mortgage rate is 18 per cent.

Those are practical figures we're trying to bring home to you, on the effects to the average home-owner in the province of Saskatchewan. With significant increases like that, do you not feel that it is time to take on your duty to give some immediate mortgage interest assistance to the people of this province, and we come back to our much earlier proposal and common-sense proposal of the Government of Saskatchewan, using its borrowing powers to loan to the people of this province at a much lower interest rate than the normal lending institutions would charge?

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, we have considered the things that we can do as a government and we have introduced them in the budget, which we have almost completed considering in this session. Certainly, it is not only in the area of mortgage interest rates where the problem lies, and so our approach has been to consider various areas in which we could provide assistance. That's why we have a \$50 million tax cut for Saskatchewan people, which is certainly a significant amount of assistance that is being provided, to cushion against inflation, much of which is now being caused by Conservative and Liberal interest rate policies. We have some \$74 million in senior citizens' school tax rebates and property tax rebates which we are providing to Saskatchewan people. We have a \$12 million mortgage interest rebate program. All of these when taken together in the package provide some very substantial assistance to Saskatchewan taxpayers and Saskatchewan consumers, the likes of which does not exist in other parts of Canada.

MR. LANE: — I wonder, by way of final supplementary, if I may bring the Minister of Finance down to the real world. I have further examples, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Minister, of a \$5,000 consumer note, which is not an unreasonable figure for the average wage earner in the province. At 13 per cent interest, his monthly payment would be approximately \$272. At 20 per cent interest, his monthly payment is going to be \$907 — three times as much. How do you expect the average wage earner in the province of Saskatchewan to cope with financial problems arising from the high interest rate? Will you not instead of living in the past and talking about past items and issues, now direct your mind to the real problems that exist outside this Assembly, and start to take some immediate concrete action for the taxpayers of this province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — The most immediate concrete action that needs to be taken, Mr. Speaker, is for this country to stop following the devastating kinds of interest rate policies that have been promoted by a former Conservative government, supported by the leader of this Conservative Party in Saskatchewan (on record) and members opposite. Until we make those kinds of changes in Canada, there is no amount of assistance that's going to do an adequate job when you talk about the country as a whole.

We have, within the context of this province, done a very commendable job in cushioning Saskatchewan citizens against the ravages of inflation and the misplaced and misplanned policy of high interest rates.

The members opposite, all of a sudden, have caught on to this. They have had three months, but somehow the question of interest rates and inflation was hardly

mentioned. Now for some reason, which only the members and some others will know, they have caught on to this and so they have come up with a proposal on mortgage interest rates. I say we do have a program. We have a number of programs, but one that specifically addresses mortgage rates is the mortgage interest tax credit which rebates \$12 million. Their proposal is that we borrow \$100 million at our provincial borrowing rates (16.75 per cent now is what the going rate would be) and lend it out so that there is a subsidy between what the mortgage rate is, which is about 18 per cent. Add to that at least 0.25 per cent handling and service charges and the benefit would be about 1 per cent or about \$1 million. When I compare our \$12 million program to the Conservative \$1 million program, which is nothing but rhetoric, I think our record stands in pretty good stead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

High Profits to Grain Elevators

MR. THATCHER: — A question to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, as you are aware, after this past crop year, virtually all of the elevator companies announced record profits. I'm sure you are also aware that at the end of last week, the Canadian Grain Commission announced increases in grain tariffs to go in place on August 1. Very briefly, primary elevator wheat will go up 10 per cent; flax and rape will go up to the incredible handling charge of 47 to 49 per cent. More importantly, at the terminals we have increases in wheat of 50 per cent; oats, 48 per cent, rape, 50 per cent, flax, 46 per cent, barley, 48 per cent, and it goes on and on.

Mr. Minister, in light of the fact that the grain companies have just come away from years of record profits, will you tell us what action your department intends to take, in view of an action which is bordering on very questionable legalized stealing from our producers?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, I have not yet seen the report to which the hon. member refers, from the grain commission. I will review the report and make a decision as to the policy of the government.

MR. THATCHER: — A supplementary question. I would suggest that the minister needs to surround himself with a new staff. This information is several days old. Mr. Minister, would you agree that these tremendous increases at the terminal level (the figures I gave you previously) are a disincentive to the grain companies to move grain through those ports at Vancouver and Fort William, and more of an incentive to collect storage charges? Probably even more blatantly, it is a means that the Canadian Grain Commission is using to eliminate the use of producer cars. In other words, the producer can no longer short-circuit the exorbitant rates of the grain companies, and they are now going to nail them at the terminal which they cannot circumvent.

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, the issue of producer cars is a very important issue, and I share the opinion of the member for Thunder Creek about the importance of that issue. I think, before making any statement in this legislature or to the people of Saskatchewan, I want to have the opportunity to review the announcement by the Canadian Grain Commission. I want to have the opportunity to review that announcement with the grain handling companies in Saskatchewan, and I think that would be very appropriate.

MR. THATCHER: — A supplementary to the minister. Mr. Minister, if these charges are

approved by cabinet and they do go into effect on August 1, which is the start of the new crop year, this will mean that charges at country elevators and terminal points will have increased approximately 700 per cent in the past 10 years. Mr. Minister, my question to you is very simply this: how can you and your government remain silent on this horrendous increase in charges to our producers, and yet be so vocal about the crowrate, when in terms of overall dollars, the dollars going into these elevator companies make the crowrate look like peanuts?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the hon. member that we would be reviewing the latest announcements; we would be discussing the announcement with the grain handling companies of Saskatchewan. I would suggest to the hon. member and all hon. members opposite that they consider their position on the crowrate as well. Obviously, by the statements coming from the hon. member for Thunder Creek, they are recommending changes in the crowrate. Unfortunately, we are not.

Public Accounts Committee Sitings

MR. SWAN: — My question is to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, and with your indulgence, I would like to read a couple of paragraphs into the record. Mr. Penikett, the NDP member of the public accounts committee in the Yukon, is making this statement. This is part of the *Hansard* from the Yukon:

It is appropriate for me to tell you at this time, that those procedures have not in any substantive way changed during our second round hearings, except in one major respect. Last year, following the practice of the province of Saskatchewan (which province's committee has been studied by our Clerk, prior to the establishment of this committee), we sat in camera. Following the advice from a number of other public accounts committee chairmen in the rest of the country, and after some discussion by our members, an important decision was made this year to hold our hearings in public.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that somewhat to the surprise of all members, the fact that the committee hearings were in public, that the press had access to the proceedings on a daily basis, and that citizens were able to come to observe the proceedings, made absolutely no difference whatsoever in the way the committee operated.

My question, Mr. Premier, is: would you give serious consideration to allow our public accounts committee to be open to the public and to the press, so that we, too, could have a different kind of operation, one which would indeed produce some results?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I think it will be known to all members that the public accounts committee is set up in Saskatchewan as a result of a report adopted some years ago by this legislature, I believe, when the previous government of the Hon. Mr. Thatcher was in office, but based upon work which was done when the Hon. Mr. Lloyd was the premier. Both sides of the House agreed, at that time, that we would operate on the basis of having the committee in camera, but having all of the proceedings recorded and available to the public. The reason for that was that there was a desire to question and cross-question public servants. It was felt that since they were not likely to have the minister there, it was only fair to the public servant not to be cross-examined in public on matters which were of a political nature without having

the advice of his minister. That has been the custom in this House for upward now of 15 years. There are those who suggest that the committee has not been effective. I do not share that view. It may well be there are other ways of doing it.

I have, for my part, appeared before the public accounts committee, when I was a minister and at one time provincial treasurer, when it operated in public. I have no doubt that the public accounts committee, as it now operates, operates a great deal better than the public accounts committee when it operated in public. I don't have any doubt at all that the current arrangement works better. It may well be that it could be improved. I'm not denying that. It may well be that we could find a better method. I certainly invite all hon. members to study methods which would perhaps produce a better method. We are, however, operating on the basis of a system which works a great deal better than having the press there, as was the previous custom, and having the minister answer the questions.

MR. SWAN: — Supplementary to the Premier. Are you aware that Saskatchewan has the only public accounts committee in the British Commonwealth that sits in camera? All others, at this point in time, have open public accounts committees. Certainly, you are not telling me that Saskatchewan is the only one that is right and that everybody else is wrong?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — I am certainly not telling the hon. member that, although, if I did say that, it would only be one further example of Saskatchewan being right and other people being wrong.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — As has been indicated by a good number of people copying many things we do. It has often been said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and we have been flattered a good number of times. I do not, however, suggest to the hon. member that our method is necessarily the best way. I do not suggest that at all. Members opposite may well be able to offer other methods which work. I am not stating that our current method is the ultimate in the state of the art.

I am suggesting that it has worked reasonably well; the press has had access to the total transcript. They have not made a great deal of use of the transcript. It has never been clear to me why, when you are looking at an account which was perhaps incurred in March 1980 and you were looking at it in March of 1981, that the full transcript in June of 1981 is not news, but the details would have been news in March of 1981. In fact, we are dealing with things which are a year old in any case. However, that's a judgment the press makes. I am not here to tell them how to run their business.

I'm just saying, in any case, we are looking at material which is old. The incidents which are under investigation have occurred, in almost every case, many months ago, and the fact that the transcript may be delayed a month or two surely does not deprive the public of any particular access to public affairs.

MR. SWAN: — A supplementary to the Premier. Are you aware, Mr. Premier, that the Yukon public accounts committee started out sitting in camera? It tried to follow the Saskatchewan example. After only one year they made the decision to change. The report which I read to you is really an indication of how they have found that change has worked. They say that it has worked well. Are you prepared to take a look at our public accounts operation and to recommend that it sit openly next year?

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HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, it is not for the government of the day to tell the House how it ought to conduct its business.

When the current rules were set up they were done so after a detailed report and a thorough debate of that report in this Chamber. If I may say so, the debate was a non-partisan debate on how we might get the best information available to the public. There was at that time a general feeling that the Crown corporations committee, as it had operated in public, had not operated to the best interests of the public, and had not got as much information before the public as might be desirable. The change was made on the basis of a report made to this House and debated in a relatively non-partisan way. I invite all hon. members to look at the record. We are certainly prepared to do the same thing. I am not prepared to commit myself to any particular result following that debate.

Board and Room Concept for Nursing Homes

MRS. DUNCAN: — My question is to the Premier in the absence of the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Premier, while your minister was in Hudson Bay over the weekend he indicated that the board and room concept for nursing homes, which supposedly will be implemented in July, will cost approximately \$390 to \$460 for each resident (that's paying out of his own pocket). In light of the statements the minister has been making throughout the province, little bits and pieces, on the board and room concept, are you now prepared to make a policy statement on the changes which are proposed?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, the government is not yet in a position to make a policy statement. It is hoped that the minister may be in a position before many weeks to make a policy statement indicating the details of the government's policy. He has, in a number of instances I know of, indicated the direction of our thinking in order to get reaction from organizations and also groups of the public. We do not have a policy which is sufficiently firm that it might be announced at this time.

MRS. DUNCAN: — I find it difficult to believe that the major change which is about to take place in a little more than a month would be unfamiliar to you. I might add, Mr. Premier, that the board and room concept, at a nominal fee, is something that we on this side of the House have been urging for five or more years. When the final official announcement is made pertaining to the board and room concept for nursing home residents, will it also be in your announcement that the proposed prices of \$390 to \$460 are at least \$100 more than that which is charged in our three other western provinces, B.C., Alberta, and Manitoba?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I have only two or three things to say in response to that question. Firstly, I am not unfamiliar with the details of the program. They simply are not in a form yet where they can be announced as government policy. Secondly, if there is a charge, it may be different from those in other provinces. It will certainly be higher than the charge in Alberta, which is low. I can't give the hon. member the comparison with the other western provinces. I do not have them with me. However, we will certainly be announcing a range of charges, which we think will be of very substantial benefit to the people of Saskatchewan, over and above what the current arrangement is.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Supplementary to the Premier. The minister already announced that it is going to be between \$390 and \$460. As you are aware, Mr. Premier, 15 per cent of our Saskatchewan residents live below the poverty line (which is higher than the national average), and that the majority of them are seniors over the age of 65. Are you aware, Mr. Premier, that in British Columbia they charge \$258.54 per month for nursing home board and room; Alberta (which is low) is \$219.92, and in Manitoba, which you seem to think is behind us in the economic boom we always hear about in Saskatchewan, they pay \$296.56? Do you not think that, before the final announcement is made, you and your government should sit down and bring nursing home board and room fees in Saskatchewan within the range of the other provinces, and not gouge our seniors?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the figures given to the House by the hon. member. I do not dispute them, nor do I agree with them. I simply do not know whether they are accurate. I don't have anything further to say about the nature of our policy on this. As I have indicated, it is not totally firm. Government policy will be announced in due course.

Bookings of Mobile Stage for 1981

MR. KATZMAN: — A question to the Minister of Culture and Youth. Mr. Minister, your mobile trailer which is used all over the province for fairs and exhibitions as a mobile stage (I understood on the March 5 budget) is now not available to the organizations which have been using it for many years. As of the end of July, it is going out of service. Mr. Minister, could you inform this House if it is available and if the people who want to use it will pay the total costs of it (seeing as the government owns it and has it anyway) for the remaining part of 1981?

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Speaker, the mobile stage, which culture and youth has had available, upon recent inspection was found to need some major repairs. All of the outstanding commitments which were made for bookings of the mobile stage are being honored, after which time the stage will be taken out of service. At the same time, we will be considering whether or not we should be making the major repairs or looking at alternative ways of meeting those needs of those communities.

MR. KATZMAN: — Mr. Minister, the additional time for which it will be required will be about another 10 days after you have committed to all the commitments you have already made. Why will you not extend it or rent it on a total cost basis to the people who rely on it so heavily and have had it over the past few years?

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — I think the important concern is that the stage not be used any longer than the advice which we have indicates with respect to its appropriate use in terms of safety and so on. The decision about commitments and when to put it out of service was done on that basis. I can certainly have another look at the cutoff date. I'm not familiar with the exact details and evaluations which were done. I can certainly have a look at that for the hon. member.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 2 — Celebrate Saskatchewan

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed resolution by Mr. Pepper:

That this Assembly commend the people of Saskatchewan in hundreds of participating communities for their boundless enthusiasm and involvement in making Celebrate Saskatchewan, 1980, a memorable success, and further that this Assembly commend the Government of Saskatchewan for its exemplary leadership in marking Saskatchewan's seventy-fifth year in confederation.

And the proposed amendment thereto by Mr. Taylor:

That the words: "the Government of Saskatchewan for its" in the fifth line be deleted and the words "the people of Saskatchewan for their" be substituted therefor.

MR. MOSTOWAY: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a few minutes speaking to his resolution, and in particular to the amendment proposed by one of the members opposite.

It would seem to me that the amendment proposed by one of the members opposite is sort of a frivolous or mischievous amendment . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It does, and I will proceed to tell you why. Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that what the amendment does is negate the main motion, which seeks to commend the provincial government for the good quality of leadership which it showed in our Celebrate Saskatchewan celebrations which were held last year.

It would seem to me that one of the marks of a good government, one that shows leadership, is that the government can bring out the leadership in its citizens. That's exactly what the provincial government did last year in the Celebrate Saskatchewan celebrations. It chose to go one route as opposed to Alberta. It brought out the good quality of leadership which is available in practically all the communities in Saskatchewan. I know that to be the case because I attended numerous Celebrate Saskatchewan celebrations in various towns and also in Saskatoon. At those celebrations I very often ran into citizens from Alberta. They said, "If we only had had the kind of celebration of 75 years in the province of Alberta you people have had in Saskatchewan, we would be well off."

I secretly suspect, Mr. Speaker, that what the hon. members are trying once again to do is compare Saskatchewan with Alberta. Well, let me tell you one thing: in Saskatchewan, where we did not spend as much money as they did in Alberta, the celebrations were a success. As I mentioned before, numerous people from Alberta came to Saskatchewan. Time after time they would say, right to a man, to a woman, or to a child, "If only our celebrations were as successful as yours are." And that's a tribute to the people of Saskatchewan. But let me tell you, in Alberta, where they spent possibly 10 or 15 times as much money, everything was done from the top. There was no leadership on the part of government. There was leadership on the part of one man, but it wasn't very good leadership.

Mr. Speaker, when you buy everything such as the Government of Alberta tried to do in

their Celebrate Alberta celebrations last year and you don't get the people involved, when you don't get the people involved such as they were involved in Saskatchewan, it is doomed to failure. They spent a lot of money in Alberta, with direction always from the top. I know of communities that were subjected to various performing arts, where they didn't want these performing arts. The local chairman would get a telephone call from some government official in Edmonton saying, "Look, you are going to have a symphony concert on such and such an evening." Never so much as, "Would you like one, would you want to get involved?" But, "This is what you are going to have. You are going to have this, that, and that."

In fact, Mr. Chairman, so alienated were the people of Alberta, so much did they feel that they were not a part of things, that the whole system in Alberta practically collapsed. I ask you, then, why did the government of Alberta try to rectify the situation by hiring the chief executive officer of Celebrate Saskatchewan to clean up that mess? No, Mr. Speaker, I want to say one thing and the main point is that the Government of Saskatchewan took the right route in promoting and bringing out all the leadership potential there is in the various communities of Saskatchewan and by bringing in a lot of leadership potential on this side. I tell you what: our leader at least gets elected, which is more than I can say for your leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. MOSTOWAY: — I'd say that you people should be the last people in this province to talk about leadership and leadership potential. I believe you have about four leaders over there and you don't know whether you are coming or going, trying to follow every leader. That's the kind of nonsense that you people would have perpetrated on the people of Saskatchewan had, God forbid, you been the government last year. But that will never happen, so don't worry your little heads about that. Mr. Speaker, this amendment which the Tories have brought forward, as I mentioned before, frivolous, mischievous, simply slams the people . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! Just so there isn't any confusion about private members' day, that means the members can debate issues, but not all at once. If we can just have the member for Saskatoon Centre, I'm sure he'll relinquish the floor to somebody else who is interested in getting into the debate.

MR. MOSTOWAY: — Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to hear you remind the Tory members about a little bit of decorum in the House. You will get your opportunity to speak at the appropriate time — a little bit of decorum such as the Speaker suggested and the kind of decorum that the Unionist leader, your former leader, suggested that you were going to follow a couple of years ago. Now I know that you agree with many of the things . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I know that you are in very close touch with him. You always were and I would suggest that you still probably are. Mr. Chairman, to suggest that the Government of Saskatchewan should not be commended, along with the people of Saskatchewan, is a slap in the face to the people of Saskatchewan because they elected the New Democratic government. When they slam the government what they are really doing is slamming the people who elected this government. Mr. Chairman, it was the right route to go. Public participation brought out the qualities that we admire, the qualities that are and will be there. I urge all members to vote against this frivolous, mischievous amendment and to vote whole-heartedly for the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. SWAN: — Mr. Speaker, I hadn't intended to get into the debate on this until the member for Saskatoon spoke, but I believe there is need to speak at this point in time.

The member raises the idea that the people of Saskatchewan didn't do anything during Celebrate Saskatchewan year. Around my constituency (and I spent a lot of time in the constituency last year), I found literally hundreds of people who had been involved on Celebrate Saskatchewan committees and they worked diligently to see that Saskatchewan had a good Celebrate Saskatchewan year. When I talked to the members of those committees they weren't saying, "Oh, the Government of Saskatchewan has done such wonderful things." What they were saying was that the people of Saskatchewan were doing wonderful things and that it was the mood of the people of Saskatchewan to get involved in the celebration that really created the exciting year that we had. I think that's the reason for the amendment that was put here.

It was not an amendment to defeat the motion, but rather an amendment to bring into context what the people of Saskatchewan were actually saying. That is that the people of Saskatchewan got behind Celebrate Saskatchewan year and made it a very successful year indeed. I would urge everyone in this Assembly to support the amendment, because that amendment is stating the way things were during last year. To vote against it would be to vote against the committee who worked so diligently in the province to make our celebrations worthwhile.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on this resolution moved by the member for Weyburn. I think it's an excellent resolution in that it recognizes what happened in Celebrate Saskatchewan in 1980 very well. The members opposite should have asked this question before they tried to move the amendment, which they have on the order paper. They should ask the question, "How come there were thousands of people in many of our communities who got involved and who did the planning with the assistance of Celebrate Saskatchewan and some funding from the provincial government, which gave them the ability to do that? How come all this happened in Saskatchewan but it did not happen in Alberta?" Isn't that an interesting question?

Well, I'll tell the members opposite and the Leader of the Opposition why. It was because of the philosophy of the people, their co-operative outlook about working together supported by this kind of government over here, that was allowed to happen. In the province of Alberta, where they have a Progressive Conservative government, that was not allowed to happen, Mr. Speaker. That's why those thousands got involved in Saskatchewan and those thousands did not get involved in Alberta. The government there didn't let them. It seemed to have the feeling and the philosophy, as have the members opposite, that all you have to do is spend a lot of money.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that for about \$7 million we had a better feeling, more enthusiasm, more involvement and more accomplishments in this province in 1980 than they did for the \$75 million that was spent in the province of Alberta. What do they have? They have (I think it is in Edmonton) a \$500,000 waterfall that they turn on twice a year, built, Mr. Speaker, by the Government of Alberta — a Progressive Conservative government. That's the difference that the member for Rosetown should have recognized when he got up on his feet instead of trying to play cheap politics with a successful event that the people of Saskatchewan made successful.

Mr. Speaker, I say "cheap politics" for a very deliberate reason. If you look at the

resolution, here is what it says:

That this Assembly commends the people of Saskatchewan . . .

And I repeat again for the member for Rosetown-Elrose because he wasn't listening (maybe he should open up his blues and take a look), that the resolution, as moved by Mr. Pepper, says:

. . . in hundreds of participating communities for their boundless enthusiasm and involvement in making Celebrate Saskatchewan, 1980, a memorable success.

Now, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, why do we need this amendment when what is said in the amendment has already been said in the resolution moved by the member for Weyburn? That doesn't surprise me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, you should read it, Mr. Member for Rosetown-Elrose. It may be very enlightening. I'm sure that up until now you have not read that resolution. Otherwise you would not have spoken in favor of the amendment. It must be obvious to the member for Rosetown-Elrose that the amendment was not necessary. It is already covered, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know where the members were in 1980, but I certainly recall where they were before 1980, when we established the Celebrate Saskatchewan corporation. When we began to hire people who would help communities to organize, the members opposite didn't say it was a good idea. The member for Kelsey-Tisdale wouldn't know that. He wasn't here. They were very critical. You go back to *Hansard* and check. You will see. I say to the members opposite that they should, once and for all, stop playing the kinds of silly, immature games that they display in this House time after time. They should mature as an opposition, once and for all, and do something that is constructive and worthwhile.

Saskatchewan people, because of the way they have learned to live and work together to achieve the things they felt they needed and wanted since the beginning of this province, took \$7 million and received \$75 million worth and more of accomplishment through Celebrate Saskatchewan. Whereas, in a Conservative kind of province, the government took \$75 million and didn't receive \$1 million worth of celebration.

I'm not critical of the people of Alberta, because I think, had they been given the kind of opportunity that was given in Saskatchewan, they would have done the same thing. But they were not given that kind of an opportunity. So, Mr. Speaker, what the members over there pretend they would like to see as an amendment has already been accomplished in the resolution. I think it is only appropriate that this Assembly defeat the amendment and support the main resolution.

MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Speaker, just a couple of quick comments and then I'm going to ask leave to adjourn debate. I want to see if the minister is really sincere and cares about the people of Saskatchewan, and will show us that he will go through the order paper here today so that we can go on to debate the real issues of the day — those issues being the economic issues . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It will take a lot less than that to adjourn debate.

You wonder why the Minister of Finance gets into the debate. I think it is probably that we struck a nerve, and as the chairman of Celebrate Saskatchewan corporation, he felt that he had to defend it, somehow. Of course, the old well-known phrase about "the

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best defence being a vigorous and loud offence” was well demonstrated here today.

It matters not to me whether it goes to question. My fear is that some other bird will get up and expound on and on about the virtues of Celebrate Saskatchewan. Quite frankly, I think there are more important things to debate. That is what we came back for this week. We’re prepared to do it. I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Subamendment negatived on the following recorded division:

YEAS — 10

Berntson
Duncan
Swan
McLeod

Thatcher
Taylor
Hardy

Birkbeck
Rousseau
Andrew

NAYS — 31

Blakeney
Kaeding
Tchorzewski
Skoberg
MacMurchy
Hammersmith
Byers
Shillington
Johnson
White
Miner

Pepper
Romanow
Robbins
McArthur
Mostoway
MacAuley
Cody
Poniatowski
Long
Solomon

Allen
Smishek
Baker
Rolfes
Vickar
Engel
Koskie
Prebble
Nelson
Chapman

Amendment agreed to on the following recorded division:

YEAS — 32

Blakeney
Kaeding
Tchorzewski
MacMurchy
Hammersmith
Byers
Prebble
Nelson

Pepper
Romanow
Robbins
Mostoway
MacAuley
Shillington
Johnson
White

Allen
Smishek
Rolfes
Vickar
Engel
Poniatowski
Long
Solomon

Baker
Cowley
Chapman

Skoberg
Cody
Miner

McArthur
Koskie

NAYS — 10

Berntson
Duncan
Swan
McLeod

Thatcher
Taylor
Hardy

Birkbeck
Rousseau
Andrew

Resolution No. 23 — Rural Natural Gas Distribution System

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed resolution by Mr. Muirhead:

That this Assembly recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan consider designing 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.

MR. JOHNSON: — Mr. Speaker, when I spoke before on the resolution put forward by the member for Arm River, I said that I would look up some of the reasons why I think this motion should be voted against.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Arm River put forward a proposal that suggested that consideration to design and implement a rural natural gas distribution system be implemented by the government. Mr. Speaker, I find that this is a statement made by the member without having given any consideration to the proposals that the Conservative Party has been putting forward. I'd like to take just a minute to go back over some of the things that they have been suggesting that have a direct impact on what would take place.

Mr. Speaker, one of the points of the 10-point program that the Progressive Conservative Party has put forward is a one-year freeze on utility rates. Mr. Speaker, if you were to ask Sask Power to build a system in the province of Saskatchewan to distribute natural gas to the farmers in the province, it would cost a considerable amount of money. One of the first things that the opposition members would do is to say they would go the opposite direction. So what they are doing is presenting the best of both worlds to two different groups of people, hoping that no one brings them together and says, "Look at the two of them at one time." They say, "Reduce the rates on utilities," and the second time around they say, "Spend more money." This is what this particular resolution says.

It is also selling what I would like to say is a "pig in a case" because, although the natural gas prices today are lower than other sources of energy, if you speak to anyone who is in the energy field and ask him what the long-term situation is going to be for natural gas, he will tell you that the pricing of energy in the future will be in a manner that will bring the price of natural gas up to the same level as other energy costs. So, Mr. Speaker, what is happening is that they are proposing a very expensive program, proposing it for the benefit to the farmer of only cheap fuel, and that is not guaranteed over any length of time. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the member for Arm River

took any time at all to look at what he was really proposing in this particular resolution.

I would also like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that the member was attempting to propose a program for the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan. It shows up in the four-point program that the Conservatives have for agriculture, and that program states very plainly that this program would provide Saskatchewan rural communities and, particularly, farms with access to low-priced energy for home heating, grain drying, irrigation pumps, livestock heating facilities.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that would have to occur, if this were really the case, would be an increase in the price of fuel. Unless you made a very substantial change in the manner in which natural gas is presently being sold, it would mean a substantial increase to the present users of natural gas. I don't think one should take lightly the concept of expending a large sum of money only to increase the cost for other people. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask everyone to vote against the resolution.

MR. WHITE: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hadn't intended to speak on this resolution at this time, but I do want to say a few words now since it has come up again. I am not sure if the mover of this resolution is ill-informed regarding the Saskatchewan natural gas system or if his actions, in putting the resolution forward, are hypocritical, as certain well-known Tory proposals are in direct opposition to implementation of this resolution.

First of all, I think you should understand something about the natural gas system, how it was constructed, and basic principles involved in its creation. It was a system designed, first of all, I could say, to serve urban Saskatchewan. It was the financing and so on which was planned for that. That is just one part of it. I want to tell you about the system itself. The system, Mr. Speaker, is perhaps unique in the world. It is one of the few systems which was ever planned from scratch anywhere. It was planned with the idea of starting at the gas field and covering a large part of Saskatchewan. At the time they were thinking largely of urban areas where there were concentrations of populations. The idea was to take the gas to all communities of 1,000 people or more.

The system was constructed on the advice of Fish Engineering of Texas, a very prominent engineering firm in the United States, and David Cass-Beggs, who played a prominent role in utilities in Saskatchewan, and elsewhere. The idea was to take a bit of a gamble, you might say, to start at the gas field with a larger pipeline than necessary, move to the first city, and then on. The idea was to serve as many people as possible, as cheaply as possible.

In time, storage facilities were also created. Gas caverns were constructed in Prud'homme, Regina and places like that. Compressor stations were installed to increase capacities of lines and so on.

The idea was to build a large system in Saskatchewan, planning it from the very start with the idea that it would be a larger system. Now, I just want to point out some contradictions in Tory policy. I want to talk about the production of natural gas. I have said that there is a system to carry it over a large part of the province. Production is really a joint undertaking in Saskatchewan. Gas is produced by some of the oil companies, by natural gas producers — private companies, if you like. Gas is also acquired from Trans-Canada Pipelines. The SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation) owns certain fields and produces its own gas there. This is a very good arrangement.

Tories are really pursuing two contradictory policies. They propose a gas distribution for farmers and, at the same time, they are against the SPC or government owning any gas fields. I say those two policies are in direct contradiction. Ownership of the gas fields by the SPC enables it to use its pipeline facilities, storage facilities, etc., more efficiently. It can move gas from its own fields during the summer when demand is light and put it in storage where it provides security of supply and also cheap gas, you might say, close to cities. The fact that SPC owns gas fields enables it to avoid take or pay contracts. These are not unusual in the gas business. SPC has them with Trans-Canada Pipelines. You contracted for so much gas and either took it or paid for gas you did not take.

An ownership of the gas fields and an ownership of the lines means that SPC can contract for a certain amount of gas, take all of it, and when it is in surplus capacity in its own pipelines, move gas to where it will need it at a later date. It is an efficient operation, about as efficient as you could make it. The Tories, I say, by opposing public ownership of certain gas fields are proposing, really, if you get rid of the gas fields, to raise the price of gas. That will not help provide the farmers of Saskatchewan with natural gas.

There is another thing too, which I would like to ask about here. When the system was being established, Cass-Beggs was called in to make a study. I just want to read parts of what he said (and I've gone over it a bit already):

Circumstances make it practical, perhaps for the first time anywhere, to plan for the systematic construction of a gas system to serve an area the size of Saskatchewan. Such planning is possible because of a "large and presumably permanent differential between the cost of natural gas and the cheapest alternative fuel for domestic heating." That differential held out the possibility of supplying a large population at a rate which would be at least competitive with coal and which would bring essentially the same benefits to all other dwellers, whether in large cities or moderate-sized towns.

The financial key to creating the gas system was setting gas rates at the level which would meet two conditions: they would cut existing fuel costs substantially and simultaneously provide sufficient revenues to cover the costs of a fairly extensive natural gas system.

Now I think, when we talk about a rural gas distribution system, Mr. Speaker, we must realize that federal government policies are influencing the spread between the price of natural gas and alternative fuels. There could be problems with getting conversion to natural gas because of the narrowed differences as a result of federal policies.

You will note also that the idea of building the gas system was to bring about conversions and also to set up a system which would produce a modest profit. That modest profit would be really earned in the cities and used to expand the system into smaller communities.

I say this is another contradiction in Tory policies. They want to eliminate SPC profits. They want to freeze SPC rates. Without any profit, what does SPC do and how do they expand? This has been the key to expansion. You always take profits from the profitable areas and put them into areas where there would be no profit. To get around that, the Hon. Ross Thatcher brought in a policy for a while and it was followed later, of charging extra to communities when they took natural gas. You must get this money from somewhere. Is it going to be subsidy or is it going to be from profits? I think it has been a

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good system where you took a modest profit out of the cities and used it to expand into smaller areas. So there is a contradiction there in Tory policies.

I would also like to know if you are going to implement this policy. Urban municipalities get surcharge money and receive gross revenue payments from SPC on natural gas — would the Tories suggest that that should perhaps be taken by the SPC, to use for expansion? They say nothing on this whole area. There are fairly substantial amounts of money going from the SPC to those areas. On at least these two points, the Tory proposals are contradictory, if you look at the other policies.

I have been doing a bit of a study on the natural gas proposal. When I think of this rural distribution system, it reminds me very much of rural electrification. I wondered, was the task of building a rural distribution system as difficult for Saskatchewan as it was to build a rural distribution system for electricity. Saskatchewan, by the way, was the most difficult of all provinces to electrify. Back in the '40s they were examining this and trying different systems such as rural power districts, rural power co-ops and so on, until they reached the area coverage method which meant people paid essentially the same price in a given area. You had a certain percentage sign up and then you would proceed. Is the situation much the same today? Is Saskatchewan still perhaps the most difficult area to service?

I've done a few calculations here. I have some figures from StatsCan. If you look at the number of farmers and the square miles of farmland, you find that building a distribution system in Saskatchewan is more difficult than in Manitoba or Alberta. The number of farmers per square mile in Saskatchewan is 0.6594; in Alberta it's slightly denser — 0.7106, and in Manitoba it's 0.9793. From the point of view of farm density, or the miles of pipeline you have to lay to provide the farmers with natural gas, it is higher in Saskatchewan than in the other two prairie provinces. So we can look at a somewhat more expensive system here.

I also looked up another matter which would suggest that it would be somewhat more difficult to do this in Saskatchewan than in Alberta. These figures are not as accurate as I would like them to be, but there are approximately 22,000 miles of pipeline in Alberta, which can be tapped for rural services. In Saskatchewan we have something like 8,000 miles. So your farmers are further from a natural gas line in Saskatchewan than in Alberta, and it means the cost of serving them is going to be somewhat higher.

Before we really support a motion like this, we have to do a good deal more study of the question and really have policies that (unlike the Tory policies) complement rather than contradict each other. I have found that to be the case with many of the policies they have in their platform.

They talk about setting up a public utilities review board to cut back on these tremendous profits which SPC is making. You know, they kept 4.75 cents on each dollar they took in as profits. They would like to cut that back. If they should get their way on that board and reduce the profits, then what do you use for the natural gas system?

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I really just began studying this. I do want to give it a lot more consideration and do more research into the topic before I would want to support it. Therefore, I would like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Thatcher that Bill No. 52 — **An Act to Guarantee Certain Rights to Children whose Interests are affected in Domestic Disputes** be now read a second time.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few additional words with respect to The Infants Act, 1981.

In 1978 this legislature passed amendments to The Infants act which were designed to direct the attention of the courts, when dealing with custody disputes, away from irrelevant considerations to the most relevant consideration — the welfare of the child. Section 3, as enacted in 1978, directs the court to have regard only for the welfare of the child and in so doing to take into consideration a number of factors, one of which is:

The preference of the infant to the extent the court considers appropriate, having regard to the age and maturity of the infant.

I underline the words, Mr. Speaker, that the current bill in 1978 indicated that the preference of the infant, to the extent the court considers appropriate having regard to the age and maturity of the infant, shall be an important consideration for the welfare of the child. This amendment, and others made in 1978, arose out of a growing awareness over the past few years that, to state the obvious, children are people, not property subject to every whim of their parents and other adults. There is a growing awareness that the intellectual development and maturity of children of even tender years today far surpasses that of just a few years ago. Recognition of this is evident in the numerous studies of children's rights by the federal law reform commission and those of other provinces and the work of our own law reform commissions. In fact, the Saskatchewan commission has been working in this area since the 1978 amendments, and has released tentative proposals for reform.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize this to all members. The 1978 Infants Act (only about two and a half or three years old) was a major step in improving the law respecting custody determinations. However, some cases since the amendments have shown that perhaps in some areas of legislation we need to go and examine this matter further with a view to determining whether there can be new improvements made or not.

Mr. Speaker, my position with respect to this legislation is, accordingly, that what we need to do is to await the report of the law reform commission, which has been studying the thrust of the 1978 amendments. The law reform commission, as I may have indicated, has released tentative proposals for reform of the law of custody. The purpose of these tentative proposals is to elicit public input and comment. The final report of the law reform commission is expected soon, and I'll be asking the commission to review the provisions of this bill prior to the release of a final report. Prior to the next session of this House, my officials will also be reviewing the commission's report with a view to further amendments that may be necessary, and, of course, public input and comment on the provisions of this bill will be appreciated by me and by members of the public and by members of the law reform commission.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us has two major thrusts. Firstly, in sections 3 to 5, the bill

directs that a child of 10 years or more shall be permitted to give evidence in domestic dispute — if an independent expert reports that the child is capable of understanding the importance of speaking the truth and is not subject to pressure upon him to give evidence. Provision is made for a child under 10 years to be interviewed by the judge outside the court. As well, and most importantly, the evidence of a child of 10 years or older is to be given predominant consideration by the court in reaching a conclusion respecting the domestic dispute.

When I made some brief remarks on the bill the other day, I alluded to the reform of the 1978 legislation. To change the preference to make it one of predominance is one which I feel needs further study. The judicial system is not, regrettably, perfect, but the development of the law in this area is one which requires an orderly process. Since in marital disputes so much tension and anxiety very often surrounds those in which the child is a central feature, it would be my view that we need to give further thought to the proposal at this time and not to enact the current legislation.

I reiterate that it is my intention to have this bill drawn to the attention of the law reform commission. It will be looking at substantial and serious aspects of the proposal and if (underline the word “if”) it’s recommended by the law reform commission in the fall, we’ll be back to the members of the House with a more specific proposal.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — I have a few poorly prepared remarks I want to make about the bill. I didn’t, as of last Friday, expect to be speaking on it because I thought we were going to adjourn. But since the matter does come up, I do want to say a few words on it.

Mr. Speaker, I have been opposed to the policy underlying the bill introduced by the member for Thunder Creek since I have seen it. Perhaps this is nothing other than the professional’s bias in favor of the existing; perhaps this is just the lawyer defending the status quo, but I don’t think so. As I intend to try to point out, I think the existing system works well. I would be very fearful of what this bill is introducing. I am going to mention the member for Thunder Creek just one more time; nothing I say should be taken personally, nor is it intended, in any sense, to be a comment about the member or any of his affairs. What I am saying is a general description of my experience with respect to domestic disputes.

I have been involved in a number of domestic disputes as a lawyer (a lot more as a husband, but none of them have reached such a serious stage). They all tend to have some common features. One of the features of domestic disputes is that they tend to be extremely bitter. Emotions are involved by the very definition of the subject. Parties tend to use every conceivable weapon against each other; the husband throws everything he can at the wife and the wife throws everything she can at the husband. And they tend to use children as weapons against each other; it becomes a grudge match. People in these kinds of situations tend to lose their sense of rationale; their common sense seems to take a holiday and they seem to want just one thing and that is to put their finger in the eye of their soon-to-be former spouse.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am fearful of highlighting the role to be played by the child. What inevitably will happen is that both parents (because the child, under this bill, would play a key role in his own future) would tend to go the child and say, “Now, listen, what you say is going to be key and I want you to say that you want to stay with me.” They will attempt to influence the child and I don’t know of any way of preventing it. I think it will inevitably happen where there are bitter feelings between spouses and that is the norm. Thus, I think the net effect of this bill would be that the child would be even

more of a weapon against each other than he or she is now.

I also have some serious reservations (although less serious) about requiring a judge to hear a child of 10 years of age. I have frequently had to decide whether or not I should put a 10-year-old on the stand because they differ widely. Some are mature enough that there is no question but what they could take the stand and be trusted to tell the truth. Other 10-year-olds are so immature that no thinking person would trust their evidence. To require a judge (and that's virtually what this bill amounts to) to provide that a court practically has to hear the evidence of a 10-year-old is, I think, bad policy.

Mr. Speaker, it has been my experience that the existing system works very well. The existing system, simply put, is that the judge considers whether or not the child has the maturity to be a dependable witness and, if so, allows the child to give evidence under oath. If the child isn't a dependable witness he can always give evidence, but it is not under oath and it is not given a great deal of weight.

So, on that ground, the provision of the bill relating to a child's evidence is poorly thought out. I think the provision of the bill which says that the child's wishes are to be the determining factor in the absence of some strong extenuating circumstance is very bad policy. I think it will result in the child being an even greater weapon between the husband and the wife. I think the existing system, Mr. Speaker, works very well. The existing system provides that the judge acts in the best interest of the child, not according to who is right or who is wrong. The only consideration in granting custody of a child is what is in the best interest of the child.

The bill introduced by the member for Thunder Creek seeks to replace that system with a system whereby the child's wishes will be the determining factor. Many children simply don't have the maturity to make that decision. They might have been under the influence of one parent, particularly where a separation agreement or some interim order has given custody of the child to one parent. That will turn the child into a weapon between the husband and wife.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I speak in opposition to this bill.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a few comments I wish to make in defence of this bill and in support of this bill. I would agree with my colleague, the member for Thunder Creek, who drafted the bill. I think this is something that we, as legislators, should be addressing. I understand the former chief justice, Mr. Culliton, had nothing but contempt for The Infants Act. Therefore, there is certainly a need for something of more substance to be brought in in this province.

I listened to some of the reasons. I must admit the speakers on the other side are both lawyers, but sometimes (as the one member did say) one can be blinded a bit by tunnel vision or by the blinkers which one wears. I wonder if we shouldn't be looking at this whole concept from a different point of view?

The Attorney General pointed out that the primary result of this is the welfare of the child. That is certainly the case on this side of the House. I'm sure that is the reason that the member for Thunder Creek brought the bill forward. I think we all realize and understand that the children of this day and age are probably maturing, both

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intellectually and physically much earlier than children previously did. There are many reasons for this. Certainly the children are far more worldly because of the styles in which we live, because of the impact of television, and because of the expanded knowledge in their curriculums. I think the children who are coming through the educational system and who are growing up in our society today have a broad horizon and have a worldly situation and are able to cope with situations that children at the time of the drafting of the original legislation were not so prone to.

One of the things which I think is probably the most important aspect I have heard in the arguments from the other side is talk about tension and anxiety, and that a child in this situation (a separation of his parents), testifying in court, would be put into extreme tension and anxiety. I don't dispute that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say that in homes where marital breakdowns would take place, those children have already been subjected to considerable tension and anxiety. Unfortunately, I don't think that it would be anything new for that child to be put into a situation where there is tension and anxiety.

However, the ultimate aim of this legislation is to do the best you can for the person concerned with it. That, of course, is this child. The reason for this legislation coming forward is that the existing legislation does not take the child's rights into consideration. Perhaps, by the judgment of a court, the child may be put in a situation where he has anxiety and frustration and tension for the remainder of his maturing years. If you talk to any psychologist or psychiatrist, he will tell you that those scars on the development of young people cause problems later on in their lives. So I would think the argument of tension and anxiety in court falls down, my friend, because I believe that those children have been exposed (in the intervening breakdown of that marriage) to great periods of stress and anxiety.

The reason for the bill coming before this legislature is that we know of cases in this province where children were not allowed to put forth their concerns and rights before the court. Out of those rulings, there have been situations resulting in tension and anxiety throughout that young person's developmental life. I think that is the kind of thing we want to avoid.

I heard the member for Regina Centre saying that the maturity of that person should be established to see if a child 10 years of age was mature enough to testify and give an opinion. I think the bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, addresses that situation. The bill says there should be consultation with school teachers, educational psychologists and people who know those children in that situation. They can make a very good assessment as to the intellectual maturity and the capabilities of the child to testify. With all due respect to the legal profession and the judges of the province, I think you would get a sounder and a more valid assessment of the maturity level of that child than you would by a judge who has only seen him in the courtroom. The member opposite says that a court is a high-tension, emotionally charged situation causing high anxiety. I think the bill does address these situations.

I look back at this session of the legislature and I have seen legislation being brought forward for the rights of the handicapped. That has fallen on deaf ears and has not been enacted by this legislature. Now I see an attempt to stalemate or to stonewall legislation which can help children in these situations. At least give them the right to speak and the right to have their desires and intentions weighed along with those of the parents whose marriage is breaking up. I think it would only be just and fair that consideration should be given to these people.

We live in a time of rights. Every time we turn around we see rights for various groups and individuals. In this situation, where young people can be affected very seriously for the rest of their lives, we in this legislature are inclined to say, "No, we had better study it further."

Listening to the two learned gentlemen on the other side, I can see no good reason why this legislation which has been carefully drafted and thought out could not proceed through this House in this session.

MR. MOSTOWAY: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to say a few words on this bill. I want to say, in looking it over (having been involved with those agencies which are in turn involved with children, and custody of children) that it's not quite as black and white as the hon. member would wish to paint it right now.

I do want to say that it seems to me that right now the child's wishes, to some degree, can be taken into consideration — maybe not to the extent that gentlemen opposite would like, but I do believe that there is room for that.

I do want to say one thing: yes, the child's rights should certainly be taken into consideration. As I said before, it's not all black and white. In some cases that can be very advantageous to the child. Children can also make mistakes. In some cases that can be very disadvantageous to children.

I sent out a questionnaire relative to that bill. I made no statement and no judgment on it. I said that a bill was introduced and asked, "Would you give me some guidance as to how I should be voting on this bill?" I will give you the truth. I said, "when and if the bill comes up." I gave no judgment on it. I received a number of responses. I will have to inform the House that it was about 50-50. Some said to leave it the way it is now; others said no, the changes are welcome.

I won't mention any individuals. I will mention a family service bureau in Saskatoon which stated, "If you want guidance, Mr. Mostoway, in our judgment there should not be significant changes made to existing legislation." I'm not saying there shouldn't be. I'm just telling you that it was about 50-50.

I would prefer, as I believe the Attorney General suggested, to have the law reform commission take a good look at this. I would want some public input into this. I would want some public input from children who have been affected in the past. I don't see anything wrong with that. It may stave off for a while what some members opposite might want. I do think there are too many shades of grey in this for us to make a snap judgment today or for us to have within the past couple of weeks. With that in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned on the following recorded division:

YEAS — 28

Blakeney
McArthur
Shillington

Pepper
Rolfes
Poniatowski

Allen
MacMurchy
Johnson

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Kaeding
Tchorzewski
Skoberg
Hammersmith
Cody
White
Miner

Romanow
Robbins
Mostoway
Engel
Long
Solomon

Smishek
Baker
Vickar
Cowley
Nelson
Chapman

NAYS — 12

Berntson
Taylor
Hardy
Andrew

Thatcher
Rousseau
Pickering
McLeod

Duncan
Swan
Muirhead
Ham

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Garner that Bill No. 16 — An Act to amend The Vehicles Act be now read a second time.

MR. JOHNSON: — Mr. Speaker, the amendment to The Vehicles Act that was put forward by Mr. Garner asks that this Assembly delete some sections from the act. In doing so, this deletion removes from the urban municipalities the opportunity to do different things as they see fit for their community. One could say that the deletions set up are asking the Assembly to change what is now in the hands of the municipalities — without even so much as consulting with them and whether the municipalities would agree with this or not.

Just as an example, I have been told that one of the communities or the town of Unity which is in the member's riding shuts off an entire street because it has schools on both sides of that street. When the buses are being loaded and unloaded, the street is closed off entirely. I'm not sure whether the deletions that are being made in this act would cause this to be not possible for the urban municipality, but I believe that might be the case. Mr. Speaker, what I think has happened is that the member opposite has moved forward with a bill to amend The Vehicles Act without first of all having given full consideration to the impact of the amendments, and in doing so is basically creating more of a problem than he is solving. So, I think that other members may be interested in speaking on this bill, but my direction to the members would be to oppose it.

Motion negatived.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY CASH OUTFLOW

DEPARTMENT OF TELEPHONES

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 38

Item 1 (continued)

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister why zero-plus dialling

is not a fact of life in Saskatchewan. I have raised this in the Assembly before with him. I know Saskatoon has it but Regina and Moose Jaw don't. I'm not aware of what centres do, but more don't have it than have it. With the kind of money that Sask Tel has borrowed and with the kind of speeches we have listened to, with you extolling the virtues of the marvellous job that the people's phone company is going to do and the wonderful benefits we have through the public ownership of Sask Tel, why do we not have zero-plus dialling when virtually every station that Ma Bell has, has had it (and takes it for granted) for years?

HON. MR. CODY: — Mr. Chairman, I don't feel that it's the responsibility of the Minister of Telephones to answer this. I think it's the responsibility of Sask Tel. I don't feel that I should be giving you the answer. I can certainly tell you, but I think that would just be opening up a can of worms that is precedent setting and I'm not sure that I should be doing that. If you want me to do so, I will certainly tell you.

The fact of the matter is that we do have a lot of zero-plus dialling in Saskatchewan; there's little question about that. The reason we don't have it in all of the areas is simply that we have step-by-step switching equipment in some of the areas, which is still working well; the capacity is there. As soon as that capacity has run out, it will go to a digital system. Once the digital system is in, then the zero-plus dialling can go. We are putting that in as quickly as the other equipment becomes obsolete or there is no additional capacity left. Once that happens, the digital system goes in and you can have zero-plus dialling.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, I assumed you were the Minister of Telephones and I think this falls into that category. The telephone company has proposed to go into the cable television business, under Bill 13, and into retail stores. Does the minister consider it unreasonable with a primary centre such as Regina (and I suggest to you that even though Sask Tel may not consider it so, Regina is a centre of some activity in this province, as is the city to the west, Moose Jaw, and the city to the south, Weyburn) — would you not think with some of the things that your government has led the telephone company into, that zero-plus dialling surely must be a basic that our residents should have access to immediately?

If you don't have the money, stop some of these strange things which really aren't related to telephones and get down to what other people in North America just take for granted.

HON. MR. CODY: — I don't agree with the hon. member that we aren't doing anything and that we aren't doing anything about zero-plus dialling; we certainly are. We have been doing it on a basis that we think is reasonable. The fact of the matter is that the growth in Regina wasn't as fast as it was in Saskatoon and as a result, Saskatoon and some of those areas received zero-plus prior to the city of Regina. It's on the schedule now to have it done. I'm not here to answer for Sask Tel today. I don't have a lot of figures or dates with me. But it will be very shortly; that is the only answer I can give the hon. member.

MR. THATCHER: — Well, I didn't ask you for very many figures or dates. All I really asked you was, when can we expect zero-plus dialling province-wide? We got the same answer we got last year. I guess we had better not hold our breath waiting for it. Here are some figures that you do have, hopefully, Mr. Minister. On April 7, I asked you to comment on a trip that you took to Brownsville, Texas. You indicated at that time that you were accompanied by an STC official, and that you met an individual from Amtrak. At

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that time you were asked if you could produce vouchers for the trip, and the name and the vouchers of the STC official who accompanied you.

You may argue that you are the Minister of Telephones. I counter that argument in advance by saying that this question was answered through the Department of Telephones, and therefore I contend that it's a valid point to debate or question today. I will ask the minister if he will table the documentation that was requested on April 7, which he agreed to do at that date.

HON. MR. CODY: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I have a brief statement and I will table it if the hon. member so wishes. It is one which I had my officials and my CIC (Crown investments corporation) people check as closely as they could, and concerns the trip I made in February 1980 from Regina to Dallas and to Brownsville. The air fare was \$621.70, the expenses for the total trip were \$386.32, which is \$1,008.02.

Return no. 67 shows a total of \$1,077.75, which was an error. The error was made by adding 18 per cent U.S. exchange, which had already been included in the \$886.32. That's why you will note a slight discrepancy between the \$1,077.75 which return no. 67 shows, and the \$1,008.02 which was the actual expenditure.

On February 3, 1980, at 7:55 a.m., I left for Dallas from Regina, via Calgary and Denver. On February 4, I met with Ms. Casey Cockrell, who is the public relations officer for Woodbine Development Corporation, and later on in the day with Mr. John Scovell, president of Woodbine Development Corporation. This is the firm which operates the multimodal terminal in Dallas.

On February 4, in the evening, I flew to Brownsville. On February 5 and the morning of February 6, I met with Mr. Jim Thompson, the president of Eagle International, the organization which builds Eagle bus lines and the largest bus manufacturer in Canada and the United States.

On February 6, in the afternoon, I met with an official from Amtrak. My trip was not specifically to see this official, but was for the other reasons which I stated.

The balance of the trip was personal, and I returned by rented vehicle at personal expense. I went from Brownsville to San Antonio, and by aircraft from San Antonio to Regina via Denver and Calgary. The return trip, incidentally, from Regina to Dallas, and Brownsville to Regina would have been \$657.70; however, because I took a vehicle at my own expense to San Antonio, the trip from San Antonio to Regina via Denver and Calgary was \$621.70, which was a saving to the Government of Saskatchewan of \$36.

That is the statement, and I will table that for the hon. member if he wishes.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, I would ask you why you were not this open on April 7? I can read the *Hansard* and see the way you went around in circles. A quote for example:

Mr. Pickering — I had the opportunity of visiting Woodland subdivision at my own expense. The property involved here is on the north side of Canyon Lake, just north of San Antonio. Is that not true? It is about 35 miles north of San Antonio? Did you in fact stop at San Antonio on your way back?

Mr. Cody — I don't think I need to answer that. I have no idea what you are talking about.

You had an idea. You knew exactly what he was talking about that night, didn't you? You knew precisely what he was talking about. You misled the Assembly that night. I just quoted your own words; you deliberately misled the Assembly that night.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. I'll have to ask you to withdraw that. You can't say to a member that he deliberately misled the Assembly; that's . . .

MR. THATCHER: — What if you're prepared to prove it, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — It doesn't matter; you can't say it. I'd ask you to withdraw that statement.

MR. THATCHER: — I'll move on to something else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Hold it; I ask you to withdraw that statement.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, I can't withdraw the truth because he just confirmed that as the truth. If I withdraw it, then I'm saying it's not the truth. I just quoted you the facts; you have something tabled in front of you. I ask you to consider whether that is the truth or whether it isn't. I'll toss it in your lap. If it's not the truth, I shall withdraw it. If it is the truth, I'll expect action.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. You have to withdraw that statement.

MR. THATCHER: — All right, I shall withdraw it. I suggest to you that I will withdraw it because I wish to move on to another matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Look, it's so simple to say, "I withdraw the statement, without any reservations." Please do that and we can move on.

MR. THATCHER: — All right. I withdraw the statement without any reservation.

There's an indictment of our rules right there. Talk about hypocrisy, I'm withdrawing something here . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. Let's get on here. We don't want to get into a hassle with the chairman.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, on that trip you made no mention of the general manager of STC. May I ask if you were accompanied on that trip by the manager of STC?

HON. MR. CODY: — Yes I was.

MR. THATCHER: — Are you prepared to present the vouchers on that trip as you indicated? You were asked on that date:

I want to see that documentation tomorrow. I want to see the charge on STC for that official who accompanied him to Brownsville, Texas, and I want to see his airplane ticket.

And you agreed that night that such would be put forward. Now, you may argue that this is not STC, but nevertheless the answer about that trip came through the Minister of Telephones. That is the vehicle and we have to deal with it.

HON. MR. CODY: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I have no way of tabling documents which another individual may have. I just can't understand how you could ask me to do that as the Minister of Telephones. I have given you the full resumé of the trip that I made, and I make no apologies about making that trip. It was well worth it. It was exactly what I went there for. I made no apologies about that, whatsoever. I do not have any other documentation which I can give you for the general manager of STC.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, it was you who brought STC into it on that particular evening because the questions were on your trip to Dallas and your subsequent trip to Dallas. The original question went to the Minister of Telephones and the answer came from your department.

The answer from your department said that you were not accompanied by any officials. The night of your original estimates, you indicated that you were accompanied by the general manager of STC. Now, you have had about five to six weeks to come up with what is a very simple request. Your estimates have been before this Assembly on two occasions. I don't recall the other night, but I am advised by one of the other members, and, while I don't have the *Hansard* in front of me, I think you agreed at that time to provide the documentation of such. I think, Mr. Minister, it has to be a questionable procedure for you to lean on the general manager of STC, then, when requested to provide that documentation, for you to agree to provide it, and then on the last day of the session to suddenly say, "No, I am not going to give it to you. It's not relevant; I can't get at it."

Mr. Minister, I don't believe you when you say that you can't get at it, because you can get at it. You are also the minister in charge of STC. You simply tell your executive assistant, "Get that voucher for me, and get it up here." Your executive can pull it for you in a matter of hours at the very maximum (Probably one-half hour, but hours at the very least). If you don't have that here, you are not producing it for a reason. That's all I can conclude, because twice you have been requested. This is the third occasion.

Mr. Minister, you indicated you visited the Woodlands subdivision. You indicated that you met with certain officials there. Would you tell me what the specifics of the business were, which you were conducting with the Woodlands subdivision? You mentioned a terminal. Would you tell me if Woodlands is also selling land? I believe you said it was Woodlands development? Is that what you called it?

AN HON. MEMBER: — No, it isn't.

MR. THATCHER: — Would you tell me the nature of the business which you were conducting on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan with the real estate people from the Woodlands subdivision?

HON. MR. CODY: — Once again, Mr. Chairman, it is pretty obvious that the hon. member for Thunder Creek wishes to mislead the public because he is trying to tell the people that I was down visiting the Woodlands subdivision or the Woodlands people who sell land. That is simply not the truth. I told the hon. member what I did. I think if he wishes he will find that it is tabled with him. The fact of the matter is it is Woodbine Incorporated. That is what it is. They are the people who run the multimodal project in

Dallas, Texas. They have nothing to do, as far as I am concerned or aware of, in selling land.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, just give me a chance to read that statement. Give the 30 seconds, will you, please?

Mr. Minister, we have some other business to do. Again, I am going to ask you to have someone from your staff go to STC and pull the expense voucher of the general manager who accompanied you. This is the third time you have received that request. This is the third time your estimates are up. It is not a very complicated thing to do. It is a relatively simple thing to do, and you can do it very quickly. It is only 4:15. I am sure they can have them back here by 5 o'clock.

I suggest that we move on to something else, and let's do the business. Mr. Minister, I don't think I am taking a particularly unreasonable position. This hasn't exactly been sprung on you. You knew this was going to come up. It has come up on the other occasions of your estimates. Again, you come up blank. I would also ask you, for the third time your estimates have come up, to specifically table the vouchers for this trip. All I see here is a piece of paper. I don't see any vouchers.

Now, I think it is fair game, when you have notice, to expect those things to be tabled on a given occasion, particularly something as routine as this. All we have is a piece of paper. Now, you can clean this up very simply and very quickly. It is in your lap. Please table them, and let's get on to something else.

We don't have anything very heavy to do in your department, but I must confess, Mr. Minister, I am a little bit surprised by your attitude. I respectfully ask you to clean this thing up and let's move on.

HON. MR. CODY: — Mr. Chairman, I think I have given the hon. member as good an accounting as anyone could possibly give a person. That is just simply all I can give you. I can see no other accountability that I should be able to give. I just feel that when the hon. member sees this in print, if he doesn't believe it, well, I guess there's very little I can do about it. But that is simply all I have to give him.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — I'd like to ask the minister (and as my colleague has indicated this is a third time now you have been asked), why did you refuse to table the ticket that you used for your trip down south? Do you have any particular reason why you don't want to table that ticket?

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a response on this issue. I've been House Leader of the government side for 10 years. I was in opposition for four years before that time. What the hon. member has done by way of written answer as the words of a member of Executive Council is give more information than you would get on an order for return. When you ask for an order for return, as you have, as to where trips have been made and the members in the past of the Executive Council have answered those orders for return, you don't get the vouchers. It has never been the policy in opposition or out of opposition to dig out the vouchers. I don't know how long the vouchers are.

It's a very sound principle. It's based on the principle that hon. members in this House tell other hon. members the truth. And when a government member tables information

of that nature it is to be accepted on that basis. To go beyond that basis and to go out for vouchers and the like destroys absolutely any kind of fabric upon which we operate our system. I'm saying to the hon. members opposite that I support the member very fully on that. He has done more than is reasonable for the Department of Telephones. He has given you everything that is required. If you'd asked for an order for return two months ago on that you would probably not have received as much as you received there. And to make it into a precedent-making situation because of some hunch or some feeling or some belief is unfair and I, for one, would hope that the minister stands his ground and refuses to produce it.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — I notice the Attorney General has attempted to evade my question, and I'm going to pose it again, because the question had nothing to do with what he's tabled. The question had simply to do with why since we've asked for the documents . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, you haven't. I'm asking the Minister of Telephones to tell me why he refused to produce the ticket that we've asked him to produce. You talk about taking someone's word for it. I notice some errors in what was produced here. I think having noticed that, I would like you to then again reply to my question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, the return no. 67 shows a total of \$1,077 due to an error in the Provincial Secretary's office's adding 18 per cent which had been included previously in a 386. Well, 18 per cent of the figure doesn't work out to the difference. So again I would ask you to tell me why you don't want to produce that ticket.

HON. MR. COWLEY: — Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a couple of comments. First of all, the orders for return asked for the trips made by the Minister of Telephones and the Minister of Co-ops, as I recall. It did not ask for any trips made by the minister in charge of STC. Going through the hon. member's trips, he had a trip that was made not as Minister of Telephones or Minister of Co-ops but as minister in charge of STC. I suppose we could have left the trip out altogether on the order for return. That would have been the most letter of the law way, if you like. Those were the questions that were asked.

We could have left the trip out. But on looking at the member's trip, it was obvious he had made it and it seemed to us that we should disclose the trip because I'm sure the members didn't just want to know what trip the Minister of Telephones was taking but rather, what trips ministers were taking. So we included them all. That was the rationale for it. The error there was that on the return which I filed as Provincial Secretary, we overstated the member's expenses. Again, because of an error in doing the calculations in the Provincial Secretary's department, the costs for the exchange were added in twice. Certainly that was an error in the wrong way if we were making it. We should have made it the other way rather than that way, if we were trying to hide anything.

I think that the member has given more information than he has been asked for. It seems to me we've consistently tried to give full disclosure to the members opposite. I don't understand the points of the question. With respect to the people accompanying him, etc., the questions on the orders for return were all at government expense, not at Crown corporation expenses. Furthermore, it has been our policy all along not to divulge the expenses of senior members of Crown corporations. That has been consistent in Crown corporations committee and here. Along with the Attorney General, I think the member has more than adequately responded to the member's questions. I only respond because as Provincial Secretary I filed that return and that was how it came about. That's why it showed up there. It had to show up under one or the other because you didn't ask the other question. It seems to me had we not shown it

(and you had been asking about the question), you would have been arguing that we were trying to hide something by not putting it in. Now we are getting hell, pardon me, heck for having put it in when it would have been better if we hadn't put it in and disclosed less.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — This is the third time I asked the question. I asked the question once of the Attorney General and then the Provincial Secretary came to the defence of the cabinet minister, so I am going to ask the minister again to answer his own question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's the so what! The so what is I have asked the Minister of Telephones a question. Two of you have stood up and maybe there are more of you who wish to go to his defence. Fine, if you want to do that go ahead and stand up. Again, I will ask the Minister of Telephones: why don't you want to table it? Is there any particular personal reason you don't want the House to see the ticket which you used?

HON. MR. CODY: — Mr. Chairman, I indicated to the hon. member that I have given him all of the information which I have. I have no other information to table.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Attorney General, I don't know what you are getting so upset about other than the fact that you flubbed things so badly last week that you dragged us back here for goodness knows what. We are asking some simple, basic questions, questions that you would ask were you over here — the same question on this same issue. If I did not ask these questions you would be the first one to get up and announce what a lousy opposition we are. What we are trying to do today (I was listening to you this morning) is that we are trying to raise ourselves in your esteem, since I note you acknowledged we had gone from zero to one on a scale of 1 to 10. Mr. Attorney General, our personal objective today in defending the people's purse is to raise ourselves to at least two in your mind.

Gentlemen, without getting an awful lot of inflammatory rhetoric into this (which we are rapidly heading to), but to calm things down . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We may get there a little bit later.

Mr. Minister, I am sorry to be repetitious, but I don't accept and I don't think anyone else will buy the concept of the Attorney General that vouchers are not tabled. Mr. Chairman, I submit to you that the tabling of government documents in this Assembly is relatively routine. Now there may be some documents for which the government may say "Not in the public interest" with some validity and refuse to table those documents. I submit to this Assembly, and to anybody, that a routine request to a minister to table some travel documents (documents which have been referred to by an order for return) is not an unreasonable request. When this minister has had that request on three occasions and on the third one knows full well that he is going to be questioned again and refuses to do so, I think we have to wonder what is up. With some validity I think we have to wonder what's up.

The minister has refused — other than to say back on April 7 that he was accompanied by the general manager of STC — to get any further involved. Already, Mr. Minister, you have been tripped up today. I have already had to withdraw something that, frankly, I truly regret withdrawing. You know you misled the House and you did so in a very arrogant fashion. You were tripped up on that occasion. You had a chance to get out of it; you chose not to take it. That was the reference to San Antonio

Mr. Minister, it's a very simple thing; it's a very simple request. There is something here

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that just isn't quite right. It's something that you can make right with a minimum of difficulty. I ask you to table your plane fare. I don't want a statement from your executive assistant. I want those vouchers and I want to see the other ones which were referred to, despite the fact that they came through the Minister of Telephones. Rapidly I am coming to the conclusion that you have something to hide out of this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, you can end that speculation right now and you can do it very simply. I invite you to do it. This is the third time. On both previous occasions you have agreed to table these documents and they're not heavy documents; they're pretty simple. I suggest that maybe you have something to hide. Let's see the documents and let's get on with what has to be done.

HON. MR. CODY: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I have also said for the third time that I have given the hon. member, the House and anyone else who wishes to read the statement, the full disclosure of what I have done and what it has cost. That is simply all I am going to table and that is the end of that.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, I have no alternative but to come to the obvious conclusion. I'm saying that you have something to hide and I refer to page 1953 of April 7 in *Hansard*. You had something to hide that night when you denied knowing anything about a trip to San Antonio and I say that people can conclude the very obvious from that. Today you say you went to San Antonio. On April 7 you said you knew nothing about it. I think the conclusion is obvious; I don't have to say it. It's there for everybody to see it.

I say to you that there is something fishy about that entire trip. I say there is something very strangely fishy about that trip. On the night that you were questioned, April 7, you made no reference to trips of a personal nature. You made no reference that night when you were questioned extensively by the member for Qu'Appelle, me and the member for Bengough-Milestone about the details of that trip. We didn't hear anything about a personal trip. We didn't hear anything about a rented vehicle at personal expense — Brownsville to San Antonio — or about that aircraft from San Antonio to Regina via Denver and Calgary. Do you know what we heard? You said, "I don't think I need to answer that. I have no idea what you are talking about." That's what we heard that night. You knew exactly what we were talking about. We received a list from your executive assistant today.

Here's another interesting little statement that you made that night. This is the member for Kinistino, the Minister of Telephones. I quote:

I'm not sure what the hon. member is referring to. I know what I was doing down there. It was business. I saw lots of land I can assure you. Their land is great. It's wide; it's nice; the beaches were terrible at the time because it was cold. I didn't even get a suntan the one day I had to go around. I think if the hon. member checks out the other information he has there, he'll find the two are quite a long distance apart.

That's page 1953. And you wonder why we want to see those vouchers.

I think it is pretty obvious why the Attorney General is on his feet. I think it is pretty obvious why the Provincial Secretary is on his feet. On the basis of what I have seen on three occasions of your estimates, I don't think you can table vouchers to back up what you say is true. I don't believe you. You call that what you want. I don't believe you, and

I'll say that outside the Assembly.

I don't know whether the general manager of STC was with you or not. If he was, why not table his travel vouchers? I suggest to you that you can clean this up very quickly and very simply. Something is very wrong. I don't believe that this thing represents the truth. I don't believe that you can put forward vouchers that will make this into the unquestionable truth. I don't believe you. I don't know what else one can say. I don't believe you on this issue.

Item 1 agreed.

Vote 38 agreed.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY CASH OUTFLOW (SUPPLEMENTARY)

DEPARTMENT OF TELEPHONES

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 38

Item 1 agreed.

Vote 38 agreed.

Resolutions

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — I would like to explain, Mr. Chairman. I want to move four resolutions that are always moved at the end of committee. They have been so moved ever since this legislature has existed. I move the following resolution:

Resolved that toward making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1981, the sum of \$66,457,860 be granted out of the consolidated fund.

Resolution agreed to.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — The critic would like to see that, while we are going through the next one:

I move resolution no. 2:

Resolved, that toward making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1982, the sum of \$1,660,681,210 be granted out of the consolidated fund.

Resolution agreed to.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — I move resolution no. 3:

Resolved, that toward making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1981, the sum of \$77,139,980 be granted out of the

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Saskatchewan Heritage Fund.

These first two deal with the supplementaries which were considered by each estimate at a time.

Resolution agreed to.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Finally, I would move:

Resolved, that toward making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1982, the sum of \$701,779,500 be granted out of the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Would you go back to that, please? I didn't hear that last amount. I'm a little lost as to what that one is.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — I can explain. May I, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Absolutely.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — The last resolution deals with the amount of money that has been approved in the consideration of the estimates, department by department, under the heritage fund. The first two were dealing with the consolidated fund; this one is with the heritage fund. We have already taken three-twelfths through the earlier resolutions which we passed; we are now passing on the remainder.

Resolution agreed to.

The said resolutions were reported and read the first time.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — By leave of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that the resolutions be now read a second time and agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER: — Is leave granted.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — I hesitate to carry on with this vote until the minister has checked out a figure which I asked him to check out. If it is wrong, this would have to be changed. There is a discrepancy in it. I am sorry, Mr. Minister. Your other figures work out; this one doesn't. I hesitate to go on with it if it is wrong. If you say it is right, I will accept that.

HON. MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — All I can say to the member opposite is that we have had the resolutions prepared by the office of the Clerk. The resolutions have been checked and double-checked by the deputy minister. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has checked with the officials in the department to verify that the figures are right. All I can do is to go on the basis of those assurances which have been provided for me that the figures cover off the necessary remaining expenditures which we must make after subtracting those things which we approved during the two interim supply bills, which this legislature considered previously to this. If the member wishes me to check further, I am prepared to do so. If I find something wrong with it later, I will come back and we will find some way to rectify it. Meanwhile, I would suggest that we proceed, because I really don't think there is a problem.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order. We are getting ourselves into a highly unusual procedure here. I have the member for Regina South and the Minister of Finance having an interesting conversation, with no rules which will support their conversation. The question which I had asked is, is leave granted? I have yet to get an answer to that.

By leave of the Assembly, the said resolutions were read a second time and agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 119 — An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

HON. MR. COWLEY: — Mr. Speaker, in rising to move second reading of this bill (which I shall at the conclusion of my remarks), what I intend to do is to briefly go through the terms and conditions of the bill, and then move my motion.

A major part of the drafting of this bill has to do with the report, which was made by (I believe it was) the rules committee to the House some time ago, which recommended, among other things, a board of internal economy. Part 2(1) of this act establishes a board of internal economy and establishes the Offices of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Library under that. It attempts to deal with the employees and the method of handling the estimates for the board of internal economy.

The material here (I am given to understand, but I haven't checked it carefully) attempts to follow the recommendations of the particular committee, at least in a general way with respect to the board of internal economy and what it shall deal with. So that, Mr. Chairman, is what about half of the bill deals with. The rest of the bill deals with some assorted odds and ends with respect to The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act as it now stands.

In that same report there was a recommendation that there be some additional allowances made to the members of the Assembly who filled special roles. For example, there was a recommendation that there be a deputy chairman of committees. Members will know that the chairman of committees is the Deputy Speaker and he already receives an allowance as Deputy Speaker; that is not changed by this act. However, a deputy chairman of committees, under the terms of this act, will be established, which is a new position. The proposal in the bill is that there be an annual allowance to that deputy chairman of committees of \$1,500 per annum. So that is one change, and it follows, as I understand it, the recommendations of the committee, although the figures obviously are new because the committee didn't make any reference with respect to figures.

There is also a change in this bill which will provide payment to the chairmen of the Crown corporations committee and the public accounts committee of \$1,500 per annum each. Where there are two members who serve as one of those chairmen it will be prorated on the basis of the amount of time which each member spent during the session as chairman of the respective committees. The chairman of the Crown corporations committee is an opposition member, and the chairman of the public accounts committee is an opposition member. While the report, I believe, spoke generally of chairmen of committees, it was felt (I don't believe there will be any great disagreement here) that really the only two active committees that we have are Crown corporations and public accounts. These were probably the two they were referring to — not, say, the standing committee on agriculture or something like that.

There was also a recommendation in the report that there be an allowance made for House leaders. The bill has an allowance in it for the opposition House Leader of \$1,500 per annum, but no allowance for the government House Leader who is a member of the Executive Council. I would assume that if at some time in the future, which may or may not be likely (I would think unlikely), the government House Leader was not a member of the Executive Council then perhaps the Assembly would be asked to consider changing the legislation to include a government House Leader. But at this time that is not contemplated. Because of the other changes that were made with respect to chairmen of committees it was felt that there should be some change made with respect to the remuneration for whips. The present remuneration for whips, I believe, is \$1,784 per session, and for deputy whips half of that or \$882 per session. It was felt that the deputy whips perform a function roughly equivalent (and certainly one can have a debate on this if one wants) to that of the chairmen of Crown corporations and public accounts, or deputy chairmen of committees, so that was raised from \$882 to \$1,500 to make those equivalent positions for both government and opposition members. The whips' remuneration was increased to \$2,500 to keep a somewhat similar differential between the whips and the deputy whips.

Those are the basic monetary changes. There are some other changes in the bill as well. Provision is made for members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in group life insurance programs and in group disability. At the present time members are covered by Sun Group Life Insurance. The lawyers advise me that it should be in the act to make it perfectly clear that members are eligible for this. The senior public servants do have a group disability plan. This will simply enable members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in a group disability plan if, indeed, one is put together for members of the Legislative Assembly. A major change in the bill is the section relating to members' services (section 55(2)) which is section 8 of the printed bill.

Each member is entitled to payment of an amount equal to one-half of the maximum amount paid to a clerk-stenographer 3, in the classified division of the public service, for the purpose of secretarial expenses incurred by him in respect of his duties as a member where he produces a bill for such expense, identifying it as having been made in respect of such duties.

This is an additional allowance and above the existing allowance which is made for constituency offices. This would allow a member to hire, for example, a part-time or half-time person equivalent to a clerk-steno 3, and to submit a monthly bill (after identifying the person) to the Legislative Assembly office to have the payment made by that office to the person so designated.

I think the thought there (although it's not exclusively restricted to that) is that members would probably use this for a secretary in their constituency office, or for research assistants during the session, or a combination of both. Again, I think members will undoubtedly (depending on their various circumstances) use the allowance in somewhat different ways. As an individual member, my intention is to provide a half-time secretary in my constituency office in Biggar (which is the largest centre in my constituency). That's how I intend to utilize the money; other members may intend to use it in some other way.

I think there are some other relatively minor changes in the bill with respect to oaths, etc. There is also a change with respect to the per diem allowance. Now per diem and sessional allowances are paid to members and the deductions are made from the sessional allowance if a member is away on other than government or constituency business.

With respect to the per diem, if the member is away a deduction is made to make the two consistent. The deductions per diem are made in both cases when a member is away on other than illness, military service, constituency or government business. I think the two are now consistent where before they were inconsistent.

Mr. Speaker, I think that covers the main terms of the act. I will, of course, if there are some specific questions, be prepared to deal with those in committee of the whole.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 119 — An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

MR. ANDREW: — I wish to make a few comments on the second reading of this proposed bill. I will cover it in the order of sequence as advanced by the Provincial Secretary.

First, as it relates to the committee of internal economy, I would say that for those of us who sat on the rules committee, it took a lot to persuade the committee and the Executive Council to move on that particular piece of legislation. I think it is extremely important that we move to a committee of internal economy. Then the services, pay, etc., which is being advanced to the members of the Legislative Assembly would be handled like any other expenditure of government. It comes at the same time the budget is introduced. The package is there for you to decide how you spend it. The committee, which is represented by cabinet, back bench and opposition, will deal with how that should be spent. I take it that when it comes to a question of determining what the pay package should be, there would be unanimous consent. I would expect that that is what is done in other provinces — there would be unanimous consent as to what that package would be. It would be presented to the legislature. It would be defended in the committee of finance by the committee of internal economy.

I'm glad to see that particular piece of legislation brought in. I hope that by doing that we can avoid some of the problems we have experienced this year, and some of the problems that legislatures throughout this country have experienced — paying themselves or setting their own fees as to how they should be paid. Very often this takes place in the dying days of a particular session.

I acknowledge the Provincial Secretary's statement that the special committee on rules and procedures recommended that certain committee chairmen be paid an extra amount of money. The basis of the rules committee was, quite frankly, that the legislature should move toward upgrading the level of committees.

What we did in that particular regard is recommend that the increase be paid to the public accounts committee and the Crown corporations committee, but more particularly to bring in the select standing committees that had investigative powers to deal with various topics that the members would be interested in. That is the important recommendation of the rules committee, that that would, in fact, be funded, and the funding would not be restricted by Executive Council. In other words, if several members got together and advanced a good subject matter they wanted to investigate, they would have appropriate money provided to defend it.

Quite frankly, I have no qualms with the payment for special duties other than to say that it is very difficult to come up with some kind of formula that says we should pay the deputy chairman X number of dollars, or the chairman of the public accounts X number

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of dollars. How do you really relate that to the amount of work done by any particular member?

I think all legislatures face the problem of how to pay the one who maybe does a little bit more or works a little harder than the other one. It is probably impossible to come to terms with that situation.

The other thing advanced in this particular bill is the question of group insurance. I have no strong views one way or the other. Clearly, for someone who is affected by it, the concept of group life insurance could have some merit.

With regard to the per diem cost, I would have some problems with that particular clause of this particular bill. The reason I would have problems is that basically it allows, I think, every member who lives outside Regina a set per diem for expense cost. That provides you with your meals, room, and that type of thing. That's the cause of the differential in the past between those living in Regina and those living outside Regina. I can't see its merit; even if your constituency is outside Regina, you're still living in Regina. As a good example, I take the member for Qu'Appelle. Under this proposed legislation the member for Qu'Appelle, so as not to attack the members opposite, instead of receiving the traditional \$35 a day per diem will now receive \$55 per day. In other words, he would be paid for the additional cost of a hotel room. I don't think that particularly makes a great deal of sense.

I suppose there are several other people in much the same bracket as the member for Qu'Appelle. I think he's the only member on this side of the Assembly who is, in fact, affected that way.

I think the per diem thing is the point I find most offensive in the entire bill. The other point I wish to make is that through the constitution debate the concern that most members in this Assembly had was not so much with what the package was, but what the process was in the constitution. We weren't concerned and we didn't put ourselves to arguing nearly as strenuously about the charter of rights as we did to arguing about the process, the way the constitution was being advanced upon the provinces.

We are facing exactly the same type of situation with this particular piece of legislation. In a prior speech, I think with regard to the rules committee, I made the observation that by and large a lot of people out there in the province look on the members of this Assembly in a cynical way. Perhaps the members of the media look on us in a cynical way. I think that is probably a fair statement; with regard to the people, perhaps it's founded. With regard to the people on the third floor, I don't think it is. But I think the people do look at us somewhat cynically, and I think they have a right to look at us cynically when we propose to increase our pay and to bring that legislation in in the last minute of any legislature. I think that is the problem that we have to look at. If we were looking at increasing the money for secretaries, or at increasing the per diem, and bringing in the committee of internal economy, we should do it a lot earlier in the session. There is no use saying that it's not a pay package or it's not this. What is in fact happening is that we are bringing this in at the last hour. I don't think that really augurs very well for any of us in this particular Assembly, and I'm not looking particularly at you. I'm looking at the entire Assembly, and I don't think it does add a great deal of credibility to any of us.

I hope in the future, of course, that the committee of internal economy will solve that problem because that's primarily why it was implemented. The rules committee

designed the committee of internal economy to avoid that last minute increase of pay or increase of assistance to the members that we would slide through on the last couple of hours of a session that has run 65 days. I really don't think any of us should stand up and pat ourselves on the back for that kind of a tactic,. It happened the first year I was here. I suppose last year the whole question of pay resolved around the member for Nipawin's Bill 105 that took away his money, and I suppose everyone has mixed views on that.

Mr. Speaker, I have a few more comments to make that perhaps will take a little bit of time and, in that it's now past 5 o'clock, I would call it 5 o'clock.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.