

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 25, 1982

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Private Members' Bills

DEPUTY CLERK: — Mr. Skoberg from the standing committee on private members' bills presented the second report of the said committee, which is as follows:

Your committee has duly examined the undermentioned petitions for private bills and finds that the provisions of rules 56, 57, and 60 have been fully complied with in each case: of the Canadian Theological College praying for an act to change the name of Canadian Theological College to Canadian Theological Seminary; of the Canadian Bible Society auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society (North Saskatchewan District) of the city of Saskatoon praying for an act to change the name of the corporation to Canadian Bible Society (North Saskatchewan District); of the Canadian Bible Society auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society (South Saskatchewan District) of Regina praying for an act to change the name of the corporation to Canadian Bible Society (South Saskatchewan District).

Your committee has considered the following bills and agreed to report the same without amendment.

1. Bill No. 01 — An Act to incorporate the Bishop Andrew Roborecki Foundation;
2. Bill No. 02 — An Act to amend An Act to incorporate Radville Christian College;
3. Bill No. 03 — An Act to provide for exemption from taxation of certain property of the Nelson Lake Lutheran Bible Camp Association, Inc.;
4. Bill No. 04 — An Act to amend An Act to incorporate the Briercrest Bible Institute.

Your committee recommends, under the provisions of rule 58, that fees be remitted less the cost of printing with respect to Bills 01, 02, 03, and 04.

MR. SKOBERG: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the hon. member for Rosthern, Mr. Katzman:

That the second report of the standing committee on private members' bills be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. BYERS: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 34 grades 11 and 12 students who are seated in the west gallery. They are accompanied here today by their principal, Mr. Mitchell, one of the teachers, Mr. Walter Oleksyn, and their bus driver, Lillian Voeltz. I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming this group from Kelliher to witness the proceedings to day. I hope that with this visit they will broaden their understanding of our parliamentary, democratic system of government.

I will be meeting with the students for pictures, refreshments and discussion at 3 p.m. I hope that all members will join me in welcoming them today and in expressing the hope that they will return to the legislature on future occasions, and in wishing them a safe trip home.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems a day when we have quite a number of guests within and without the legislature.

It is my pleasure to welcome and to introduce to you, and through you to the Chamber, 11 adults from the Regina Plains Community College who are taking aids to independent living. They are accompanied by their teacher, Debra Thomas. I look forward to meeting with them after the proceedings here, at 3 o'clock, for pictures and a discussion about what is going on.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to members of the House a group of students who are taking part in the vocational program at Scott Collegiate. They are about 24 in number, sitting in the Speaker's gallery, with three on the floor of the House. They are accompanied by three of their teachers, Margaret Stewardson and Faye McLeod and Doug Conway. They are, as I indicated, from Scott Collegiate, a collegiate in this city with a long and distinguished academic record and record in sports and other activities. Three of my children have gone to Scott Collegiate and one is there now. Accordingly, I think highly of the institution.

The students are pursuing vocational courses and are proceeding with their courses under more difficulties than frequently encountered by students, but they are doing their job and they are doing it well. I congratulate them for their interest in our proceedings here today and I extend to them a warm welcome on behalf of all members of the House.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. CODY: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a grade 8 class from Cudworth School, 35 in number. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Tom Thomas and Jim Bridgeman.

As you know, Cudworth is one of the fine communities in the Kinistino constituency. We welcome them here today. I know that they have had a long journey. I hope your stay in the legislature will be a good one, a fruitful one for you to take back to all of the people

you see and keep in touch with from time to time in the Cudworth district. Please welcome the grade 8 students from Cudworth, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly, 20 grade 8 students from Athabasca School in Regina sitting in the west gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher, Dr. Ochitwa. I know that all members of the legislature would want to join with me in wishing a warm welcome to our visitors here this afternoon. I might say that I look forward to meeting with you a little later for refreshments, for a picture, and for some discussion. Welcome to our legislature.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I, too, have the pleasure of introducing to you, Sir, and to members of the House, a group of students who I believe are in the west gallery from Princess Alexandra School. Is that Princess Alex up there? Yes, princess Alexandra. There are 30 of them. They are accompanied by Joe Lozinsky, Irene Alderman and Lonnie Thompson. As members may know, Princess Alex is one of the oldest schools in Saskatoon and still one of the best — not quite as good as Westmount, my school, but still pretty good. I welcome them to Regina.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

CUPE Hospital Strike

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Labor. Mr. Minister, I understand that it is the intention of the government opposite to introduce a bill to legislate the CUPE workers back to work. You will recall that yesterday I asked you in this House to use your offices to try to bring about a negotiated settlement to this strike. Obviously you have done nothing. You indicated yesterday in oral question period that the two parties were quite some distance apart — much further apart, I believe, than actually is the case. I did some investigation on my own in your absence, and have found that the parties are not nearly as far apart as you would like people to believe they are and that they could be back at the negotiating table within three hours.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! The member is clearly making a debate. The question period does not allow for that. The situation we get into is that one member puts a debate and the other member wants to respond to the debate. I would prefer to receive questions and answers.

MR. TAYLOR: — In light of what I have said, will you use your offices to bring these people back to the negotiating table?

HON. MR. SNYDER: — Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the hon. member the last time he raised a question that negotiations had broken down as of, I believe, around 6 o'clock on Sunday morning with the parties still being separated in a very major way. The health-care association, I believe, was of the view that they had extended themselves as far as they were able to go; the Canadian Union of Public Employees, on the other hand, believed they were entitled to a good deal more than they had been offered. As I indicated yesterday to the hon. member, magic solutions are not always possible and I am of the view that until there is an indication that one or both of the parties were

prepared to make some significant movements, returning to the table would not improve the circumstances. It might, in effect, be counterproductive under those circumstances.

The member may believe he has been a party to some complex negotiations. I would question the wisdom of his judgment. The negotiations have been protracted and are very complex in their nature. If he is suggesting that they are separated only by a very narrow gulf, he has been misinformed. I am of the understanding that is not the case and I can tell you certainly that any action that is taken is not looked upon with any joy on this side of the House. It seems to have created a fair degree of mirth on the other side of the House. I can tell you that we do not engage in this kind of activity light-heartedly. We're certainly not overjoyed with the prospect of having to use legislation in circumstances such as this.

MR. TAYLOR: — Supplemental question. Have you done any investigation since question period yesterday and, if so, what have you found out?

HON. MR. SNYDER: — Well, obviously, Mr. Speaker, the facts of the case are as they have been presented. I believe they are well understood by both the parties and the government at this time. I think they are virtually, as has been suggested, still a significant distance apart and, accordingly, to bring the parties back to the table without any indication of some significant movement by either party, as I said before would be counterproductive.

MR. TAYLOR: — A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I ask you: have you personally, as Minister of Labor in this province, done anything to contact the parties involved since question period yesterday and, if not, why not?

HON. MR. SNYDER: — I think I indicated to the member on another occasion that the conciliation officer, Cliff Hagen, had been in touch with the parties and continued to be in touch. He is the agent of the Department of Labour, the agent of the minister in this connection. There has been no indication of a significant or a substantial movement which would justify a return to the table at this time.

MR. TAYLOR: — In other situations and labour disputes in this province you have brought parties right into this building, and directly have taken part in facilitating negotiations along with other ministers. I ask you, what makes this strike different? Why have you and the Minister of Health not brought the parties into this building to bring about a negotiated settlement?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! I want to take this opportunity to mention to people who are here by invitation in the galleries that we have a democratic system in the province of Saskatchewan which we all honor highly. Now, that democratic system dictates that anyone in this Chamber who is to take part in this Chamber has to be on the floor of this Chamber, and that is a difficult process because you have to be elected. The people who are in the galleries are not elected; they are here by courtesy of the House; they are not allowed to take part in the functions of this House. They are here to observe, and I would ask the people who are in the galleries to cease and desist taking part in the functions of this House.

HON. MR. SNYDER: — I think, Mr. Speaker, that it has to be said that if anyone believes

that one set of circumstances entirely different from another requires similar or identical solutions, that, obviously, is not the case. I think that each particular set of negotiations is handled in the manner in which it is most appropriate. In the event which the member draws attention to, there appeared to be significant movement and a genuine chance of the reconciliation of the parties.

What has been suggested at this stage is that those circumstances are, as have been outlined in another set of circumstances, two separate disputes, two different conditions and a different element involved in each particular case with very real possibilities of a settlement. Obviously under those circumstances the negotiation can be escalated to a point where pressure is applied, and the conciliation officer is then hopeful that he can draw the parties together with the hope of a settlement. Those are not the elements; those are not the ingredients that are present at this time in this dispute. Accordingly, as I indicated before, without an indication of genuine movement on the part of either of the principals to this collective agreement, gathering them together with neither party indicating a willingness to move would be less than productive.

MR. TAYLOR: — I indicated a few minutes ago that within three hours they could be back at the table. You have not even talked to them since yesterday's question period. Will you, as Minister of Labor, bring these people into this legislature today and get a negotiated settlement for this strike?

HON. MR. SNYDER: — The member persists in asking the same question and I have to provide him with the same answers. Mr. Hagen, one of the senior industrial relations officers with the Department of Labor, has kept in close contact with the parties. An indication of movement through Mr. Hagen obviously is necessary in the event the Saskatchewan Health-Care Association were to extend themselves beyond the final position that was indicated at the table as late as last Sunday. That has not happened and there has not been an indication of willingness on the part of the Canadian Union of Public Employees to move from their stated position. Accordingly, to draw them together I think flies in the face of reality. Neither party has given an indication of their willingness to move, and accordingly under those circumstances I have to tell the hon. member that bringing them together does not provide any kind of a magic solution. I wish you would understand that fact.

MR. LANE: — I'll direct a question to the Premier. In light of the obvious refusal of the Minister of Labor to become personally involved in this strike, will you use your offices to bring the parties to the bargaining table, and if necessary to bring them into the Legislative Building and urge them to commence negotiations in order to get a negotiated settlement?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I take the view that in difficult areas of government activity, I am well-advised to rely upon the expertise of my ministers, particularly where the minister is very skilled in the area of labor relations and the people who are suggesting the nostrums for solution are totally unskilled in the field of labor relations. The Minister of Labor is a particularly well-informed person with respect to labor relations. He is in the best position to judge what tactics ought to be used in order to resolve a particular industrial dispute. I have every confidence in his staff, particularly his staff of conciliators, who in the past have solved some seemingly intractable industrial relations problems. He is calling the strategy. I believe that he is the right person to call the strategy, and I will continue to repose my confidence in him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — I have difficulty with that given the Premier's obvious attempts to try to take credit for the constitutional settlement and his skills in that area. Mr. Premier, I have a press release from the Minister of Health laying out the legislation that is to be introduced, the NDP form of Bill 2. I ask the Premier if he has now delegated the labor announcement to the Minister of Health. He seemingly has lost confidence in the Minister of Labor. Given the disorganization over there as to who is speaking on this particular matter, do you not feel it's now incumbent upon you personally to get immediately and personally involved in this confrontation and this strike to get a negotiated settlement?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to Bill 2 and, of course, he would be well-informed about Bill 2 since he was in the office of the Attorney General when that bill was drafted. It is a bill which gave the cabinet the authority to order people back to work indefinitely for 12 months of the year, and a simple reading of Bill 2 will make that clear. The bill which is contemplated will provide nothing of the kind, will not provide 12 months of every year that the cabinet can send anybody back to work. It will provide, as it is contemplated at least, a very, very much more limited return-to-work provision.

It has been announced, as you say, details of it, in part by the Minister of Health inasmuch as it relates to health. The solution of the industrial dispute has been in the hands of the Minister of Labor since it involves two parties well-outside the government, the SHA and CUPE, and, in my judgment, the Minister of Labor has done a very fine job. His staff was at the negotiating table, at the conciliating table, right through the night hour after hour after hour. He extracted, it is my understanding, some indication of movement from the SHA. I gather these matters were considered by CUPE on Tuesday at a meeting . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I am certainly advised, of course I am advised. I would be very, very ill discharging my duty if I were not advised of what was happening. I would equally be ill discharging my duty if I decided I could do a better job in this area of expertise than the Minister of Labor, and I will leave it with the Minister of Labor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Ambulance Service

MRS. DUNCAN: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Premier. Today we have witnessed a number of ambulances massing in front of the legislature, ambulances from all parts of the province. The ambulance drivers have indicated that if the problems within their industry caused solely by inadequate government funding are not resolved by midnight Friday, they will have no alternative but to respond only to emergency cases within their own ambulance areas. I would ask you, Mr. Premier: are you aware of the awesome implications that this action would have, and what have you done or are you willing to do to prevent this type of action from commencing?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's not useful to speculate on all of the potential consequences. May I say that it is my information (I may be misinformed) that the great bulk of the private ambulance operators in the province have contracts with the ambulance boards in their areas which require them to provide services pursuant to the contract. I expect that the ambulance operators will be as good as their word and,

accordingly, I do not anticipate any widespread withdrawal of service if it violates the contracts they have signed.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Mr. Premier, obviously those contracts provide for providing service within an ambulance district. What I am asking you is: are you aware of the awesome implications of not responding outside of a district? If I were in an accident in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, that ambulance will not transport me either to Regina or to Saskatoon. What contingency plans do you have in place to make sure that this does not happen?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, firstly, I do not anticipate that any large number of ambulance operators would withdraw service in violation of their contracts. Secondly, if cases arise which are not in violation of the contract, I know that the air ambulance services would be on hand, as it would be with respect to any storm or any similar incidence where road ambulances could not operate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, I will continue my answer. Some hon. members are unaware of circumstances where road travel is difficult but air travel is easy. This has frequently happened in my experience. I expect it will happen again. In all of those circumstances, air ambulance service would be available. I anticipate, therefore, no danger to the health or safety of Saskatchewan people in this regard.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Air ambulance could not respond to all the cases in the province and you know that. What I'd like to know, Mr. Premier, is: when is your government going to recognize that ambulance service is a very vital part of the medicare system in this province, and when are you going to start funding it adequately? What you are doing is setting up a two-tiered health system in this province — one for rural Saskatchewan and one for urban areas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, we believe that hospitals are a vital service in this province, but we do not operate the hospitals. The local boards operate the hospitals in almost all instances. We believe that ambulances are a vital service and we believe these can similarly be successfully operated at the local level. With respect to the adequacy or inadequacy of funding, the budget brought down by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, provided for a 21 per cent increase in the amounts paid by the province for ambulance service. We think that is a very significant increase.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — A question to the Premier. You will be proposing back-to-work legislation. Will that legislation include provisions for emergency funding or an immediate increase in funding for ambulance services in the province of Saskatchewan and, in particular, at least emergency funding to the municipalities and local districts so that the problem that is threatened to begin on Saturday does in fact not become a reality?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, the debate which we will be engaging upon in about two minutes is on the budget. The budget provides for an additional 21 per cent for ambulance operators.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — Is the Premier of Saskatchewan telling this Assembly that in fact the amount set out in the budget is all that the ambulance services are going to get in this province?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is asking (I'm not sure I understood his question) whether the amount provided for in the budget is all that ambulance services can look forward to, the answer is, of course, no. As he will know, the ambulance service is funded by a three-part funding — partly by the provincial government, partly by fees paid by those who use the ambulance service (and these fees can be set at the discretion of the ambulance board and not by the provincial government), and partly by funds provided by municipal governments. The number of municipal governments which are called upon to provide funds is relatively small (I would think perhaps 20 per cent of the total). In almost all cases — certainly 75 or 80 per cent of the total — the amount that is provided by the government, together with the fees, fully pays for the services of ambulances.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATE

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski that this Assembly do now resolve itself into the committee of finance.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget announced last Thursday in this legislature can be described by only two words — hypocritical and insulting. This budget, Mr. Speaker, is an insult to the intelligence and the integrity of every man, woman and child living in Saskatchewan.

I would like to use a few examples to illustrate the sheer hypocrisy of this budget.

For the past four years, the Progressive Conservative members on this side of the House have been urging this NDP government to bring in meaningful measures which would help alleviate the impact of inflation on our citizens, to bring in meaningful measures which would help alleviate the impact of the rising cost of living for our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, during the past four years members on this side of the House have asked for a freeze on utility rates. We have asked for the establishment of a public utilities review commission. We have asked for the removal of sales tax on children's clothing and school supplies. We have also asked for the implementation of a rural gas distribution system. Mr. Speaker, we have asked for a substantial reduction in personal income tax, and we have also asked for the removal of the sliding gas tax.

Mr. Speaker, herein lies the hypocrisy of this budget. The standard pat answer to all of our suggestions — suggestions which we, as Progressive Conservative members, know would have a meaningful and significant impact on Saskatchewan families — has always been, "No." The NDP ministers say, "Don't be silly." The NDP members, in

response to our suggestions, have cried, "It's sheer lunacy." That is the answer we have been subjected to, Mr. Speaker.

But all of a sudden we come to 1982. All of a sudden this government has a change of heart. All of a sudden they see the merit in the proposals which we Progressive Conservatives have been making for the past four years. One must ask a simple question — why? Is it because they truly care about the housewife trying to balance her food budget? I don't think so. Is it because the government has suddenly become concerned about the elderly widow living on a fixed income who is trying to scrape up enough money to pay her gas bill? I don't think that's the answer either, Mr. Speaker. Is it because of the government's concern about rapidly rising farm input costs? I really doubt it. The answer to all of these questions is a resounding no. The answer is simply that they have had a change of heart because 1982 is an election year!

The answer is that this NDP government has shown nothing but utter contempt for the intelligence of the voter by doing the biggest flip-flop in the political history of this province. I say, Mr. Speaker, that the voters of Saskatchewan will not be duped by this government's hypocritical and contemptible flip-flop. The voters of Saskatchewan will recognize that this NDP government will stoop to any level to retain power and that this government is not interested in the problems facing the real families of Saskatchewan.

What have they done for the real families of Saskatchewan? Well, if you're a home-owner, the NDP will give you back 10 cents a day. If you are a renter, the NDP is going to give you back 8 cents a day. If you are a small businessman there is nothing meaningful in the budget for you. If you are a farmer or a rancher, again there is nothing meaningful in the budget for you. And for the senior citizens, most of whom live on fixed incomes, there is very little of any benefit in this budget.

We can look at the reasons why. The price of gasoline is among the highest in the country even though we are a producing province. We can ship our gas elsewhere and they will pay less for it than we do right in our own province. This NDP government still charges sales tax on all utility bills, and as these utility costs continue to rise, so does the revenue from this tax. And they say, Mr. Speaker, that they are trying to help the families of Saskatchewan — 8 cents a day for a renter and 10 cents a day for a home-owner.

But, Mr. Speaker, they are in actual fact taking away more than they are giving back. Let us have a look at the truth. Let us have a quick look at the tax revenue expected in 1982. Revenues from miscellaneous taxes are up 12 per cent. Revenues from corporate taxes are expected to rise by 15 per cent. Revenues from sales tax are expected to be up 15 per cent, and this, Mr. Speaker, after they have removed the tax from children's clothing. They still expect sales tax to be up 15 per cent. Revenues from the gas tax of 20 per cent are going to increase by 24 per cent. And what about personal income taxes, Mr. Speaker? Personal income tax is up a whopping 46 per cent.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, while they give us back our nickels and dimes, this NDP government has raised the taxes by \$300 for every man, woman, and child in this province. And they say they put people first. That, Mr. Speaker, is sheer hypocrisy. And to add insult to injury, after giving us back this nickel and dime, this 8 cents and 10 cents a day, they turn around and they give to the only family they recognize. And do you know how much they give to the only family they recognize? A whopping \$2 billion. That is correct, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government is giving to the family of Crown corporations in the 1982 budget \$2 billion — 8 cents a day for the real families and

\$5.5 million a day to the family of Crown corporations.

This NDP government has completely forgotten about the real families of Saskatchewan, the real families who live and work here, the real families who want to make Saskatchewan their home and take an active part in developing our province to its fullest. This budget, Mr. Speaker, illustrates clearly that this government, the NDP, hold the real families of Saskatchewan in utter contempt. They are willing to pump billions of dollars into the family of Crown corporations and only a pittance into the real families of Saskatchewan. Why? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The Minister of Consumer Affairs tries to interject and says that it is silly. Well, read your own budget and you will see.

Why? Because the NDP does not trust people. They don't trust people to manage their own affairs. One only has to look at the areas that they have gone into: hotels, shopping plazas, malls of all descriptions and sizes, and the list goes on and on. They don't trust anyone. There has been a devastating result of 10 years of the NDP government's not trusting the real people of Saskatchewan.

We probably have the highest personal income tax rate in Canada. We have a per capita income that is below the national average, and yet they spout about how good things are here. We probably have the highest auto insurance rates in Canada in consideration of such a small population and the highest gas tax. We are the only province in Canada that in recent years has suffered a net decline in our rural population; 54 per cent of Saskatchewan's towns and villages are declining. We have also led the nation in the loss of farmers — in absolute numbers and often in percentages as well. Our population has virtually been stagnant since 1936, while the nation's population has doubled from 11 million to 23 million people over the same period. Saskatchewan should have one of the fastest growing populations in Canada. Our resource wealth is there to be tapped and we need people to come and work it. We can brag about our low unemployment rate, but the reason it is so low is that we do not have jobs to keep our kids at home.

Health and education spending in the province is at a low level. Saskatchewan virtually has no specialists left. We have a declining school system. We have thousands of empty and unfinanced hospital beds. We have a very poorly funded ambulance service here. Whether the Premier wishes to recognize it or not, an ambulance service is an extension of medicare. For those of us living in rural areas, who do not have quick access to the specialized centres such as Regina and Saskatoon, that ambulance system could be our life line. Yet the government fails to recognize that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MRS. DUNCAN: — We can look at other provinces. One of our neighboring provinces is pumping \$25 million into its ambulance program, assisted by \$11 million from the municipal level. Here in Saskatchewan we are putting a mere \$3 million in our ambulance system and yet this government, with its priorities screwed about, is willing to pay \$4.5 million for a wave-tech pool in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Well, I say, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan are more important than to be given some grandiose — I think someone referred to it as the Red Sea — pool for surfers in the Qu'Appelle Valley. That is the result of 10 years of a government which does not care for the real people of the province.

We on this side of the House feel that the future can be better. I can say with great

confidence, Mr. Speaker, that comes the next election the voters of this province will give the government opposite a clear and resounding message. This government will be defeated, as sure as they are sitting here today, mainly because they have forgotten about people and no longer trust people. Mr. Speaker, I cannot support a budget which puts more emphasis on the family of Crown corporations and very, very little emphasis on the real families of our province, the people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, 10 months ago in this Assembly, members opposite, including the member for Regina South, stood on their feet to vote three times against The Saskatchewan Beef Stabilization Act. And they say they would do it again.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers of Saskatchewan do not agree with the Conservative members opposite. As of March 15, 1982, 2,600 production units, representing 3,500 producers have enrolled 172,000 head of slaughter cattle in the Saskatchewan Beef Stabilization Plan. Mr. Speaker, 172,000 head represents 87 per cent of all the steers and heifers produced for slaughter in Saskatchewan in 1981. By March 31 of this year, 40,000 head of cattle will have been sold through the single best selling principal, the Saskatchewan Beef Stabilization Board, representing \$28 million in sales. Farmers throughout the province of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'll tell you what kind of price. Farmers throughout the province of Saskatchewan have told me how much more they have received in returns by selling through the board and how much better their grades have been by selling on the rail and not being at the mercy of the eye of the buyer.

I want to say to the hon. member for Meadow Lake that he had better be careful what he says. The areas of the province with the largest enrolment in the beef plan are the northwest area of the province and the southeast part of the province. I say to the hon. member for Thunder Creek that that's bad news for him and good news for the NDP candidate in Meadow Lake. It's good news for the member from Redberry and the member for Turtleford. I say it is bad news for the member for Moosomin, the member for Indian Head-Wolseley, and the member for Souris-Cannington; it is good news for the member for Estevan and for our shining candidate in the Weyburn constituency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, on April 12, the announcement will be made with respect to the payment from the stabilization fund for the first quarter of 1982. It will be a significant payment. The budget for 1982-83, this budget, allocates \$8.4 million to the government's share of the beef stabilization levy or premium. And the government guarantee, Mr. Speaker, to the beef stabilization fund in 1982 could well reach \$24 million.

Mr. Speaker, there is the FarmLab program. It is a program of agricultural research that was also debated in this Assembly last spring. It is a program about which the member for Indian Head-Wolseley said, "I would sure like to support that, but by golly, I am worried about those regional committees that the Minister of Agriculture is going to establish. He is going to be playing politics."

Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the regional committees and the farmers of

Saskatchewan do not agree that the FarmLab program is politics. Twelve independent farm committees have been working throughout the province for the past year. These 12 committees have approved 216 agricultural research projects to be undertaken on farms through the province of Saskatchewan. In every region of the province measurements were taken, stakes were planted, and detailed plans were made during the winter — plans for rotation, cultivation, fertilizer, cropping, moisture, preservation experiments.

This year's budget commits \$4.33 million to the FarmLab program; \$3.5 million for research projects funded through the University of Saskatchewan and \$833,000 for projects funded directly by those 12 political FarmLab regional committees, as the member for Indian Head-Wolseley calls them.

Mr. Speaker, the province's drought program has been very much appreciated by the farmers of Saskatchewan. In addition to the dugout pumping, the municipal community wells, the ground water search program and the deep-well assistance program, all of which saw a high level of activity, over 10,000 farmers applied for and have receiving fencing assistance under the program.

Over 10,000 applications have been received for the feed transportation assistance program, with a total assistance reaching \$7.8 million. Mr. Speaker, 400,000 tons of feed have been moved by farmers under this program. I say to the hon. members opposite, whether it be the member of Indian Head-Wolseley or the Leader of the Opposition, that farmers have particularly appreciated feed transportation assistance during January, February and March of this year. Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberal government cut off its drought assistance program to Saskatchewan farmers back in August of 1980. A full 18 months later the Government of Saskatchewan is still providing drought assistance to farmers with program expenditures reaching \$13 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the \$7.1 million experimental ethanol plant is in the detailed design states. Construction will start on that plant at Canora, Saskatchewan, during 1982.

Mr. Speaker, to assist beginning farmers, FarmStart eligibility criteria have been revised for 1982 to increase the maximum loan limit from \$150,000 to \$200,000, and the net worth eligibility limit has increased from \$144,000 to \$185,000. Some 800 applications will be approved during the fiscal year of this budget. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, land bank eligibility criteria have been revised upwards to \$185,000. And I say the members on this side of the Assembly, on the government side of the Assembly, are proud to provide \$40 million in the 1982-83 budget for the purchase of land through the Saskatchewan land bank program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, in response to the growing concerns with respect to pesticides and pesticide safety, new permanent positions have been added to the Department of Agriculture to establish a chemical safety unit. And \$50,000 has been provided toward the establishment of a new toxicology study centre at the University of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, new positions have also been added to the Department of Agriculture to provide assistance to the dairy industry, assistance in the control of rats, and assistance to the honey producers of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the agricultural programs provided by the Blakeney government are essential programs, and I say in this Assembly that they are appreciated by the farmers of Saskatchewan. But the programs of this budget are overshadowed this year, Mr. Speaker, by an issue which threatens the very existence of the family farms of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Pepin plan, announced in Winnipeg six weeks ago Monday, gives the people of Saskatchewan a clear-cut choice: you either have to be with the farmers of Saskatchewan or you're with Pepin and the railways. Mr. Speaker, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Agriculture and every member on this side of the Assembly are with the farmers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, this party, this government, is on the side of the farmers because when we analysed the announcement of six weeks ago we found that the Pepin plan guarantees three things. Strip away all the words, boil it down, and you've got three things.

First of all, the producers are guaranteed that they will pay more.

Secondly, the railways are guaranteed that they will be adequately compensated for the movement of grain, and they are going to have that guaranteed in statute.

Thirdly, it is guaranteed that there will be no fixed rate, in law, for the producers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is not in the Pepin plan is the two fundamental principles of the statutory crowrate; the two principles are not guaranteed. Missing is the fixed rate for the farmer, so he can pick up the law, see what it's going to cost him to move his grain, and the railways can't tamper with it. The other missing principle is that of equal rate for equal distance which has given the farmers of the Prairies, the farmers of Saskatchewan, their delivery system.

Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the Assembly are with the farmers because of what we see in the announcement of six weeks ago by the federal Minister of Transport and what we do not see in that announcement. As I said a minute ago, no longer can the farmer of Saskatchewan pick up a law of Canada and know what he is going to pay to move his grain.

But what's to be in its place? What's to be in its place, Mr. Speaker, is some kind of a negotiated rate. The rate is going to be negotiated between three parties — the railways, the federal government and the farmers. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that a moment ago I said that the announcement of Pepin involved the railways' being guaranteed adequate compensation for the movement of grain, and guaranteed that by statute. There is an important point here, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting to note that adequate compensation according to the federal minister, Jean-Luc-Pepin, is a 35 per cent return on equity, on investment.

You will recall in this Assembly that even the member for Thunder Creek thinks 35 per cent isn't a bad return on investment. But more specifically, Mr. Speaker, it is a return on investment not only on the railways' funds invested in the system but on the government money that has been invested in that system as well. Now, if you think under those circumstances that the railways are going to be at the table legitimately,

then you are not thinking properly and adequately. If they are at the table they will be smiling and they will be holding up the law, saying, "We're protected by this law with return on investment of 35 per cent, including the taxpayers' money."

So they are gone from the table, and that leaves the federal government and the farmers. The federal government says, "We have \$612 million that we are going to contribute annually." They have committed themselves on the \$612 million until 1985 in terms of dollars on the table. But they say, "There are inflationary costs." These are inflationary times, said the Prime Minister of this country when he was in Regina last weekend. He said, "We can't control it; we can't govern any more. We can't control inflation so it's going to be ongoing." He said, "With respect to the movement of grain, somebody has to pay inflation."

In the announcement of six weeks ago, the federal minister, speaking for the federal government, said, "Our resources are limited." The railways are away from the table because they're protected by law. The government's away from the table because it says that it's broke. Who's left? The farmers are left. Based on the figures in the federal announcement and based on the targets of the Canadian Wheat Board, the costs to farmers will be 10 times crow if the \$612 million continues until 1990. If the \$612 million does not, it will be 13 times crow.

Mr. Speaker, how much is 10 times crow? The 10 times crow is \$1.10 more than farmers are now paying for the delivery of their grain; 13 times crow means \$1.49 per bushel more. Ten times crow is tough; 13 times crow is tougher for the farmers. It is going to be equally tough for every business person in the province of Saskatchewan. It's going to be equally tough for the whole economy of the province of Saskatchewan because that money is going to go to the head offices of the railways in Montreal.

In communities like Southey, Kelvington, Morse and St. Walburg, with annual deliveries of 1.5 million bushels of grain on an average, the cost will be \$1.6 million at 10 times crow and \$2.2 million at 13 times crow directly out of the farmers' pockets every year; \$2.2 million out of the farmers' pockets will mean \$2.2 million out of the businessmen's pockets in those particular communities.

The Minister of Transport came to a SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention and said that these are funny figures and that the people in our government who put them together are funny people. Now it's all right for the Minister of Transport to call me a funny person. It's probably true. But to say that the economists in the Government Saskatchewan put together some funny figures is totally false because they based their figures on the information provided by him in his announcement in Winnipeg on February 8 and based on the Canadian Wheat Board export targets until 1990.

I say, in this Assembly, that I've used those figures around the province of Saskatchewan in farm and rural meetings and nobody has laughed. You note, Mr. Speaker, when the Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin was speaking to SARM, he didn't say that the numbers were not accurate. He said they were funny. He only said that for the 1982-83 crop year the farmers of Saskatchewan will not be paying five times crow. And you can look at our figures, Mr. Speaker. We'd like the people of Saskatchewan to look at them in our save-the-crow booklet, *The Saskatchewan Solution*. We have never said that farmers in Saskatchewan would pay five times crow in 1982-83 crop year. We have said that by 1990 farmers will be paying ten times crow or be paying 13 times crow,

depending on how long the federal payment remains in place.

It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that when the federal Minister of Transport was speaking to the SARM convention, he said that the trouble with those figures and this analysis by the Government of Saskatchewan is that we haven't taken into account economy and efficiency in grain handling that will result as a result of the implementation of this Pepin plan. Now, Mr. Speaker, what does economy and efficiency bring to your mind? Well, to my mind, Mr. Speaker, it brings the attack on the principle of equal rate for equal distance. It brings an attack on the delivery system guaranteed in the law of 1925 for farmers. For a long time in this province we've heard about economy and efficiency in grain handling and then we've heard about the inland terminals at Weyburn and Rosetown and the unit trains.

He's going to talk about economy and efficiency as it relates to the implementation of his plan. He's talking about the principle of equal rate for equal distance going down the drain and equal rate for equal distance replaced by variable rates. Now, Mr. Speaker, what happens if equal rate for equal distance is gone and the railways can set different rates on different lines — different rates on branch lines from the rates on secondary mainlines, or different rates on the secondary mainline from rates on the main line? If they have the power to set different rates on different lines, the people living on the main lines don't need to feel secure because if they have power to set different rates on different lines they have power to set different rates in different communities on main lines. When the federal Minister of Transport talks about economy and efficiency, it's down with equal rate for equal distance and we're going to have variable rates.

What does the Pepin plan do, Mr. Speaker? It gives the railways control over the map of Saskatchewan — control that they do not have now but have wanted all along — control because, if you recall, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line of the Hall commission report of five years ago, supported by every western government and farm organization here in the West, was keep the law for farmers with its fixed rates and its equal rate for equal distance and pay the railways for what they do. Why didn't the railways come to Saskatoon, and share support with the western governments and the farm organizations around the Hall commission report? They did not come because Hall said keep the law for farmers, and they have been out to get the law for farmers; they are out to get it now, and they've achieved it in the announcement six weeks ago of the Pepin plan.

There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that economy and efficiency mean inland terminals and unit trains. The Pepin plan means the loss of delivery points, and ask any businessman in any of our rural communities what happens to the community if the elevator is no longer there and the farmers and the people begin to move away to the delivery point with their farm business. Farmers in Saskatchewan reject the Pepin plan. A couple of fellows in my home community of Semans went around with the Pepin cards. They had people sign them; then they took them to the post office. They have sent 351 cards signed by farmers, businessmen, teachers, working people in Semans and they have only had three of those cards rejected.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier of this province, the Deputy Premier, the Minister of

Agriculture, every member on this side of the Assembly stands with farmers against the Pepin plan. The Premier, the Deputy Premier, every member on this side of the House demands the statutory crowrate remain in place with its fixed rate and its equal rate for equal distance for farmers.

Mr. Speaker, while our Premier and our government stand squarely with the farmers, where do the Liberals and the Conservatives stand? Mr. Speaker, I say in this Assembly that the Prime Minister, his Minister of Transport, Jean-Luc Pepin, every Liberal, and the Conservative Party along with them, stand with the railways.

How can I say that, Mr. Speaker? Why are the federal government, the Prime Minister and his Minister of Transport with the railways? Well, first of all it's fairly obvious that they don't like the farmers of Saskatchewan. Ten years ago, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the same Prime Minister, came to Saskatchewan and he said to farmers, "Why should we sell your wheat?" Last weekend he said, "Farmers don't want to pay more, big deal!"

Second, Mr. Speaker, the railways are the friends of the Liberal Party. Indeed it's tough to tell where the railway lobby ends and where the Liberal Party begins. John Turner, waiting in the wings to be Prime Minister of this country under the Liberal banner, former minister of finance in the Liberal cabinet, is on the board of directors of Canadian Pacific. Paul Desmarais, the head of the giant Power Corporation of Montreal, is a close personal friend of the Prime Minister and a key figure in the backrooms of the Liberal Party. Mr. Speaker, Paul Desmarais has a son married to Jean Chretien's daughter and he used to have on his board of directors of the Power Corporation the present Minister of Transport, Jean-Luc Pepin.

Mr. Speaker, about a year ago last summer, Paul Desmarais purchased shares and options to become the largest single shareholder in Canadian Pacific Ltd. And isn't it interesting that a few months later the announcement comes from the federal government — why, his friend from former days, strengthened by the Prime Minister, his friend, on his visit to Regina — that the crow must go. And isn't it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the president of CP Rail, Bill Stinson, said in the *Western Producer* last November that the shareholders must get some of the new money going to the railways if crow changes. The CP shareholders are going to get some of the money paid by the farmers — no question.

The Prime Minister and his Minister of Transport, the Liberals, are with the railways. And I repeat, Mr. Speaker, what I said in the Assembly a few minutes ago. The Conservative Party is also with the railways.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members opposite say, "Oh no, we're not. Oh, no, we're not." Well, let's have a look at some facts. We had 20 meetings around the province. Most meetings in rural Saskatchewan crossed party lines. They crossed farm organization lines. There were Liberal supporters, Conservative supporters, NDP supporters at those meetings. There were National Farmers' Union supporters, stock growers, wheat pool, SARM, and so on. Look at the attack that took place at those meetings, because there was attack; I say the attack came from Conservative supporters, because the line is the same. The line in the meetings and the line in the Assembly and the line in the literature put forward by the Progressive Conservative Party is the same. They would stand up and say, "Oh this Pepin plan is bad; it's tough." But, Mr. Speaker, they would say, "Now you're wasting your breath, MacMurchy. You can't do anything about it. Let's talk about something else — let's talk about the land bank, or let's talk about the

constitution, or let's talk about FarmStart or let's talk about the beef plan."

Mr. Speaker, look at the attack of the members opposite at the meetings and on the meetings. Let's look at the attack on the meeting by the members opposite here in this Assembly. Tory after Tory stood on his feet during the crow debate and called the rural meetings a travelling road show. Well, we've got some good-looking fellows on this side of the House to go out in a travelling road show, but certainly not the Minister of Agriculture. He has been in too many tough hockey games to go out in a travelling road show.

The members opposite said that this good government shouldn't be spending money to tell the people of Saskatchewan about the implications of the Pepin plan — the implications of losing equal rate for equal distance, and losing the fixed rate for farmers. The members opposite say that through those meetings the Government Saskatchewan shouldn't be taking the leadership, yet Saskatchewan produces 60 bushels of every 100 bushels of grain which is exported from Canada into the international grain trade. To say that Saskatchewan shouldn't be taking leadership and encouraging the people of this province to get the plan stopped is ridiculous. And members, like the member for Moosomin just a minute ago, say, "Let's talk about something else."

Mr. Speaker, in addressing the implications of the Pepin plan, I say in this Assembly that those who want to talk about something else, those who want to lie down and be silent on the fundamental principles of the crowrate, are on the side of the Liberals, Prime Minister Trudeau, Pepin and the railroads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — I ask the members of this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan: have they ever heard the members of the Conservative Party attack Ottawa, attack the Pepin plan? Where are their words? Where is their analysis of this Pepin plan and its impact on the law for the farmer — the loss of equal rate for equal distance and the fixed rate for farmers?

What are they doing? In this Assembly, through the public media and at every forum, they are attacking the Premier of this province and they are attacking the Minister of Agriculture for this province. Where are the attacks in this Assembly? They're on the Premier and they're on the Minister of Agriculture. The attacks in the full-page advertisements being taken out by Conservative candidates attack Blakeney and MacMurchy. Conservative literature on the crowrate does not attack the Pepin plan. They don't attack the Prime Minister and his Minister of Transport; they attack the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this Assembly to recall what happened when the Prime Minister came to town. What happened when his Minister of Transport came to town? Did they attack the Conservatives in Saskatchewan? Did they have something to say about the Conservatives? No, they attacked the Premier of Saskatchewan, Allan Blakeney, and the Minister of Agriculture, Gordon MacMurchy. Pepin said that MacMurchy's statements, Mr. Speaker, were "misleading, half-truths, inflammatory accusations." The Prime Minister called the NDP plan "distorted," like the member for Moosomin called it distorted. And he says that Blakeney is a "reactionary." Never one did the Prime Minister or his minister mention the Conservatives. Why, I ask you? It's because the Prime Minister and his Minister of Transport know that in an election in this

province every vote for the Conservatives in Saskatchewan is a vote for Trudeau, Pepin and the railroads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — And I say in this Assembly that Tories in Saskatchewan cannot deny that. The Leader of the Conservative Party in this province has said, "The crowrate may be retarding the growth of western Canada and may not be in the public interest." That's from the *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, volume 26, July 2, 1978, after the Hall commission report came down.

The member for Rosetown-Elrose says the Minister of Agriculture is old-fashioned. Probably true. "The Minister of Agriculture," he says, "is still saying, 'No change in the crowrate.' I wonder if it is a realistic stand." That's from *Hansard* of 1980-81, volume 23, pages 142 and 143. The member for Thunder Creek said last week in this Assembly that the crow debate is a sham. He says we should negotiate. Anyone who says we should negotiate and not try to get the Pepin plan stopped has already given up the crowrate and is with Trudeau, Pepin and the railways.

Members opposite, I say, Mr. Speaker, should remember that the former chief justice of the province of Saskatchewan, the chairman of the Hall commission report, has had something to say about negotiating the crowrate. Again and again he has said that once you allow the crowrate to be put on the table for negotiation, it will be negotiated out of existence. Nowhere in the debate on the crowrate last week did members opposite spend time discussing the principles of equal rate for equal distance and the fixed rate for the farmer. They talked about the constitution, land bank, whatever, but don't call on the farmers to pay more at this time.

I say that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport know that the Conservatives are with the railways and the Pepin plan, because it is Conservative policy. Let's look at the position of Conservative politicians and Conservative governments in Canada. In Alberta, Conservatives say: "Alberta Ministers Welcome Crow Study" (*Edmonton Sun*), "Tories Crow Over Rates" (*Edmonton Sun*), "Alberta Minister Praises Rate Move" (*Calgary Herald*). Manitoba Conservatives say: "Crow Changes Beneficial to the West." Jim Downey, former Tory minister of agriculture in Manitoba said that the federal government must charge the farmers more.

In Ottawa, the former minister of transport in the short-lived Conservative government said:

Our party has stated that the status quo, the existing arrangement is not satisfactory . . . because it has brought us chaos, breakdown and collapse in the grain transportation system. The railways should be adequately compensated for the movement of grain. (*Hansard*), House of Commons, February 26, 1980)

As one Tory member put it in the *Western Producer*, February 25, 1982:

Saskatchewan members of parliament are defending the crow to minimize the damage to the Saskatchewan PC Party. If we can keep our heads down until the election in Saskatchewan, things will change and we will be able to come out more honest.

It is all a show, Mr. Speaker. Conservative support for the crowrate is a show. Even one of their own confirms it — "We'll keep our heads down."

Trudeau, Pepin and our railways know that Tories in Saskatchewan would stand with Tories in Alberta, Manitoba and Ottawa, and they would not work to stop changes in the crow. A vote for the Conservatives is a vote for Trudeau, Pepin and the railways. No matter how you cut it, the lines are drawn.

The Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, members of this caucus, and members of this party throughout the province are on the side of the farmers, and members opposite are with Trudeau, Pepin and the railways. We are going to tell every businessman, working man, farmer, teacher, homemaker, and student where the Conservatives stand in the election coming up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — It is a battle that will decide the shape of rural Saskatchewan. The whole being of rural Saskatchewan will be destroyed if the Pepin plan goes ahead. Don't ever doubt, Mr. Speaker, that Trudeau, Pepin and the railways will be listening when the ballots are dropped in the ballot box in the election in Saskatchewan. I say, if they are Conservative ballots, there will be singing and dancing in the streets in Ottawa and Montreal because Trudeau, Pepin and the railways will have won. If the ballots are for Blakeney, MacMurchy and Romanow, they will shiver in their boots because they know that the members on this side of the House will not rest until the Pepin plan is put aside, until we work as Canadians to build a valid rail system in western Canada from the base of the statutory crowrate with its fixed rate and its equal rate for equal distance for farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I will support this great budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak in this year's budget debate. I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance, the member for Humboldt. Each year he presents a better budget, although even the first budget he presented was good enough to be called an election budget. I say the Minister of Finance and the Blakeney government present good budgets because they meet the needs of Saskatchewan people. They put people first. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but the last three budgets have been balanced budgets.

I am very happy to see that this budget again renews the commitment of the Blakeney government to rural Saskatchewan. One of the most important safeguards for a strong rural community is the crowrate. Without it freight rates would skyrocket, forcing farmers to sell out and in turn causing small towns to close up. The Blakeney government will fight to keep the crowrate just as it has fought for rural Saskatchewan in the past.

I'd like to mention a few of the programs that have benefited rural Saskatchewan, and when I talk of rural Saskatchewan I don't mean just farmers. I mean the towns, the villages, the senior citizens, the young people and everyone that lives in rural Saskatchewan. Over the last 10 years the NDP government has provided special help to small schools so they can give better quality education. We have built new rural

hospitals and improved health services in small communities. We have helped small towns renew their streets, their parks and commercial facilities. We have improved rural transportation. We have assisted young farmers through land bank and FarmStart. We have supported the agricultural industry through the hog and beef stabilization programs, and we have increased funds for municipal governments through rural revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, this budget expands our support for rural Saskatchewan. In 1982, the NDP government will provide over \$10 million for beef and hog producers. The provincial hog program has paid farmers \$9.2 million since it was started in 1979. In 1982 it will pay out about \$1.5 million. This year is the first year of the provincial beef stabilization program. It will pay \$8.7 million to ensure farmers a fair return on their investments.

Beef producers have recognized the value of the program. A total of 165,000 cattle or about 80 per cent of the cattle finished in Saskatchewan were enrolled in the program by March 1, 1982, and by March 15, two weeks later, we saw 172,000 head enrolled in the plan. Many of my constituents have joined the plan and I am glad to see the positive effect it has had on the beef industry.

What have the Conservatives done for rural communities in the provinces they govern? We would have to go to Manitoba where after one term in office, the people of Manitoba put the NDP back in power and where an uncaring and incompetent Conservative government left the province with over a \$250 million deficit. The philosophy of the Liberals and Conservatives is not to promote progress for people. It never has been, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest that it never will be. One could use Manitoba as an example or one could use Ottawa, where the Liberals made all kinds of promises before the election and forgot them shortly after the election.

This year in Saskatchewan what do we see? It's an election year and we see Conservatives making all kinds of promises, and let's take into account some of the comments made by the opposition. The Leader of the Conservative Party said that some 80 per cent of the farmers in Saskatchewan are non-productive and should not expect the public to pay for them to live in the country at a profit. The Leader of the Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker! Someone should tell that leader just how much profit the farmers are making. When you hear comments like that coming from the Conservative leader, you wonder what the people of rural Saskatchewan would really be in for if by some chance the Conservative Party ever gained power in this province.

The NDP has always kept the promises it has made. We are the leaders of many programs for people, programs enjoyed throughout Canada today. We put people first and our record proves that.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have always been against stabilization programs for producers. If they were in power, we would not see \$10 million going to the hog and beef producers of this province. This would not only be a loss to the farmers but a loss to the business people of rural Saskatchewan, too. I would suggest that the Conservatives would keep about as many of their promises as the Liberals have in Ottawa.

The Blakeney government also remains committed to young farmers. Today, Saskatchewan has a greater percentage of young farmers under 25 than either Manitoba or Alberta, and a greater total of farmers under 25 than both of these

provinces together. That didn't just happen, Mr. Speaker. It came about because the NDP government listened to farmers and worked with them to create land bank and FarmStart. These are two of the programs that have helped over 7,000 new farmers remain on the land.

To complement the programs to help farmers, rural communities will also receive help in this budget. One of the new programs announced is a new five-year, \$12 million rural capital fund. This fund will provide financial assistance for capital projects to improve the quality of life in rural Saskatchewan.

Another important program is the extension of the rural gas network to thousands more rural homes in Saskatchewan, up to a cost of \$175 million. It is not reasonable or practical to extend natural gas to every farmer in the province. Therefore, I am pleased to see that the budget includes a second way to help rural residents meet increased energy costs. Rural home-owners not able to get natural gas will be eligible for interest-free loans of up to \$3,000 for energy conservation projects. Small businesses, hospitals and community halls in areas without natural gas will be eligible for interest-free loans of up to \$10,000. As energy prices increase, these loans will mean big savings in energy costs in future years.

Other programs to benefit rural Saskatchewan include: \$42 million for revenue sharing, an increase of 11.5 per cent; \$1.1 million for increased staffing for new nursing home positions announced in January; \$1.3 million to expand the number of level 4 beds and increase staffing for existing beds; \$3 million for the new cultural and recreational facilities grants for urban and rural municipalities; \$170,000 for improved training for Saskatchewan volunteer firefighters; and \$222,000 for a major expansion of the rural transportation assistance program, and senior citizens in this province will also benefit from this budget. There will be \$200 million spent on housing in Saskatchewan — housing for senior citizens and people on low incomes, and increased funding for the home care program. Mr. Speaker, these are new programs — programs which will enable rural communities to withstand the pressures of inflation.

Mr. Speaker, another group important to the economic well-being of our province is our small business community. It is this group which is vital to every small community in our province. This group is a major employer and when they, together with our farming community are doing well, our province is doing well.

In education, operating grants will increase by 15 per cent on a per-student basis for a provincial total of nearly \$300 million. That helps to keep local taxes down. Our education system in the province is recognized as one of the best in Canada. Every effort is being made to provide our children and adults with every opportunity for obtaining as complete an education as one desires.

Mr. Speaker, all these programs have been made possible because of resource policies of the Blakeney government.

There are many other benefits in the budget of this year. We have expanded the health programs. The resources we talked about are doing so well — the potash mines that the opposition has said were holes in the ground that would never bring us a profit are bringing money to this province, which will benefit all the people of the province, and this budget has proven that they are doing just that.

Mr. Speaker, the choice is clear. I support the policies of the Blakeney government,

which puts people first. Therefore, I am also proud to be supporting this year's budget.

MR. McLEOD: — Mr. Speaker, once again it's an honor for me to rise in this House on behalf of the people of the Meadow Lake constituency, and to speak here on the budget that has been presented to us — the fourth budget that has been presented to us since I arrived in this House. In recent days, Mr. Speaker, we in the legislature in Saskatchewan, and all of the people of Saskatchewan, have been treated to probably the most cynical lesson in political hypocrisy that this province has ever seen. There is no question about it.

I think back to the three budgets that were presented prior to this one, and some of the policies that my colleagues and I have been presenting to these people across from me in a very sincere way. I think back to the arrogant way that many of these members and ministers would sit and sneer at us, laughing and saying, "Oh, no." Always the answer was no to those policies, and this year what have we seen? We have seen them adopting a good number of the or, at least, the name of a good number of them, or going part way with a good number of those policies. And if that's not a lesson in political hypocrisy, I don't know what is, Mr. Speaker.

Another aspect of the budget is their theme, "People come first." That's a hypocritical statement in itself. People come first when they have \$2 billion over here for their much-touted family, the family of Crown corporations. What do they have for the real families in this province — the housewives, the hard-working people of the province, who come home and sit down at the kitchen table to try to balance their monthly budgets so they can pay the high utility rates and pay their bills. This government is gouging them and gouging them. And to add insult to injury they add the 5 per cent sales tax to their utility bills. What does that do for the real families? How does that instil any confidence in their government? It does not, Mr. Speaker, instil confidence in the government of the people of Saskatchewan.

Just a few moments ago the Minister of Agriculture took his seat in this budget debate after a long tirade on the crowrate. He said that the Conservative opposition has not been supporting him in the crow debate, and that the Conservative opposition has not been sending a message to Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, on March 4 my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Souris-Cannington, proposed that a unanimous resolution of this House go to Ottawa. The most effective thing which can come from this province on the crowrate is an unanimous resolution of this House. That debate has been going on and we have asked for the question. Every indication is that this party opposite, this group of arrogant people across the way, has decided there is no way that the crow debate will come to a question. They don't want unanimous resolutions in this House. They are not interested in sending an effective message to Ottawa, to Trudeau, to Mr. Pepin, where it should go. They are only interested in talking to the potential voters of this province, touting their position by talking about how the Minister of Agriculture is the defender of the crowrate.

Mr. Speaker, our Leader of the Opposition indicated in a very sincere way that all members of this House are in favor of that. What more effective message could go to Ottawa? Let's get on with it. I say that to the members opposite in a very sincere way.

I have travelled around my constituency, Mr. Speaker, and very, very often constituents come up to me and pull out their wallets. Do you know what they are carrying in their wallets? They say, "I was hoping I would see you, George, so I could show you this outrageous power bill or this outrageous telephone bill or this outrageous rate at which

I have to renew my licence plates on my car or on my truck." Those things are going on in this province and if the members opposite want to be honest with themselves, this House and the people of this province, they will admit it is happening to them every day too. They sit here arrogantly smiling and saying that it's not happening. They say their citizens don't say that to them. I say their citizens are saying that to them, too, but they are ignoring it at every turn.

For three years we on this side of the House have proposed a utility rate freeze and a public utilities review commission. For three years members opposite have said no. Now in 1982, an election year, the NDP members opposite say yes. What's their turnabout? What's their flip-flop? They say yes to the program. Now, Mr. Speaker, whom are we to believe? Whom are the people of this province to believe — the NDP members of last year, their statements of last year? Or are we to believe their statements of this year?

Mr. Speaker, when and if the election comes, the people of this province will have their opportunity to say no to those members opposite.

For two years now we've been calling for a rural gas distribution system — even in my own constituency, of all places in this province where a system such as this should have been in place, with the Beacon Hill gas field closed in and the pumping in of gas from Alberta. You have natural gas and any farmer in our area knows if he steps out on his back porch and throws a stone and drills where the stone lands, there's a good possibility of finding natural gas. And for two years now we've been calling for this. Our leader, Grant Devine, has proposed rural gas distribution to help farmers in this area, and for two years these people opposite have arrogantly sneered at us and said, "No, no, it's not reasonable. It's an unreasonable request." I'd like to quote, Mr. Speaker, from *Hansard* of May 19, 1981. This is a member from the government opposite who represents the Turtleford constituency. Here's what he said to our proposal for rural gas distribution, and think again now of where this member comes from — the area that represents Turtleford, Edam, Mervin and that whole line on Highway 26. They don't have natural gas. Here's what he said, and I quote:

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.

That's his defence. And he also says, and I go on with the quotation:

It is also selling (referring here, Mr. Speaker, to our proposal for natural gas distribution) what I would like to say is a "pig in the case," (whatever that means) 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 to the benefit of the farmer of only cheap fuel, and that is not guaranteed over any length of time.

That was the NDP member for Turtleford last year. Now his government comes in and says a natural gas distribution system would be an ideal thing and they've agreed to it.

They bought the pig in the case, as he called it. They say to us, "Now we agree with natural gas distribution, and especially in northwestern Saskatchewan." For that I thank him. I notice that there are five communities in my constituency that are now getting natural gas after being gouged for this number of years. I notice that the communities of Turtleford and Edam and Mervin and those others down Highway 26 in that member's constituency are now going to get natural gas because this government opposite has looked at the polls and realized the trouble that member is in. They now say, "Let's have natural gas in northwestern Saskatchewan," where it should have been three or four years ago.

I can remember, Mr. Speaker, the very first session that we were in here in 1979. The members on this side of the House called for purple gas to be used in tandem-axle trucks, and I can remember the Minister of Agriculture at that time literally laughing from his seat, saying it was just the biggest joke and that it can't possibly happen. And now what do they say in 1982, election year? They say they'll allow purple gas for tandem-axle trucks.

We called for the phasing out of sales tax on children's clothing for a number of years now. They always said no in an arrogant way, and now they say, "Sales tax on children's clothing will now be phased out." Mr. Speaker, whom are we to believe — the NDP are the same people — whom are we to believe? Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan know whom they can believe in this province and who has been consistent over the last number of years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. McLEOD: — I have just a note, Mr. Speaker, on the taxation element of this government and how this government stands for gouging in taxation. Miscellaneous taxes this year in the 1982 budget, compared to 1981 revenues, will be up 12 per cent from \$69 million to \$77 million. Corporate taxes will be up 15 per cent from \$121 million in 1981 to \$139 million in 1982. Sales tax revenues will be up 16 per cent from \$309 million to \$358 million. And the gasoline revenues in this, a producing province, will be up 24 per cent, thanks to that piggy-backing on Pierre Trudeau's prices and the OPEC prices, from \$111 million in the 1981 budget to \$138 million in the 1982 budget.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no excuse for this. All that is, is taxation, taxation, taxation to the point of gouging our people. Let's not forget about our people, gentlemen opposite; let's not forget about our people. Let's think about our real families, not just the family of Crown corporations which you tout all over this province with your expensive advertising.

One last note to those people who have been gouged to the point of no return almost. Income tax revenues in this budget are up by 46 per cent to \$596 million from last year's revenues of \$409 million. The truth is that the NDP has raised taxes by \$300 per man, woman and child in its 1982 budget. As an editorial in the *Leader-Post* said, and I quote:

It (referring to the budget) shows an amazing lack of respect for those who expect consistency.

Mr. Speaker, it should be obvious from this that I cannot in any way support a budget

which is based on nothing more than pure political hypocrisy. The people of this province will soon have their chance, if the government can drum up the courage to call that election, to say no to the government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased indeed to participate in the current budget debate. There appears to be rumors about that there may be an election. If this 19th legislature is dissolved, an election may be called. If that should be the case, I have reason to believe this may well be my last opportunity to participate in the budget debate in this legislature. I welcome the opportunity.

A word of congratulation, Mr. Speaker, to my colleague and deskmate, the Minister of Finance, who delivered an excellent budget to this House last Thursday, and did it in an excellent manner.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, at this time, to express my appreciation to the voters of the Saskatoon Nutana constituency for granting me the privilege of serving them as their member over a prolonged period of time.

It will be 18 years next month since I was first elected to this legislature. I have served as a backbencher in the opposition, a backbencher in government, and I have been privileged to serve on the treasury benches for more than 60 per cent of my time in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I have appreciated the opportunity to serve under the leadership of Premier Allan Blakeney, the best Premier in this country, and that opportunity would not have been afforded to me had the voters of Nutana not given me increasing majorities in four elections.

Mr. Speaker, I also had the privilege of defeating the current Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, Dr. Grant Devine, in the 1978 election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I have had a rather satisfying political career. I am confident the voters of Saskatoon Nutana will continue to support the New Democratic administration and will return a New Democratic MLA in the next provincial election, whenever it is called.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition critic, the hon. member for Regina South, was hard-pressed to offer intelligent criticism of this budget. He asserted that there was a \$200 million increase in personal income tax — a 46 per cent increase he said. How does he arrive at those figures? He compared the estimated personal income tax revenue for 1982-83 of \$596,982,00 with the estimated revenue for the same source of \$409,261,000 in the preceding year. Mr. Speaker, he neglected to take note of the fact that the total personal income of Saskatchewan residents in 1981 exceeded the personal income of Saskatchewan residents in 1980 by \$2.15 billion. Reason, logic, and rational calculation would leave one to conclude that even a reduced provincial income tax rate (now 51 per cent of the federal rate and it was 58.5 per cent in 1971) on a much higher total income would naturally result in increased revenue flows. Mr. Speaker, his inability to see things as they are has left him mystified by the obvious.

The finance critic, Mr. Speaker, claimed, and I quote him, when referring to a public

utilities review commission or board, that the government was creating the impression that it had adopted this Progressive Conservative proposal. I would like to disabuse him of any such idea or conclusion. Personally, I am strongly opposed to such a board. Clearly the evidence from jurisdictions which utilize such entities is that they are costly, they are paid for by the taxpayer and they do not protect the citizens from utility rate increase. The evidence in our adjoining province of Alberta, as illustrated in this House on a number of occasions by my colleague, the Minister of Culture and Youth, is irrefutable.

Mr. Speaker, the finance critic poured derision and scorn on the fact that the senior citizen shelter allowance would provide financial assistance to only 20,000 senior citizens. He concluded that all 120,000 senior citizens required shelter allowance assistance. Well I happen to be a senior citizen, Mr. Speaker, and I don't require shelter allowance and this is absolute nonsense. He's wrong again.

Mr. Speaker, the financial critic opposes the elimination of the farm cost reduction program. That is his privilege. He contends it was one of the few breaks offered farmers. Yet, only a little more than 60 per cent of them ever applied for it. Mr. Speaker, he ignores the fact that the Saskatchewan government does not levy any petroleum tax on farm gasoline or diesel fuel, estimated to provide a benefit of \$30 million to farmers in foregone revenues in the year 1982.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had a very interesting letter from a farmer located on the western side of the province, a farmer who currently resides in a Progressive Conservative-held constituency — I trust, Mr. Speaker, that situation will not prevail after the next general election. This farmer was critical because he was paying \$1.46 per gallon for farm fuel and he was berating the Saskatchewan government for his high fuel cost per gallon. Mr. Speaker, I had to point out to that particular farmer that the Alberta government received some 30 cents out of each gallon of fuel he purchased because the crude from which the gasoline or diesel he utilized came, came entirely from the province of Alberta, and 59 cents per gallon out of each \$1.46 was paid to the federal government in view of taxes levied by Ottawa, with absolutely nothing coming to the Saskatchewan government.

There is no tax on farm fuels. There never has been a tax on farm fuels in this province, except when the Liberal government of Ross Thatcher applied one. I trust he raised his concerns with the Conservative Alberta government and also with the Ottawa Liberal administration.

Mr. Speaker, Progressive Conservatives attempt to make much of our ad valorem gasoline tax, indicating that it should be frozen or reduced. Even a perfunctory perusal of the budget would indicate that highway construction and maintenance costs estimated for 1982-83 will exceed the revenue flow from gasoline tax by some \$73 million. It is generally conceded, Mr. Speaker, that the revenue flows from the gasoline tax and — just listen for a minute, hon. member — from registration fees on automobiles should, in some way, match the construction and maintenance cost of highways. Even if you add the revenue flows from registration fees of some \$49 million to the figure for gasoline anticipated estimated revenue flows in 1982, there will be a shortfall of \$23 million in relation to the maintenance and highway construction program. Talk about hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker — it would be difficult indeed to find a better example. I can prove those figures to the member for Regina South.

I've listened to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, rise in this Assembly and talk about gasoline being more expensive in Regina than it is in Toronto or Charlottetown. They imply that this is due to taxes. That is nonsense. The fact is that the 20 per cent ad valorem tax in Saskatchewan is applied at a 6.4 per cent per litre rate at the moment, and in Ontario with a 20 per cent rate, exactly the same as our own. Because of the way they apply it, it's 6.4 cents per litre on regular fuel, 6.8 cents on regular unleaded, and 7 cents per litre on premium unleaded. If, in fact, gasoline sells more cheaply in Toronto or Charlottetown, it has obviously nothing to do with taxes. If you look at the taxes in Prince Edward Island, based on a 22 per cent ad valorem tax, it's 8.3 cents per litre against our 6.4 cents per litre.

I hope during my legislative term that I have made some contribution to the solution of the pension problem. Private pensions, generally, are of two broad types. The defined benefit is where the pension is defined, and most pension plans in Canada, Mr. Speaker, fall into that category. This type may have been a satisfactory pension approach when a pension was considered to be a reward for long service. It does not meet current needs when current mobility of the work force is taken into account. Defined contributions, where matching contributions plus realized earnings derive the funds for the individual's pension results, are realistic and reasonable. In the first type, actuarial assumptions, which are never realized, are periodically required.

We have, on an evolutionary basis, introduced the second type into the public service, into Crown corporations, other government agencies, and the members of the Legislative Assembly pension systems. Saskatchewan teachers have also adopted that approach. The new public employees (contributory) pension plan has accumulated \$66,679,218 in less than four years of operation. There is a continuing discussion on pension plans of both types; however, many erroneous impressions of the probabilities and attainable results abound. If we have sufficient patience to utilize the second approach to attain a mature pension operation, we will achieve realistic and reasonable pension results, which will come much closer to meeting generally the needs of the people at retirement than is currently the case.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister in charge of SGI, I've experienced my share of unwarranted criticisms and unsubstantiated assertions from the occupants of the opposition benches. We had a difficult situation in 1979 and 1980 in relation to automobile accident insurance fund, when we paid out — I hope the members will pay some attention to this — \$29 million more in claims than we got in premiums. When that happened, they screamed mismanagement. When we realized in the automobile accident insurance fund an earning of some \$11 million in 1981, they screamed rip-off. Mr. Speaker, they are the ones who are inconsistent and hypocritical.

We heard a great deal about the loss we suffered on re-insurance in 1980 in the general insurance business of SGI. They ignore the fact that all insurers cede out and assume through re-insurance treaties portions of their risks on potential claims.

Mr. Speaker, I trust the member for Regina South isn't leaving; I have some things I'd like to say to him specifically.

Insurance is a two-way street, and anyone who is even vaguely familiar with insurance as an assumption of risk realizes insurers go through cycles. In 36 years of operation, Mr. Speaker, SGI has achieved 32 surpluses and suffered four deficits in its general business, realizing accumulated surpluses of almost \$16 million with more than \$10 million of that amount returned to the shareholders, the people of the province, either

into the Crown investments corporation or the consolidated fund of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some brief comments on the economy. I want to make special mention of the heritage . . . (inaudible interjections) . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! I wonder if we can just have one debate going on at a time. I know the other one will be interesting when we get an opportunity. Right now I'd like to hear the Minister of Revenue, Supply and Services.

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make some brief comments about the economy. I want to make special mention of the heritage fund. I want to remind members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that all the revenues which flow from oil, potash, uranium, natural gas, sodium sulphate and other minerals go into the heritage fund directly.

We have a rule that a certain proportion of the heritage fund can then be transferred to the consolidated revenue fund. That has major impact in two ways. First of all, it benefits the current generation and, by the retention of assets in that particular fund, we will have benefits for future generations of Saskatchewan residents, and, Mr. Speaker, that makes eminent sense. I mention the heritage fund particularly because it is a clear indication of how we in Saskatchewan have met the challenges that have faced us, and how we have used those results.

Mr. Speaker, the heritage fund didn't happen by accident. It had to be planned. There was a great deal of opposition to it. Liberals and Conservatives in this House fought it every step of the way in relation to the actions we took on oil and potash. I remember well, Mr. Speaker, their telling us that if we got into the potash business it would simply result in ruination of the industry, etc. I remind them that we paid \$418 million for the assets in potash that we bought in this province, and we've realized over \$400 million in earnings and paid over \$274 million in taxes to the Saskatchewan government on that operation in five short years.

Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan fought for a fair share of resource revenues. Because we prevailed, the heritage fund will provide, in the current year, \$750 million to the consolidated fund as a dividend to the people of this province. That's the largest source of revenue to the budget in the current year. If you had to raise that revenue in some other way, you would have to increase the sales tax, for example from 5 per cent to 20 per cent; \$750 million to the consolidated fund is a dividend to the people of this province. We should never forget that. This will help pay for things such as highways, school grants, the dental plan, cancer research and many other programs, and it helps to keep taxes as low as possible.

You may hear people say that tax revenues are going up. Those people are always saying this about tax revenues going up. Obviously, tax revenues will go up in inflationary times. The 5 per cent sales tax in 1971 brought in roughly \$15 million for each percentage point. Today, it brings in roughly \$75 million for each percentage point. This is a major factor, however, in dampening increases. The challenge facing our economy in Saskatchewan has always been to create stable and diversified growth. All economic indicators, including this budget and the heritage fund, show that we are meeting that challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak briefly about the role of Crown corporations in the economy of this province. Indeed, one of the most effective ways Saskatchewan has

met the challenge of achieving its economic potential is through Crown corporations which play an active role in the development of our natural resources, supply utilities to all areas of the province, and provide a variety of financial and other services to Saskatchewan people and businesses. When viewed in the context of our total economy, it becomes crystal clear that Crown corporations fill economic gaps that private enterprise cannot or will not fill.

Saskatchewan Power Corporation, Sask Tel, Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Government Insurance are the largest Crown corporations when measured by a number of yardsticks. Crown corporations have the flexibility to serve the public interests by providing services such as rural power and telephones. We should not forget that power and telephone distribution could not be justified on strictly economic criteria in the rural areas of this province. When the going gets tough in the market place and in our national economy, Saskatchewan Crown corporations have the stability to tough it out. They do not cut and run to invest their money in low-wage areas elsewhere.

Saskatchewan Crown corporations are not branch plants of larger foreign multinationals which leave our province in any time of economic uncertainty. Saskatchewan Government Insurance is one of those Crown corporations, a corporation whose record, yesterday and today, is unrivalled anywhere in providing insurance services to Saskatchewan people. Regardless of the effects of adverse market conditions on the industry in general, public insurance is still the best insurance deal for Saskatchewan people.

There is another thing some people forget when they criticize Crown corporations: they are an important source of revenue. They pay their way. Last year, Crown corporations paid a total of \$115 million in taxes and similar charges to municipal governments and other bodies within this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy is in a fragile position right now. If left entirely to its own devices, it would fall under the control of a very small number of individuals and corporations, most of them non-Canadian and few of them responsive to the needs of individual provinces or, indeed, to the country itself. Our ownership of key resource corporations and financial corporations such as SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) is one of the key lines of defence against total loss of control. Mr. Speaker, if governments do not pull the economy into line, who will? When the chips are down, everyone turns to his government to take action in the public interest. This is clearly evident if one is willing to look at the facts. I wonder if the members opposite have ever heard of Massey Ferguson or Chrysler. Where did they go? They went to governmental authority when they were in deep economic trouble.

It is really remarkable, Mr. Speaker, to recall that Saskatchewan Government Insurance had no equity base from the beginning. It started out with a \$12,000 loan from the government which it repaid in the first year. While it is true that the automobile accident insurance fund lost money in 1979 and 1980, at the end of 1977 the account had \$13.8 million in it. We always argued that the fund should operate on a break-even basis and we felt the surplus was growing too large.

Mr. Speaker, when rates were reduced in 1978, what did opposition people say? They said that we were coming up to an election and that was why the rates were reduced. Using that kind of logic, I suppose they should argue that we raised the rates this year because we are coming up to another election. Mr. Speaker, that isn't really rational.

But when should anyone expect anything rational from the opposition benches.

Although rates for compulsory coverage were reduced an average of 7 per cent across the board in 1978, the surplus in that account grew by \$1,480,000 in that year. At the end of 1978 we had \$15,280,000 in that fund. In 1979 we suffered very substantial increases in accidents, claims and losses to the account. The loss in 1979 totalled \$28,575,000. It wiped out the surplus of \$15,280,000 and left a deficit of \$13,295,000. In 1980 the loss to the account was \$20,160,000. Members opposite screamed that it was mismanagement that we paid out \$29 million more in claims than we took in in premiums. That is errant nonsense, Mr. Speaker. That is what happened. We had to pay those claims. We still provide universal coverage. Even though we had to increase the rates, obviously, we have also increased benefits.

Opposition members are critical because we built a new head office building. They call it the gold-plated palace. Well, Mr. Speaker, they may be against energy conservation, but that gold-plated building was designed for energy conservation. I want to make a brief comment on that building. They have tried to create a tremendous amount of public misunderstanding about it. The office was built as part of the Cornwall Centre development and was one of the key buildings in that project. The building, land, and equipment, depreciated on an annual basis, cost SGI less per year than did the old head office building and six other places we had to rent in Regina to accommodate the staff and service plants. The theory that the head office building has anything whatsoever to do with increases in automobile accident insurance rates is a totally fallacious approach. It is pure Progressive Conservative fiction.

Mr. Speaker, members will recall that I have, from time to time, utilized verse to convey a point to the Assembly. When the finance critic, Mr. Speaker, got on auto rates last year, I used a verse to explain why our rates had to go up. Members will recall a bit of that verse. It went like this:

The truth of the matter, the costs were immense,
To pay for repairs to his Mercedes Benz.
I asked you to check out the cost of his claim;
I think it not unfair to mention his name;
It really isn't unfair to do so.
Our rates really rose because of fellows like Rousseau.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, may I transgress once again on the patience of the Assembly members with a bit of verse? I must, necessarily, give you a bit of background. Unfortunately, the hon. member for Regina South suffered a fire loss in December, 1981. We did not carry the insurance on the residence, but the member had a contents policy with SGI. The incident prompts me to call on my literary capabilities (if any) once again.

Mr. Speaker, it goes something like this:

The outgoing member for Regina South
Is going about a bit down in the mouth,
Haunted by something he'd like not to remember —
An event which occurred in chilly December.
He would like to forget, from his memory erase,

Events related to a certain fireplace
 Which spewed out its flames on his beautiful rug,
 It could drive one to drink; one could take to the jug.
 But none of this happened; we dampened his ire;
 We came to his rescue and paid for his fire.
 Poor service? Baloney! We expeditiously settled his claim.
 No service cry our critics; we will mention no names,
 However, the opposition is now shot down in flames.
 Flames remind one of fire; it is natural to do so.
 Welcome our new friend, Paul Mortimer Rousseau.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed my tenure in this Assembly, and will leave it with some measure of regret. It should be obvious to all members that I am strongly supportive of the budget, and I shall support it inside and outside of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. WHITE: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In rising to speak in the budget debate, I want to begin by congratulating the Minister of Finance on a simply excellent budget. As Minister of Culture and Youth, I think I would call it a budget which is a milestone in the history of the province of Saskatchewan.

In the past, Saskatchewan has often been called next-year country, but this budget clearly says otherwise. We have come a long way in this province, but we haven't left behind the traditions that we valued in the past. It was hard work, faith and friendship that brought us through the difficult times in our history. Friends and neighbors worked together to help one another and to keep their communities alive.

Working together continues to be a central ingredient of our Saskatchewan identity. As I travelled around the province as Minister of Culture and Youth, what has impressed me more than anything else is the number of people who volunteer their time and energy to make Saskatchewan an ever better and richer province in which to live. Thousands of volunteers in our cities and rural areas not only raise money for worth-while community projects, they also erect structures, coach teams, hang paintings for art shows, organize multicultural festivals, host regional games, assist libraries . . . You name it; they do it.

Every activity that goes on in the province depends upon the energy and the ability of Saskatchewan people, be it mining potash or be it involvement in sports or cultural activities. Their efforts and the sound economic management of this government have, in fact, made Saskatchewan one of the most favored provinces in Canada. We need only look at papers like the *Globe and Mail* to see the senior vice-president of the Bank of Montreal, Mr. Bates, commenting on the performance of this province, pointing out how resource revenues provide dividends to the province of Saskatchewan, and complimenting the province on the excellent administration of the Blakeney government.

As a consequence of this type of administration and the efforts of people throughout the province, our citizens now have more opportunity than ever before to enjoy

recreational and cultural activities. We also have the time to reflect on the quality of our lives and we are asking such questions as these: What do we value? What gives our lives meaning? What kind of Saskatchewan do we want for our children and grandchildren? They are difficult questions for us to be asking. They are difficult questions to answer. But we all agree that at least part of the answer lies in the area of culture and recreation.

Cultural and recreational activities are not only pleasurable, they bring meaning and richness to our lives; they expand our knowledge and sensitivity, as well as our understanding of ourselves and our society. Cultural and recreational activities make us less alone. They are an essential part of our lives. We have reached a period in Saskatchewan in which development means more than economic and agricultural development — it also means cultural and recreational development, a priority which is certainly reflected in the 1982-83 budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address myself to government initiatives which specifically concern my department. I have already pointed out the value of cultural and recreational activities. I now want to direct attention to culture in particular. Last year during his response to the budget, the Hon. Doug McArthur spoke about the cultural policy secretariat report. He said that after developing a clear sense of the public's wishes the department would draft a policy that would form the basis for a new cultural program. I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that we now have a policy, a cultural statement which stems from the expressed needs of the people. The rationale for our policy is fairly well known. As a society and as a government we need guidelines and objectives that will take into account the future implications of our present cultural decisions. What we decide today will affect the quality of our lives tomorrow.

Just as this government has accepted its responsibilities in the areas of health, education and transportation, so too it has accepted its responsibilities in the area of culture. This policy and this budget are signs of our commitment to the past, present and future Saskatchewan culture. Wallace Stegner, an author who spent his boyhood in the Cypress Hills, described our province as one which produces "mystical people, egocentric people, perhaps poetic people, but not humble ones."

Our cultural policy certainly reflects more pride than humility. It shows pride in our artists, our multiculturalism and our heritage, pride in the individuals, the organizations and the co-operative spirit which have contributed so much to our cultural vitality.

Our policy, Mr. Speaker, is based on five objectives. None of them can be achieved overnight nor will they be realized unless individuals, organizations, businesses, institutions and government work together to achieve a healthy cultural environment. I would like to summarize the five objectives for you.

The first objective is to strengthen the social base — that is, to broaden public awareness. Cultural pride, only when our residents understand that cultural activities are not for the privileged few. The arts, multiculturalism, and heritage enrich everyone's life. We need to help create an awareness of the importance of cultural activities.

The second objective is to develop the creative community, or, to put it in other words, to improve educational and employment opportunities for Saskatchewan artists. Leaving the province to obtain training or employment must become a matter of choice, not of necessity.

The third objective is to support cultural production. We must support cultural industries so that Saskatchewan artists have an outlet for their work and the public has an opportunity to view or buy Saskatchewan cultural products. Records should be made here, books published, and films and plays produced. This year my department is addressing the needs of two specific cultural industries — film-making and publishing. We are meeting with agencies, other government departments and individuals involved in these industries in order to develop film and publishing policies.

The fourth objective is to improve public access. Every individual in the province should have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities. Our goal must be to connect the artist with the audience, the student with the artifact, and the reader with the book.

Finally, the fifth objective is to discover and preserve Saskatchewan's heritage. Never before in our history have so many expressed such a strong commitment to the preservation of our heritage resources. Since the passing of The Heritage Property Act in 1980, for example, over 70 communities have participated in municipal heritage property designation, and that number continues to grow.

The five objectives I have just outlined are very important elements in our cultural policy. In past budgets, this government introduced several acts and initiatives which addressed these objectives. Over the next several years we will continue to show our commitment to the cultural development of our province.

But more immediately, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about this budget's initiatives in the area of culture. I spoke earlier about the need for a cultural policy based on pride — pride in our artists, multiculturalism, and heritage. A major source of civic and provincial pride in Saskatchewan is our museum and gallery system. Museums and galleries have become more than places which preserve our history and our arts. They are also activity centres for people of all ages, educational resource centres for our school children, and major tourist attractions. They reveal to us the contributions of our native people, pioneers and artists from all over the province. They show us the past, help us understand the present, and even provide us with insight into the future. Galleries and museums are not dusty warehouses, but vital community centres. In Saskatchewan we can't speak of one museum or one gallery in isolation. We must talk about a museum and gallery network, which includes the four Western Development Museums, 180 community museums and galleries, exhibition centres, and other major museums and galleries such as the Museum of Natural History, the Norman MacKenzie and Mendel galleries, and historic parks.

To ensure that this network continues to preserve and display the many facets of Saskatchewan culture, we are increasing our expenditures for museums and galleries for the second year in a row. Last year we allocated \$245,000 and this year we are allocating a further \$235,000 to museums and galleries. This represents more than a 700 per cent increase in two years. My department is working closely with the Saskatchewan Museums Association to develop criteria for the new program. Our initial priority will be to provide financial support to existing art exhibition centres and galleries.

We are also concerned about the present state of preservation of museum and gallery artifacts and artwork. The budget provides for the continuation of the study which commenced earlier this year, and there has also been some action. The archives building will provide space for art collections of the arts board and perhaps a

government collection as well. In terms of specific museums, the operating budget of the Western Development Museum is increased to \$1 million, an increase of 22 per cent. As well, the capital needs of the museum will be addressed at a later date, but we want to emphasize that we know the value of the four Western Development Museums. Over 200,000 visitors toured the four branches in 1980-81. In a recent study examining our residents' awareness of what Saskatchewan has to offer, the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources discovered that 89 per cent of our people were aware of the Western Development Museums and 72 per cent had visited at least one branch. This level of awareness, one of the highest recorded in the study, reflects the importance of museums to our province.

Another major provincial museum requiring additional funding is the Museum of Natural History. This museum, which is almost as old as the province, has an excellent reputation, but we are convinced that it can provide even better service. An expansion of its services, however, requires additional staff, and the budget allows the museum to expand its full-time staff by three persons, an increase of approximately 20 per cent.

The government's support for museums demonstrates our commitment to one of the most valuable made-in-Saskatchewan resources, our provincial heritage.

Another important part of our Saskatchewan way of life is the celebration of our past. All of us have fond memories of Celebrate Saskatchewan, an affirmation of community life and friendship, and a tribute to our pioneers. Hundreds of Saskatchewan residents returned to towns and cities where they grew up to renew old friendships and to see the progress of their communities. We wish to keep this spirit of celebration alive in our province. In response to many communities approaching their 100th anniversaries, we have implemented a \$110,000 program which will assist them with their celebrations.

When communities celebrate, the entire province celebrates for the vitality of Saskatchewan depends upon the vitality of our local communities. Without the 30 provincial cultural organizations with members and volunteers in towns and cities throughout the province, many of our cultural activities would come to a standstill. Last year we allocated \$95,000 to help cover the administration costs of these organizations. This year, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say we have allocated an additional \$65,000, an increase of 68 per cent. In addition, we are increasing grants to multicultural organizations by expanding our heritage language grants from \$61,000 to over \$100,000. We are also allocating \$50,000 to a multicultural theatre festival, which will be held in Saskatchewan in 1982. This festival is a showcase for community theatre companies that actively support the realities of our multicultural society. This festival, which moves to a different province every 10 years, is a major national event that will bring exciting theatrical performances to Saskatchewan.

It is the government's belief that the strength, vitality and creativity of our society are enhanced when our ethnocultural groups can share their ethnic identity with all of Saskatchewan. The multicultural character of Saskatchewan makes our province special and provides a cultural richness unequalled anywhere.

As important as the role played by provincial and community cultural organizations is the role of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Since its creation 33 years ago, it has continued to promote the development and maintenance of high standards for arts activity in this province. Its initiatives during the last year included the establishment of juries of peers to review individual assistance program requests, the creation of a new

category of support, the \$10,000 senior arts award, a new approach to the support for publishers, and the preparation of a policy for support of Saskatchewan films. In order that the arts board can expand its assistance to artists, performance companies and cultural industries, we have allocated the sum of \$521,200. This raises the board's budget to over \$2 million — an increase of 80 per cent in the last two years. The increase represents the equivalent of \$2 per capita, which equals the Ontario government's support for its art commission.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that this substantial increase will provide a new base for Saskatchewan arts in the '80s. It is an affirmation of our faith in the arts board and the talent of our artists. The arts board encourages the further development of our most valuable provincial asset — the creativity of Saskatchewan people. One sign of this government's commitment to culture is obviously reflected in its financial support for cultural programs, agencies, organizations and activities. But its commitment has been expressed in many other ways.

This year, a new Department of Communications will take its place in government. It will ensure that the rapidly growing communications technology serves the needs of Saskatchewan people. There are many issues to address, but an important one is television programming. Rather than flooding the airwaves with more American sitcoms, melodramas and game shows, we have the potential to bring our own culture to almost every resident. Saskatchewan plays, musical performances and multicultural festivals, for instance, could be made available from one end of the province to the other. I look forward to working closely with the new department to ensure that communication technology meets the cultural needs of this province.

Another department introducing initiatives that will influence the state of Saskatchewan culture is the Department of Education. I am sure my colleague, the Hon. Doug McArthur, will be speaking or has perhaps already spoken about his advisory committee study into incorporating fine arts and aesthetic education into the education system. This study is of great importance, for the support of our culture will be guaranteed only when our children feel comfortable with Saskatchewan arts, multiculturalism and heritage. Painting, writing and performing, as well as appreciating and applauding, should become natural experiences of our lives.

Yet another important initiative this time in the area of heritage preservation is the plan to construct a new archives building. The cost of \$6.5 million is a significant sign of the government's commitment to our rich heritage resources.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce a new program that crosses sports, recreational and cultural boundaries. One major issue identified repeatedly during last year's Culture Talks was the perceived shortage of cultural facilities in this province. More and more communities are asking for assistance to develop centres to house cultural activities — facilities such as theatres, performance bases, craft centres, galleries, museums and libraries.

In 1980, a culture and youth study identified that over half of the communities surveyed indicated that they did not have adequate stages to meet local needs. Only one-third had adequate lighting systems for performing arts, and less than one-third had adequate facilities for handicrafts. Only one-half had proper sound systems or adequate facilities for dance instruction. In addition, many community recreational facilities, such as curling and skating rinks built years ago, are in need of renovation or replacement. There is also a need to develop multi-use facilities so that a variety of

leisure time activities can be carried out under one roof.

Mr. Speaker, throughout my response to the budget I have emphasized the importance of community involvement in our province. In the past, people joined together in their homes, in town halls, or in local schools to have fun and to share their talents and ethnic traditions. This still takes place. But there is an increasing demand for more and better facilities, a demand which must be met, for community, cultural and recreational facilities are the heart of Saskatchewan rural life.

Sometimes renovation is the answer. For instance, the Luseland School which saw so many children pass through its doors is in the process of undergoing an appropriate change. It is being converted into a recreation centre. Sometimes the necessary renovations are minor and relatively inexpensive. For instance, the town of Lanigan would like to add an acoustic shell and lighting equipment to its existing hall. The cost of this renovation could vary anywhere from \$2,000 to \$15,000. This relatively small amount of money would dramatically increase the performance capabilities of the existing building.

In other cases, a community, after careful evaluation of its needs might decide to pool its resources with a neighboring community and build a new multi-use facility to serve both centres. Such a facility would provide the opportunity for citizens of all ages and interests to participate in cultural and recreational activities, and it would also make sound economic sense.

Mr. Speaker, the possibilities are endless. I would like to give you an example of how one community, the city of Estevan, used the former recreational and cultural facilities capital grant program to improve and expand its facilities. The allocation it received from this government between 1977 and 1981 was used on the following worth-while and varied facilities and projects: the Estevan National Exhibition Centre, the lignite miners' centre, the comprehensive school tennis courts, the civic auditorium floor, the regional nursing home activity room, the Wylie Mitchell Air Cadet Hall, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation range, the Souris Aeronautic Club, and the Hillside Churchill playground.

In a letter I received recently, the mayor of Estevan eloquently listed the positive results of our facilities grants and I would like to share some of his words with you now. I quote:

Because of the nature of this program it has provided benefits beyond the tangible ones. Thousands of hours of volunteer labor were involved in all these projects. This draws groups together, working for a common cause and interests, keeping the spirit of togetherness in rural Saskatchewan.

"Beyond the tangibles," the mayor stated. Beyond the availability of new facilities — what better reason to continue and expand this program than to keep the spirit of togetherness alive in rural and urban Saskatchewan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. WHITE: — Our new cultural and recreational facilities grant program will be introduced effective April 1, 1982, and will continue through March 31, 1987. It will provide a total of \$43.3 million to communities to assist in renovating and constructing cultural and recreational facilities. The sum, Mr. Speaker, of \$43.3 million works out to approximately \$45 for every man, woman and child in this province.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Even Conservatives?

HON. MR. WHITE: — Even Conservatives. Under the terms of this program each municipality and Indian band will be eligible for a base grant of \$10,000, plus a grant of \$15 per capita. Two further incentive grants are offered: a \$10 per capita incentive for the development of cultural facilities, and an additional \$10 per capita where two or more municipalities undertake a joint facility project. The grants provided will be to a maximum of 50 per cent of the cost of each project.

I'll be discussing this program in more detail later in this session, but let me say right now that we expect approximately 2,000 separate facility projects to be funded by the new program over the next five years with a total estimated construction cost exceeding \$170 million. This is an increase of over \$70 million from the previous program which ended December 31, 1981.

The new program will allow every community in this province to improve its facilities for sport, recreation and culture. As a result, all residents will have an opportunity to enrich their lives through sports, recreation and cultural events. The \$43.3 million is this government's response to the demands and needs of the Saskatchewan people who want to participate in a variety of activities which will enhance the quality of their lives. The program ensures that this will happen. It also ensures that the cultural community and municipalities that undertake joint projects will be the prime beneficiaries.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that this is a positive budget, one which recognizes the great promise of our province in the energy and creativity of its people. It's clearly not a Conservative budget. Conservatism has historically meant an aversion to change, a fear of progress, especially in social and cultural areas.

One also wonders what a Conservative budget would mean where education is concerned. I would like to go on and talk about a number of other things, but my time is running out. The education budget for the universities, for example, has been increased by 17 per cent in operating grants and we gave \$1,125,000 recently to help with the libraries and lab equipment and so on. Contrast this with what's happening in Ontario. A letter from the Ontario Council on University Affairs, a provincial government advisory body, tells the administrators to assume that government grant increases will be 1 per cent less than inflation for each year until 1987-88. Estimates are that that will mean a loss of 30 per cent of all professors — 3,000 out of 10,000 — and a starvation of programs and so forth. I'd like to go on about this, but, as I say, my time is running out.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, comes from a government that listens to people, a government that responds to stated needs of its citizens, a government that acts with courage and foresight. This is a budget that comes from a government that has worked closely and co-operatively with Saskatchewan people in all areas of the province and from all walks of life. Only the New Democratic Party has done this.

The New Democratic Party has always valued the resources of our province and believed that the benefits of those resources must remain here. More than anything else, this party has valued our human resources, the creativity, the volunteer spirit, the hard work and energy of Saskatchewan people. The budget, Mr. Speaker, is a budget for celebration. It marks the beginning of an exciting and rewarding future for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I will be whole-heartedly, both here and outside

the House, supporting every part of that budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — It's certainly with pleasure that I rise in the Assembly this afternoon to represent my constituency, the Moosomin constituency, and reply to this budget that has been introduced by our finance minister. I certainly have no remarks to make with reference to the speech just presented by the member for Regina Wascana. There are a few comments though, that I would like to make with reference to the remarks made by the minister responsible for a lot of things (I think right now it is politics on that side), the member for Biggar.

A couple of days ago or yesterday . . . I'm not sure when it was. Time goes so fast when one is busy in here. At least, we are busy on this side of the House. One really loses track of time, but it doesn't matter. Very recently, I challenged the member for Biggar to take his place in the debate in the House on the crow and the budget. I was very pleased to see that he accepted that challenge but I was most disappointed when the member for Biggar adjourned debate. I had thought that he would have welcomed the rebuttal coming from this side of the House, whether it came from me or any other member. I suppose it is only fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Biggar is concerned when a member from this side of the House is going to reply immediately after him and rather discredit him. It goes to show very clearly that all members, in particular those who are supposed to be heavyweights, have some very difficult times ahead of them.

The member for Biggar indicated that I would be making my last speech in this House when I stood up to reply. I would like to make just a few comments on that as it relates to my own riding. The members on the government side of the House, at least and in particular, should be aware that about a year ago (in fact a little over a year ago), the NDP association there put together what it called a candidate search committee. Now, one of the members of the candidate search committee was the NDP candidate who ran there in 1975 and again in 1978 (both of those terms were when I ran, of course). He was on this candidate search committee. So, for over a year they were all about my riding, I suppose, looking for a candidate to run for the NDP. Well, Mr. Speaker, with great disappointment, they were unable to find anyone to run for the NDP in my riding. To date, there are no candidates declared, under any political banner, in the Moosomin constituency but me. Now, most members have a fear of being defeated, Mr. Speaker, that is not my fear. My fear is being elected by acclamation.

I understand there have been recent reports in the *Moosomin World-Spectator* about this. I had a call from my riding indicating to me that the NDP association has a nomination date set and it is this Saturday, I believe, for any of you members on that side of the House who would like to come out and attend. They will need all the help they can get. The editor of the paper called the president of the NDP association — he couldn't call the candidate because they didn't have one — and asked him who was going to run. I guess he said, "We weren't able to find a suitable candidate, so we're going to be going with the same man that we ran in '75 and '78."

Now, that having been said, let me say this. I have no particular problems with the candidate that ran in '75 and '78. Given the results in '75 and '78, I would want him to run again in '82 — most certainly. The editor has this on the front page, I believe. At least, it's in the paper. It doesn't matter whether it's the front page or the back page. It's in the *Spectator* this week, which came out on a Wednesday. And the candidate is there apparently on record as having indicated that he intends to run for the nomination at

this nomination meeting on Saturday if another name doesn't come forth. In other words, he's still in a position of being able to back out. He ran in '75; he ran in '78 and he doesn't want to run in 1982 —not even the candidate they ran in '75 and '78. They've had a candidate search committee in place for over a year. They haven't come up with a suitable name, and that, surely, Mr. Speaker, has no reflection on the quality and the calibre of the people in that riding. There are a lot of very capable people in that Moosomin constituency, but they haven't been able to find a candidate. And he's only going to be running as the NDP candidate out of a have-to situation. He doesn't want to, and you people should realize that. He doesn't want to run, and he's a nice person. I don't want him to run either, and you shouldn't run him.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for all the new members that thought that the member for Biggar was making some kind of a point regarding my constituency, you might relay to him the facts. The member for Biggar also indicated that he likes elections. Well, Mr. Speaker, he had better like elections, because he's going to have his hands full in his own riding . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Oh, you hear the laughs from that side of the House. I know the PC candidate and I tell you it surprises me, because the member for Biggar is a very good politician. I'm sure he campaigns very hard in his riding and he's had a very high profile in this government, but our candidate told me in Saskatoon about three weeks or a month ago, "Larry, I'm going to be sitting in there with you on the government side of the House." And he's that confident that he's going to be here.

AN HON. MEMBER: — He said that in 1978.

MR. BIRKBECK: — He might well have. I said in 1978 to the Attorney General and to the people, "We are going to form government," and you know we almost did up until the last seven days of that campaign . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And yes, I'll agree. The Attorney General has a very good point. One can be very confident of something and feel very confident that it's going to happen, but a very quick turn of events can change things very quickly and, I might add, that cuts both ways for the members of this House. You people on the government side say, "Oh, you Tories are going to be decimated." We heard that from the Attorney General. Just remember, it cuts both ways. We have made the point and made it very clearly that had we 1,500 votes or so to distribute in the ridings of our choice after the last election in '78, we would be the government — not you people. In other words, I could have taken a few of the votes that I won by — 739 — and given them to the riding of Saltcoats just to the north of me, and Walter Johnson, our PC candidate, would be sitting here on this side of the House. The member for Saltcoats on that side of the House would be here no more — for the sake of a few votes.

Although you have 45 members to our 15, although there is an imbalance, the imbalance is not as great in the numbers of votes. At least I can be honest and realistic — 739 votes is all I won by. There are a lot of you people who only won by 500, 600 or 700 votes. If you think that is security, if you think that is something to rest your laurels on, gentlemen, I tell you, it is not. Mr. Member for Estevan, I tell you, be careful; you didn't win by many votes. We wouldn't have to take many votes from you to elect a Conservative member . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . So the member for Biggar likes elections. I am sure he is one of the best on that side in terms of electioneering, but I think you will lose his abilities for your party because he will need all the talent he can muster just to win the riding of Biggar.

Mr. Speaker, that member for Biggar said he was surprised to hear some support for the budget. Well, I can agree that he would be surprised. Every once in a while we hear somebody suggest that this budget wasn't too bad. We are surprised, too. When we tell them the truth, they don't support that budget any more because they can't realize the other side of the coin — they didn't understand that.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What is that side?

MR. BIRKBECK: — Well now, the member asks, "What is the other side?" Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of time. You're going to hear the other side.

The member for Biggar talked about leadership. Well, I tell you, after today's spectacle by your leader, the Premier, I don't think there will be any question about leadership, anywhere in this province. No way. Now I won't say any more about it. After all, the last time I was on my feet and I talked about how bad the Premier of Saskatchewan is, the Attorney General rose to his feet and said, "Mr. Speaker, that's the scariest speech I've heard in the legislature." And I tell, you, Mr. Speaker, the day that I'm putting some fear into the Attorney General is the day I'm doing my job on this side of the House.

Now, when these few people come whispering by, thinking that maybe the budget isn't too bad, it isn't very hard to turn them around. All you have to tell them is that there was a \$200 million increase in personal income tax and then it's not such a good budget any more.

Now, before I go into any of the heavy issues, I noted that the member for Biggar, when he was on his feet, did not touch on the budget. He did not touch on the crowrate; he talked about nothing more than just politics. Now I can understand that coming from the member for Biggar, because that's what he likes. He got up and he did the old charade, the comic act and, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take a lot of talent to do that. Not really. And if that's what members of the House want to hear, if that's what pleases them, if that's what they think is important, well, then maybe all of us should be indulging in a little bit of humor. So I suppose it would be fair for me to exchange with the member for Biggar. I'm really sorry he's not here, but I know the other members on that side of House will enjoy it. I'll exchange a little humor with you.

You people always talk about Reaganomics. Well, I'll tell you, people aren't so concerned about Reaganomics in the United States now. They really aren't; things are starting to look up — the miniskirt is back in. Now then it's understandable that the members over there didn't see the joke in that. They obviously aren't listening or find it very difficult to get it through their heads, so we'll run another one by them. And this is what the member for Biggar was doing.

I was watching a Bob Hope show one night and Bob Hope said, "Well, now, you know those terrible Canadians. They're always talking about how cold it is. Well, it was cold down in the United States, too, this past winter. Why, it was so cold I saw a mink wearing a fat lady." Now that didn't get any rise out of the members opposite either, so you see they only understand that perverted humor that seems to come from their side of the House.

But I have some jokes here that apply specifically to the members opposite. Now let's talk about the politician who was mangling and misusing the facts during his political tirade. We hear that quite often from that side of the House. "He's murdering the truth,"

said a fellow newspaperman. "Don't worry," said Brown, "he'll never get close enough to do any harm." And that's a fact. You people can murder the truth; you can twist the truth; you can talk about anything but the truth, but it isn't going to make any difference. It's not going to wash anywhere in this province, because you've never been close enough to the truth to really have any effect on the people of Saskatchewan. We see it again now: you're attempting to distort the issues before the people of Saskatchewan, to set up smoke screens.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do is just . . . I wonder if I could just maybe keep the Minister of Highways and Transportation from falling asleep. Maybe you're from Luseland or something — you know, out a lot at night. I don't understand. You're yawning away over there and having a very difficult time.

We have a project array that has been laid before us. I believe this project array is just a photostat copy of the last one that came out. Now, Mr. Minister of Highways and Transportation, you hear this and hear it well. In the last project array, you indicated that there were going to be improvements made to Highway No. 8 in my constituency from the Trans-Canada to Rocanville. I don't know whether you've ever been out there or not. I don't suppose you have and I wouldn't recommend that the Minister of Highways and Transportation coming out there either — not right now. If you're going to be there Saturday, that would be wonderful. I'll see to it that we have a few people there to ask you a few questions that they're very anxious to ask you. You've contracted out a contractor, all right, and you have not even finished half of what you said you were going to do in the last project array. You have the weigh scale site in this one — you had it in the last one and nothing happened. The weigh scales are still at the same place.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Do you want them or not?

MR. BIRKBECK: — Yes, we want them. The member for Kelvington-Wadena asks, "Do you want them or do you not?" Yes, we've been asking for these improvements since 1975, but obviously the Department of Highways and Transportation doesn't see fit to get on with the job.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's another very pertinent issue that I would like to draw to the attention of the Minister of Highways. Last year, my wife and I spent hours, absolute hours, and we took all of these highways (the Minister of Highways should listen to this), and we did some calculations and found out, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP was putting more miles of improved highways, either resurfacing or paving, into NDP seats than it was into Conservative seats. As if that weren't bad enough — listen, you backbenchers, hon. member for Pelly, hon. member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg (oh, he's not here today; well, you hear this too, anyway) — even the cabinet ministers are getting more miles of paved highways than the NDP backbenchers are. Now that should create a little conflict on that side of the House.

I recall in the debate that the Minister of Highways got up and denied it. He didn't believe it. I challenged him (I remember it so plainly) to get up the next day and prove to me that I was wrong. You know, Mr. Minister of Highways, you couldn't do it. In fact, there was political patronage to your side of the House in the Department of Highways, and I would venture to say that if my wife spent another three or four hours we would find that the same thing has held true in this project array. When it gets out, Mr. Minister of Highways (and that's going to happen) that your cabinet members are getting more miles of paved highway than are your backbench NDP members and the opposition members, that's going to spell a lot of trouble for you. No question about

that.

Mr. Speaker, being somewhat past the hour of 5, I call it 5 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER: — Before I call it 5 o'clock, I wonder if the members would agree to proceed with the balance of the agenda which we passed over earlier this day? There were five minutes left in the question period . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Order! Could I have the attention of the House, please? The reason I'm asking to proceed with the balance of the agenda before us at this time is to assist us in printing. If that's an inconvenience to the members, we'll just have to put up with it. Are there any further questions?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 44 — An Act respecting the Provision of Financial Assistance to Municipalities and Non-profit Organizations for Capital Works Projects involving Cultural and Recreational Facilities.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. minister, I move that a bill respecting the provision of financial assistance to municipalities and non-profit organizations for capital works projects involving cultural and recreational facilities be now introduced and read a first time.

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

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.