

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
December 6, 1982

EVENING SESSION

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (continued)

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Chairman, since one of our key figures in this evening's debate is running a little bit late, I move we rise to report progress, ask for leave to sit again later this evening and deal with those two farm bills now and then come back to energy right away.

The committee reported progress.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 45 — An Act to establish a Program to Facilitate Financing the Purchase of Farm Land

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Speaker, I think that when I have finished my speech, every member of this House — at least every member who has the interest of the young farmer at heart — will be applauding this bill. I'm sure the public will be watching to see whether anyone elected to serve their needs objects to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Agriculture is the backbone of this province. It always has been and I think it always will be. The agricultural potential of this region brought the pioneers here. It gave our grandparents a vision. It gave our parents a way of life. It established the tradition of the family far. The tradition included, as an established norm, that every farming family should own the land they worked rather than simply be tenants on that land. Mr. Speaker, how many pioneers do you think would have come to open the West if the ads had said: Land for rent from the government, rather than: Land to own?

With the exception of the people of certain socialistic countries who feel the state should own the land and farmers should simply be workers on some huge conveyor belt production system (not that those socialistic conveyor belts ever produce enough food for people to eat), I think most people would agree that people should own their own homes and the farms they work, and of course this legislation will in large part facilitate that. Of course some people, for certain reasons and convenience, do prefer to rent land, and that's fine. Generally speaking, though, it is man's instinct to own something, to build on it, to create something from it, and to leave it, when he goes to that great farmyard in the sky, to his offspring.

It is this government's desire that the people should prosper. It is this government's contention that individuals, rather than the state, should own their own farms, own their own homes, and control their own lives. We see great economic, social and cultural value in seeing our citizens given the opportunity to fulfil their dreams. Farm ownership has always been part of our heritage in this province. Farm tenancy, especially long-term farm tenancy, has always seemed something akin to serfship from some collectivized farm and some so-called socialist utopia.

We want to make sure it is part of our future. It was certainly part of our grandparents' and parents' future for many decades. Just look around this House. At least on this side of the House, I see many of my colleagues who come from family farm backgrounds. In

recent years, though, something has happened that has been crushing the legitimate hopes and dreams of young people to own their own farms. Skyrocketing interest rates, which seemed horrendous when they hit 10 per cent almost a decade ago, suddenly took off with the 1980s and rose to 18 and 20 per cent.

As you well know, this government found it distasteful that interest rates should rob residents of this province of their own homes. Immediately, the voters placed their trust in us. We acknowledged that trust by introducing a mortgage rebate program for home-owners. I don't know why such a program wasn't put into place earlier. I can't think of a worse condemnation of any government than one that sits back while people lose the homes they cherish. Of course to some, the acquisition of private property is an abomination. So I can only presume that governments that sat back and saw high interest rates undermining home ownership in this province simply figured that it was a job well done.

Our swift action to repay the Saskatchewan voters for putting their trust in us was copied by other provinces. If imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, then our administration indeed made its mark across this nation in a very short period of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I think we can even say that by introducing our won mortgage reduction program, we also indirectly aided home-owners in other provinces. We led the way; they followed. We promised leadership in this province. After a decade of pseudointellectual theorists, we provided leadership.

Along with our election campaign commitment to aid home-owners, we also promised similar aid to young farmers just starting out on their own. The commitment, like our home ownership commitment, was short and specific. We would rebate mortgages on new acquisitions of land, down to 8 per cent for five years on mortgages up to \$350,000 and 12 per cent for a further period of time, five years. I'm telling you, 12 per cent for the next five years. That, Mr. Speaker, is essentially what this legislation does. It sets up the financing and the mechanism for the carrying out of that commitment.

It's simple and straightforward and to the point. Even the agricultural critic for the members opposite should be able to understand it. It safeguards young, starting-out farmers against runaway mortgage rates. It gives them the opportunity to once again turn their dreams into reality. Nothing more. It is no free ride. It is not just another chunk of taxpayers' money going into some useless pie-in-the-sky program. It is an investment in our youth. It is an investment in our way of life. It is an investment in our future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I was somewhat surprised when I checked into the land bank commission date to find that in 10 years of operation, the land bank has put only 152 Saskatchewan farmers on the way to farm ownership. Imagine, in 10 years, only 152 people who wanted to own rather than simply be a tenant on the land they worked where able to achieve their dreams. Not much of a program. Not much of a commitment to our young farmers. Why at that rate most of them would be thinking about retirement before they were able to make the big step from tenancy to ownership.

It seems to me that at that rate the land bank would be owning more and more land, and

through attrition, there would be fewer and fewer farmer-owners. Again, that awful spectre of collectivization raises its head. I don't think that's what the people of Saskatchewan really want.

Let me give you some different figures. In the last three months of operation, we would expect about 1,500 applicants for mortgage rebates under our farm ownership program. They would have total mortgages of something in the neighborhood of \$150 million. IN the first full year of operation from April 1, 1983 to March 31, 1984, we expect to see an additional 2,000 mortgage rebate applicants. They would total mortgage commitments of around an additional \$200 million.

In the second full year of operation, we expect another 2,000 mortgage rebate applicants, and they too would total by our projections in the region of \$200 million.

Let me put this into perspective for you, Mr. Speaker. In the first 27 months of operation we would put 5,500 young farmers on the road to farm ownership. In 10 years of land bank operations, only 152 farmers achieved their dream of moving from tenancy to ownership. Yet if our figures are correct, and I believe them to be, there are at least 5,500 starting-out farmers out there who want to own their own land, and want to own their own farms. Why were these people ignored? Only this province's former government knows the answer to that. Only this province's current government knows the solution.

I see members opposite are a little uncomfortable with this, and well they might be. When we first revealed our plans for this program, critics said that it could never be done. They wanted us to back down.

To bring this program in now would show that a very, very large segment of our young farm population had been ignored for a very long time. It would also show that the answer to the problem wasn't impossible, it wasn't too complex, it wasn't unobtainable: it was right there all the time. It just needed the philosophical will to put it in place.

Of course, to those who believe ownership of private property is an evil, this program of aid to our young farmers will be criticized. We, on this side of the House, want to see our young farmers owning their own property. We don't want to see them tied to tenancy agreements for the rest of their lives.

Some critics, if there are any, of this program may say it is too expensive. The cost to the treasury for the first 15 months of operation will be about \$23 million. The cost for the first 27 months will be about \$36 million. So it is expensive, but surely it is not too expensive. For \$36 million, we'll put 5,500 young farmers on the road to farm ownership in just 27 months. Mr. Speaker, I don't think we'll get a single complaint from those young farms. And I don't think we'll get a single complaint from the city folks either. I would suspect city people will see this program as the rural cousin to its home mortgage rebate plan.

It's a tremendous program for every resident of this province, and they should be proud of it. For a 10-year-period, starting-out farmers will enjoy 8 per cent mortgages in the first five years, and 12 per cent in the next five. The experts tell us that after that 10-year-period, if a farmer can't handle his mortgage without rebates, we're probably helping the wrong people or the economy has indeed taken a flop.

We don't think that will happen; we have good faith in our young farm people. This

program is not for the well-established farmer. It's not for the doctor, or the successful lawyer, or the businessman who wants to farm as a weekend hobby. And it is certainly not for the speculator who wants to take advantage of 8 per cent mortgages. Safeguards to ensure that benefits of this program are obtained only by those to whom it is directed are built into this legislation. For instance, anyone with an income higher than \$35,000 averaged over the past three years will not qualify for rebates. Yet, because we recognize that the young farm family may have needed some off-farm income in recent years, we have allowed a husband and wife team to have made up to \$35,000 a year in off-farm income over the past three years and still qualify (that's averaged over the past three years). Any income their children may have had in this period of time is exempt from the \$35,000 limit.

We like to see young people working to fulfil their dreams, and we don't see why they should be penalized for this. Anyone with a net worth of \$300,000 or more will not qualify for admittance to this program. The program is essentially meant to aid the small starting-up farmer. That's who the benefits must go to; that's why the net worth limit was set at \$300,000. Those with a net worth of \$200,000 or less will qualify for entry into the program. Beyond \$200,000, qualification will be on a sliding scale.

For each single dollar of net worth over \$200,000, he or she will lose three fifty in potential rebate allowance. By the time net worth reaches \$300,000, he or she will be ineligible for any program rebates. Again, we think this is fair. Again, we think this ensures that the program provides maximum benefits to those to whom it is directed.

Those who can qualify for the full \$350,000 will, I think, like another aspect of this program. They don't have to overextend themselves by taking the full \$350,000 allotment at once. They can buy a piece of land this year for \$100,000, and a piece of land next year for \$150,000 and a piece of land the following year for another \$100,000.

We are not interested in the bureaucratic red tape in this town; we are interested in helping the young farmer in the most advantageous and flexible way. That's why, initially at least, we have chosen the farm credit corporation as the financial delivery vehicle for this program. Saskatchewan farm people know and like the corporation; it knows and understands our farmers and our agricultural economy, so it is a natural vehicle to use.

There are other advantages as well. Administration costs of this program will be minimal using the farm credit vehicle. They will be so difficult to find, in fact, that it's virtually impossible. We're not creating a new multilevel bureaucracy and gleaming office towers to administer the farm purchase program; we want every possible cent allotted to this program to go to the young farmer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — This will be the least bureaucratic and personnel staffed program of its size ever implemented in Saskatchewan. It sets a precedent and one that we intend to build on. So that is another advantage of using the farm credit corporation; we can use the facilities already in place; we don't have to duplicate high-cost services.

Here I would like to pay a compliment to the people at the federal level, particularly the chairman of the farm credit corporation, Sonny Anderson, who has co-operated every step of the way in this endeavor. By using the farm credit corporation facilities there is a

great demonstration of federal and provincial co-operation, and that too is something this government intends to build on. We think we should co-operate with all levels of government, with governments in all regions of the country, and with governments of all political stripes. Bickering over partisan politics has no place in this government's list of objectives. Our job is to deliver the policies and services to the residents of Saskatchewan, and where we have common purpose there's no reason in the world why we shouldn't be working together.

The family trying to pay off its home mortgage or the young farmer who is trying to acquire his first piece of land isn't interested in philosophical quarrel with some other government, and neither are we, nor should we be. We will co-operate with any government in this country in any way that will aid the man on the city street, or the farmer on the land. High blown political theory won't pay mortgage rates; it won't put bread on the table or clothes on our backs.

I would like to stress our appreciation for the way the farm credit people have responded to this program. They think it's a good program. They want to see it work, and I'm sure our young farmers won't be let down by them. In fact, I don't think our young farmers will be let down by anyone. I'd say it's more the other way around; I think our young farm people have been let down in the past. But I am serving notice here today that the days of letting anyone down, as far as this government is concerned, are over.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — The days when Saskatchewan's government let people down ended on April 26. This program is just one example of that.

Mr. Speaker, although this legislation is primarily aimed at young farm people, I would like to point out that it will aid others too. It will aid in the intergenerational transfer of the family farm. Far too often a farmer has to sell his farm outside the family in order to retire in modest comfort. In other cases, he has simply had to pass the farm down to his children free or for a modest sum and so wasn't able to enjoy retirement in anything like the comfort he deserved. This new program will aid him in selling his farm to his children, so it achieves two purposes: it keeps the farm in the family, and it eases the economic burdens on the parents and the children. It will revitalize rural life in Saskatchewan. We need young farmers in this province; we need healthy farms.

By preserving and revitalizing the family farm tradition, rural communities will be revitalized as well. They will be revitalized by vigorous young farm owners and by the custom these new owners will give to the local businesses. This custom may even create a need for new rural businesses. The ripple effect will spread to urban areas. Urban prosperity to a very large degree in this province depends on the health of the farm and rural sector.

As I said earlier something in the neighborhood of 5,500 rebate applicants are expected in the first 27 months and will create an economic demand for years to come. Successful farming operations will mean more business for cities. Expansion breeds expansion; success breeds success.

Mr. Speaker, I could speak for hours about the merits of this program. It is simply one of the finest forward looking pieces of agricultural legislation ever presented in this legislature.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — It will be talked about by many for a long, long time. Like our home mortgage rebate program it may even be copied by other provinces. I think we have come to the end of serfdom on the farms in this province, Mr. Speaker. I anticipate rather speedy passage of this particular piece of legislation. Mr. Speaker, as the opposition have already indicated that this type of legislation is long overdue and that they couldn't understand why it wasn't introduced last spring. So, with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. RYBCHUK: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to this Assembly, a Cub Pack from St. Anne School here in Regina. They are accompanied by their leaders, Roy Clark, Tony Merchant, and Gerry Jensen. I would like you to give them a warm welcome to this Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

SECOND READING

Bill No. 45 (continued)

The Assembly resumed debate on second reading of Bill No. 45.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Speaker, I too would add my words of welcome to the group that is here tonight. I thought it was particularly fitting that a Boy Scout by the name of Tony Merchant was sitting in the back while the Minister of Agriculture was introducing what he called "the most famous piece of legislation that ever hit this Assembly." I wasn't surprised at all, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Agriculture tossed in about "the pie in the sky" and the advantage there is going to be about farming in that "happy hunting ground," because this legislation that is before us tonight isn't exactly what the farmers are looking for and what was being promised.

There are quite a number of statements that the minister made that are going to require careful study. "The days of letting any one down are over" or "you won't get a single complaint" — he must have written that before today, Mr. Speaker. The farmers of Saskatchewan expected more in the legislation that what is before us tonight. The farmers will be greatly concerned, Mr. Minister, about the sweeping powers that you have taken upon yourself as Minister of Agriculture. It will not meet the needs of very many farmers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture bragged that this is the most far reaching, imaginative and innovative program ever introduced in the province. I have no doubt it taxed the capacity and the imagination of the minister and his entire government to introduce this wonderful piece of legislation. There is no doubt it grants the most far-reaching powers to the minister that I have ever seen, but it falls far short of what the farmers of Saskatchewan expected from this government.

The first basic feature of this legislation is that the federal farm credit corporation's

legislation and activities will be the overriding governing factor controlling even the possibility of access to the provincial program. Maybe I should repeat that, Mr. Speaker. The FCC legislation and its activities will be the overriding governing principle that controls the possibility of access to this legislation.

Now, everyone knows that the farm credit corporation has done a lot of good in Saskatchewan, and there are a lot of loans around. It runs a good program, but no one should think for one moment that it fills all the farm needs. For one thing, farm credit corporation funds are turned on and off at the whim of the federal government like a tap. They have so much money available in one give year and the next year it's all used up; the farmers are out of luck. There happens to be some money on hand now because we are on a downstream in the basic interest cycle; FCC rates are higher than commercial rates and thus are not being used, and that is not wrong, Mr. Minister.

It may be of interest that in 1981-82 there were 26,138 loan requests received by FCC; that was in 1981-82. You talk about a couple of thousand or fifteen hundred. There were 26,000 loan requests received by the FCC in '81-82. How many were approved? How many were approved. Less than 5,000 — 18 per cent of the total. There were 1,166 loans in Saskatchewan. Thirty-one per cent of the applicants were turned away because of insufficient payment ability. In '80-81, 35 per cent of the credit that farmers were able to get came from FCC compared to 72 per cent in 1975. The basic thrust of this provincial program should be to fill in the needs not met by FCC. This program fails to do that. If he doesn't make the grade with FCC for whatever reason, the young farmer's out of luck.

One of the major purposes of the land bank program was to help farmers who couldn't qualify for an FCC loan. Once they were on their feet they had a chance of continuing to lease or buy their land. And the minister cited as an example that only 150 farmers, 152 farmers, decided to buy their land. Doesn't that tell you something? What does it tell you? The plan didn't work? Or that it was better to rent land if 2,700 guys renting land were qualified buy buying and only 152 took them up on it, and that was with special consideration for their home quarters?

At the level of land prices today and at the level of farm costs, there is no way that many farmers can manage an 8 per cent rate of interest over a long term — no way. People who want to farm who are short of capital will now be forced to buy the land at the expense of a reduced standard of living for them and their families and at the further expense of not having capital available to improve their farms and to buy necessary equipment.

The Conservative Party is condemning many farmers to a lifetime of debt and interest payments and the balance of the 3,000 in the land bank to being sharecroppers. No more guaranteed rental rates, Mr. Speaker. I was amazed to hear the Minister of Agriculture say he expected loans to average \$100,000 under this program. That's about the average FCC loan in recent years. What will \$100,000 buy today?

AN HON. MEMBER: — Give me \$100,000 and I'll show you.

MR. ENGEL: — If we could buy a trap for him, Mr. Speaker, I could get on with my speech. In most places it won't even buy a quarter section of land, and this program will likely boost land prices. Is that how the minister wants young farmers to start? And another member over here, Mr. Speaker, said it depends where you buy. You can ship civil servants off to Siberia but I don't think you can ship farmers off. They want to farm

in a particular area where they grew up and in my area it happens to be \$125,000 a quarter for land. Is that how the minister wants young farmers to get started? That's not a viable farm unit. This demonstrates that all this will do is help some farmers to add to their land which is basically what the FCC program has done for many years. Even \$350,000 will be of limited help and certainly won't get young farmers on the land in today's conditions.

I was shocked, Mr. Speaker, when I saw the sweeping powers granted the minister in this legislation. Everything is left to regulation and the minister's discretion. We might as well have had a single-clause bill that said, "The Minister of Agriculture is empowered to pay interest rates to farmers on whatever terms and conditions he decides and may be included in the regulation." It doesn't need an amendment, it's in there right now.

I wonder if members realize, Mr. Speaker, that nowhere in this bill do we see the figure 8 per cent — nowhere. I've looked through the entire bill; there's not one place where it says 8 per cent, 12 per cent, or even \$350,000. Those words don't exist in this bill. You told us during the election campaign that they'd be 12 per cent for the balance of the loan. Now all of a sudden it's 12 per cent for 5 years. That still isn't in the bill. Maybe after the bill is introduced it will be 16 per cent. How do we know? It's not in the bill.

The minister and the government could change the interest figure to 10 per cent, 14 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent. They could reduce the level of \$200,000 to \$100,000 without even referring the matter to this legislative Chamber, Mr. Speaker. The minister is empowered to demand whatever information he wants from a farmer — information on his personal life, what political party he belongs to, or whatever. . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . No we don't. That's why you're so anxious to do away with the land bank legislation.

I must also draw attention to the fact that this program applies only to FCC from here on. There's no help for the farmer who has been struggling with his debt payments for some years, or who may finance through the credit union or some other lending institution. There's no help for the farmer who bought land since April 26 in anticipation of this program, that is unless he finds some way of putting through a fancy deal that gets around the problem.

The minister, in this bill, Mr. Speaker, has absolute powers. There is no way of appealing the minister's decision. Farmers expected more of this legislation than what has been presented. This bill requires careful consideration by this legislature.

I have other observations I will want to make after I have had an opportunity to review the minister's remarks carefully. Thus, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (continued)

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

ENERGY AND MINES

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 23

Item 1 (continued)

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Just before the dinner adjournment the Leader of the Opposition requested numbers on the crude oil export flow-back. And the total, as I think we already gave you, is \$213,663,000. That is broken down: November 1, 1980 to March 31, 1981, \$109,058,000; April 1, 1982 to March 31, 1983, and this is a bit of an estimate at this stage, \$104,605,000. Now, the two numbers should total that of \$213,663,000.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I first ask what employees are covered by this subvote under the heading “Personal Services,” and I would like the names of those employees covered by that subvote, and their titles where they make an income on an annual basis of more than \$35,000 a year, \$35,000 or more, however you . . .

HON. MR. THATCHER: — I have this list here. You know, it’s amazing how dumb questions become, according to which side of the floor you’re on. I would prefer simply to send you the list across. Now, if I’m not mistaken, when we were in opposition we made it a policy to ask the salary of the deputy minister and I think other officials, subsequently your government generally refused to provide that information. I’m going by memory. None the less, even though I don’t like it, I’m going to send it all across to you, because . . . Yes, I’m going to send it to you. I don’t like it; I think it’s penny ante. I guess it’s valid to question what the deputy ministers are making, but when you get down the line beyond that, I think I’m echoing comments that I have probably heard during my tenure in this Assembly. I think it’s small peanuts really. None the less, I’m going to send it to you. I’ll answer any questions on it that you wish. I have one executive assistant on this sheet and a figure; he has since resigned.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister. I should point out to the hon. minister that I didn’t ask for any salaries. I only asked for the names and titles of people who get more than \$35,000 a year. I didn’t ask for the salaries of the people. What I said is on the record, fortunately, and what I said was that I wanted the names and titles of people who were making \$35,000 a year or more, and not the salary of the people. In any case, Mr. Chairman . . . I’m trying hard to out shout the member for Moosomin who speaks best on his seat and not on his feet . . . all of these salaries will be in *Public Accounts*; they’re all published. The suggestion that there is any secrecy involved is, of course, without foundation.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Why could we never get the salary of David Dombowsky?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — The member to my left is confusing people who are in the public service, and whose salaries appear in the *Public Accounts*, with people who work for crown corporations. And there have always been two rules; when the Hon. Mr. Thatcher was premier and when I was premier, the same rules applied and these were not revealed, for good or ill. That was the rule.

AN HON. MEMBER: — But you asked for them. You asked for what we’re paying vice-president . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, yes, I see that now.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Trouble, trouble, trouble, Mr. Chairman, and may I suggest to you that you suggest to the hon. members that when they want to speak that they just

stand up. And then the light will go on and then I will have an opportunity to reply. When they all make comments from their seats, then I am tempted to reply but it won't follow on the record. Since the comment of the member for Moosomin or other witticisms from the member for Souris-Cannington will not have been in the record, I won't have an opportunity.

May I now ask, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, whether or not there are any executive assistants, other than the one whose name appears on the record?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — None which are under subvote 1.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I now refer to personal services and I note that you have one less employee, 43.8 and 42.8, and notwithstanding the fact that you have one less employee, there is a substantial increase in the amount of salaries paid to the extent of something more than a \$350,000 increase, representing about 26.5 per cent. May I conclude from that that the people who are being employed are receiving on the average more than 26.5 per cent more than they did a year ago?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — No, that would be an incorrect assumption. For instance, you may add a 9 per cent economic adjustment, which comes out to 93,320. You may add retroactive pay to all staff, 35,030, and you can add retroactive pay to, I guess, reclassification for draftpersons and that's 163,290. I think those numbers should fill in the holes.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — May I ask the minister to repeat the last figure of 162,290?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Retroactive pay to reclassified within the department.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Reclassified draftpersons, draftsmen, draftpersons, ah yes, right, people who . . .

HON. MR. THATCHER: — If I may respectfully point out to the Leader of the Opposition that reclassification was effective in 1979 and had to be paid out this year.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — With respect to the 9 per cent economic adjustment, what is the effective date of that economic adjustment?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — That was to provide for salary adjustments effective October 1, 1981.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — I understand then that there is a 9 per cent figure for salary adjustments for October 1, 1981, then retroactive pay of \$35,000, and then the draftsperson's adjustment of \$163,000. I ask then whether there is anything in the budget for salary increases likely to be effective October 1, 1982.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Nothing is in the budget at this point of time, primarily because we don't know exactly when it will be paid.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I understand what you said and that has been the practice for some time, not to put that in as a specific figure. Then I ask you, is the practice that has been followed with respect to putting in a figure for

salary adjustments which can be anticipated, is the same practice being followed in this budget as the previous budget?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — I'm advised that it's fairly close for the '82-83 budget. The Leader of the Opposition knows that basically many of these numbers are run through finance. Finance puts the guidelines onto it. We can have a financial discussion here, if you wish, but we have basically taken the guidelines and the directives of the Department of Finance. I'm sure there's going to be a department up shortly that questions like that can be addressed to probably more effectively and less time-consumingly than right here. However, if you wish to pursue it, we'll do our best.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I think I understood the minister to say that the increase effective October 1, 1981 was covered completely. The increase (if there is to be one) effective October 1, 1982 is not specifically provided for. At least, there may be overestimates in other places in the budget, but it's not specifically provided for. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister.

I will now proceed to Other Expenses which have increased from \$363,000 to \$644,000. Could the minister give us an indication of what is included in that substantial increase?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Well, to the Leader of the Opposition, I will be brief, but in this item \$52,760 is an increase in printage. But the major one was a contract made by my predecessor with an advertising agency by the name of Struthers. The entire increase is \$187,320. The Struthers contract is worth \$105,000. The Struthers contract has given me some trouble because, you know, really I don't know what my predecessor was looking for. I've seen the material. I don't know what he was trying to accomplish. It was supposedly an economic development film. You may have seen some of the ads in *Maclean's* about Saskatchewan being a great place to invest — these sorts of things.

With all due respect to my predecessor, for as able a gentleman as he was in many respects, what his logic was behind this contract totally escapes me. I don't know what he was trying to accomplish. I suggest if you saw the material, you would probably ask the same question. That is the primary one. Then there's a contract: Caldwell 60,000; hydrocarbon research 10,000; miscellaneous 13,600. So your total out of the contract is 187,320 and then your printing is 52,760 and I think that should account for all the numbers.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I indicated before the supper hour that I would ask in respect of all subvotes, and I may as well do it on this one, the names of employees who have been engaged since May 1, 1982, whose salary is \$35,000 or over and here I'm not asking for their salaries, just the names and titles of the people in all the subvotes who fall into that category.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Since May 1, special advisor specifically to heavy oil, Jack McPhee; an assistant deputy minister, Bob Reid; an information services officer (and she is on a probationary temporary thing), one Gail Smith; and my executive assistant who is no longer under subvote 1, Chuck Guillaume. I believe you have all those names in front of you.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, one other general question. Now this has to do with the figures at the bottom. The permanent positions of 226 and non-permanent of 31 make a total of 257. My question to the minister is: of those 257

positions, approximately how many are filled now, or as of December 1 or some convenient date and how many are vacant.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — I would be pleased to send you the vacancy list. If you want me to read it — I'd just as soon send it to you.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I think I understand this. "Draftsperson 3" doesn't mean three draftspersons but a draftsperson category 3, and two geologists means two persons? Right. I think I understand that and therefore have no further questions on item 1.

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2 agreed to.

Item 3

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, a brief question again dealing with the increase in Personal Services — the same number of employees but an increase of about 22 per cent. Could the minister indicate why the increase of 22 per cent?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — If I may comment an aside to the Leader of the Opposition, he seems rather suspicious. Basically, it's a 9 per cent economic adjustment of \$52,210 and also retroactive pay of \$25,910. I think that should account for your number.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Not quite, but fair enough.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Okay, we have another one here which I neglected to mention. There were salary adjustments to certain employees over and above those who got a 9 per cent economic adjustment. The amount there is \$32,870; it was primarily reclassifications, I am advised.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, then there are reclassifications, a 9 per cent economic adjustment and retroactive pay? I'm not sure I fully understand the difference between retroactive pay and the 9 per cent adjustment.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — The retro pay is October 1, '81 to the start of the fiscal year. The 9 per cent is for this fiscal year.

Item 3 agreed to.

Item 4

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, a very brief question here. Is it proposed to carry on the geological mapping program in the hard rock areas at about the same level or a higher level or a lower level than has been customary?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Yes, it is true. There will be a slightly reduced level of activity. That should not be interpreted as though we intend to downgrade the department. We acknowledge that it is a fine department and that it is nationally recognized; the director of that department is a nationally recognized professional. It is one of those things that

there is a slowdown, I guess you may say it's a natural progression of the department. They are mapping smaller areas. But even though that is true for now, I assure the Leader of the Opposition that it is not the intention of this government to downgrade that department because of its obvious importance in the future.

Item 4 agreed to.

Items 5 and 6 agreed to.

Item 7

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, this is the only subvote which has been cut, and it has been cut very substantially — the staff cut from 21 to 13, and the spending cut very, very substantially. Could the minister explain why he is putting so much less emphasis on energy conservation than was previously the case?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — The Leader of the Opposition can make a very valid argument that we should not be cutting here. I guess I would have to justify our action by saying it is a judgment call. It is a program that has had merit in the past and may have some merit in the future. But in fairness, it has been around for some time. Perhaps one could argue that it has done a good portion of the job it was intended to do. And I'm sure that we could debate, and both of us make fairly valid points. You could certainly make a valid point that conservation should have a priority. Unfortunately, this is one of the hard, tough decisions that one has to make when times are difficult and there must be some cutting.

Rightly or wrongly, we made the decision that this was a department that was expendable. It was a difficult decision. It had a director that I have a lot of respect for, know personally, as a matter of fact, grew up with. So it was a doubly difficult one for me to make. None the less, it's just one of those hard, difficult decisions that you make when times are tough, and when there is only so much money to go around. This was our choice, and I concede that the Leader of the Opposition could make a very valid case for its retention. Probably I'd agree with you in a lot of respects. Simply, it was a judgment call. In our view, it was more expendable than some other areas.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, the minister is being particularly conciliatory and helpful in this regard, and he is quite right that it is something that we could have a difference of opinion on, and in fact we do have a difference of opinion. I think it's bad judgment on the part of the government to cut back on energy conservation to the extent that they have.

I think that the office has done a good job, and that people in this province were just getting the hang of energy conservation. All of us in this province have come to spend energy very freely because in relative terms gas, natural gas has been cheap, and power has been cheap, and they're no longer as cheap as they were. They're not going to be cheap in the future and we all have to learn energy conservation. We're not going to learn it unless it is constantly dinned into our head. Now it's partly dinned into our head by the gas bills and the electrical bills, the heating bills that we get. But it also needs to be dinned into our head by other, more constructive programs, and I regret the government's decision to cut back on the office of energy conservation.

More specifically, I wonder if the minister would tell us what type of activities which were previously carried on will no longer be carried on.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Some portions are still functioning. For example, our department will continue to do conservation policy. I should point out to the Leader of the Opposition that a great deal of what the conservation department was doing in energy and mines was a duplication of work already being done at SPC. Now, basically what we have done is streamline to the point that a couple of important areas were merely transferred to SPC. SPC was almost paralleling their work.

For example, program development was one of the four major program areas and we transferred that to SPC. Information services was another one, and we have transferred that one to SPC. The buses, the audit buses — that portion is still up in the air. I think discussions are still going on between finance, SPC and ourselves. That is the only major point in the four areas that is still to be determined.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, do I understand that the functions transferred to SPC will now be at the expense of SPC, and they will be paid for presumably by us as power users and gas users as opposed to taxpayers.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Yes, that is true. But as I concede that point to the Leader of Opposition, I would point out that the incremental increases are small, because they were already doing a great deal of that work.

Item 7 agreed to.

Vote 23 agreed to.

SASKATCHEWAN HERITAGE FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

RESOURCES DIVISION

ENERGY AND MINES

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 1

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Minister, can you indicate why this figure is so much higher? It's up from about 100,000 to 540,000 — 95 to 540.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — The answer is: we are now paying the provincial prime. In former years we only paid 4 per cent. The change was something that was initiated under your government, and we have simply not changed it.

Item 2 agreed to.

Vote 1 agreed to.

SASKATCHEWAN HERITAGE FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

ENERGY AND MINES

Ordinary expenditure — Vote 47**Item 1**

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, those are what tend to be known as the royalty rebates payable to companies that drill.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Say 80 cent per barrel instead of rebate. This is an incentive program that we are discussing with industry right now, and even though we haven't changed it as of yet, the industry is telling us that the program is ineffective and should be eliminated. Now it's one that's not that difficult or it's one that has some logistical problems to eliminate, but it's one that we are taking a very serious look at and probably will have some announcement in the future. But the private sector whom it's supposedly going to help, are saying that they really think it's not all that great. That's why the reduced figure.

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2 agreed to.

Item 3

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, would the minister care to give a just very short statement on what projects are going ahead under the Canada-Saskatchewan Heavy Oil Agreement.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — The main one on that, 3 million, pardon me, the 800,000, yes, it's been cut from 3 million to 800,000. A \$2.5 million estimate in your government's budget represented a direct subsidy to Saskoil in this area, and they work for some very, as least what we felt were questionably beneficial research projects. We are now redeveloping the program supposedly to solve its purpose and we think \$800,000 is sufficient for legitimate programs under this. So the main difference is that \$2.5 million will not be going to Saskoil on this.

Item 3 agreed to.

Items 4 and 5 agreed to.

Item 6

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, would the minister like to make a very brief comment on that? Is that a new program?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — This is an area of real priority for us. We have suggested to the federal government that there be some changes in the structure, and we are having correspondence on that matter. As a matter of fact, I have had some discussions with my federal counterpart on it. It is an area that we regard as a real priority, and we are negotiating it with the federal government. Even though it is deceiving — it would appear that we are not spending that much — it's one that I think you can look for the figure to increase as years go on. It's a very heavy priority with us. We're trying to do an exchange of ideas with the federal government as it pertains to heavy oil. It's a number that will increase in the coming years.

Item 6 agreed to.

Item 7

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, again may I ask the minister to give a brief statement on when it is thought that area will be drilled out and by whom it is thought the drilling will be done.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — As far as the reduction in numbers is concerned, we think it is a more accurate re-estimate of the costs of the program. It is primarily for seismic, not for drilling. There may be some drilling, but I'm informed that the bulk of the funds have been committed for seismic exploration.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, so that in the year up to March anyway, in the grasslands park area, the seismic work will go on, but you're not expecting any drilling?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — That's true.

Item 7 agreed to.

Items 8 and 9 agreed to.

Vote 47 agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED FUND LOANS, ADVANCES AND INVESTMENTS

SASKATCHEWAN MINING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Vote 66

Item 1

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Chairman, I have a comment to make on that. I would like to assure this Assembly this will be the last time that you will have to vote on statutory advances, either to SMDC or Saskoil such as you just approved. I will read it into the record that both these two crown corporations, under new, visionary management, will not require advances again, unless there should be some unspecified future project that we can't imagine at this point in time. I ask all members to take note of these two votes. Take a good look at them because you won't see them again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I don't want to argue with the minister, but we're going to see a number more of these.

AN HON. MEMBER: — They'll stand on their own, Al.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Well, if they stand on their own, it means they are going to borrow in their own name. Because If I understand this vote, it is not an advance in the ordinary sense of the word, but it's a borrowing by the government. That's not any money from the heritage fund, unless I have read this wrong. Is the minister telling us

that there will be no more funds, either loan or equity money, flowing from the consolidated fund or the heritage fund to SMDC?

HON. MR. THATCHER: — I am telling you that the two crown corporations, for that matter the three crown corporations (that also includes Sask Minerals), that are under me will stand on their own. They will pay their bills on their own existing cash flow. There will be no change in existing financial policy; they will show a profit.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I have no doubt that's true of Sask Minerals. It's been true for 30 years and it shouldn't stop now just because the member for Thunder Creek has taken over. With respect to Sask Mining Development Corporation and this vote which is before us, is the minister telling us that this 97 million will complete all of the capital needed to complete the Key Lake project.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — Basically, yes. Included in that is a revolving line of credit which we approved for SMDC for use in the Key Lake Mining Corporation. It was set up to avoid a situation where SMDC had to maintain a bank balance. In other words, it was simpler to set up this revolving line of credit. I believe it's \$10 million. It is set up so that when equity funding is required, it's simply plugged in automatically by the bank. It would be covered by this. That will complete the Key Lake mining project. At no time would that exceed \$10 million. We approved that by order in council some two or three months ago. I might add, I project that SMDC should make \$6 million plus this year.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, with respect then to the capital financing of SMDC, your first statement saying that there would be no further advances could have meant one of two things: one, that SMDC, if they needed more capital, were going out on the market themselves; or two, that this was by and large the end of the line, and you felt that the cash throw-off would handle all their cash needs in the next short and perhaps long period of time. I understand that the latter interpretation is the correct one.

HON. MR. THATCHER: — No, I think it is fair to say that in the future SMDC will meet its expenses with income. And I think it's fair to say that any capital requirements, that of course excludes the possibility of going into a brand new uranium mine, but other than that, I say that SMDC will generate the funds internally.

For instance, we must make a major decision in March as to whether or not we will proceed on Cluff Lake 2. That's a major decision. That'll require \$20 million. That will be generated internally if we go ahead with it, if we do it. If we have a contract with the French, a signed, sealed, delivered contract, we will probably go ahead. If we don't, we will — hard to say. We will probably walk away from it. If we don't have the required contract. That money's \$20 million, and we'll generate it internally without doing anything different than what your government did as far as financing is concerned.

CONSOLIDATED FUND LOANS, ADVANCES AND INVESTMENTS

SASKOIL

Vote 54

Item 1

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, just one question on this. I

refer to the earlier comment by the minister that Saskoil would be able to finance on its cash flow. Do we then assume that an upgrader and Saskoil's investing in an upgrader is really not part of the plans of this corporation now?

HON. MR. THATCHER: —No, not at all. First off, we don't know for sure that Saskoil is even going to be involved in an upgrader. They are involved in the Plains consortium, what is left of the Plains consortium, and they do have a project. If in fact the project being discussed should go ahead, it will be in an entirely different financial structure than what was proposed at the Archydal site or the Cloan site. What the financing arrangements would be, I don't know. In the event that Saskoil is involved in it (and that is by no means clear at this point in time) then perhaps Saskoil may be back, if we go the conventional method of financing. Again, it is possible that Saskoil may very well be able to generate those funds internally.

SASKATCHEWAN HERITAGE FUND LOANS, ADVANCES AND INVESTMENTS

ENERGY SECURITY DIVISION

SASKOIL

Vote 61

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 61 agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 46 — An Act to repeal The Land Bank Act and to make Certain Temporary Provisions for Lessees

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce The Land Bank Repeal and Temporary Provisions Act in this House for second reading. In doing so, I might say that this is a simple piece of legislation, but an important piece of legislation. It is both philosophically and economically important. It is important to recognize that this act is being brought before the Legislative Assembly during the same session as another piece of legislation, The Farm Purchase Programs Act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — The land bank plan was set up by the previous administration in 1972. Its expressed aim, at that time, was to enable young farmers to eventually own their land. A decade later we see that this program, in its 10 long years of life, has enabled just 152 farmers to own, rather than be tenants on the land they work. Mr. Speaker, that's simply not good enough. The land bank has been a failure and an expensive one at that. This government, Mr. Speaker, is not very high on failure. In fact, we were elected by the voters to prevent failure. The voters are sick of failure. They have seen enough failure under the previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — So the land bank, one of the great failures of the previous administration, must go. In a manner of speaking, Mr. Speaker, this is a housekeeping bill. It repeals the land bank legislation and it then ensures the transfer of the continuing administration of the leases under the old program to the lands branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture.

No one who currently leases land bank land need worry that his or her lease will be terminated. I want to make that clear from the start. While there will be no more land bank leases offered, all previous contracts and leases will be honored.

When Saskatchewan voters elected this government to office on April 26, they put their trust in us and we're not about to betray that trust, Mr. Speaker. So, I can assure land bank tenants right now that they have nothing to fear from this legislation. This is not a government, like some, that tramples on individual rights; this is a government that respects the individual. We believe that the strength of this government is with the enhancement of individuals' rights. Part of an individual's rights is the freedom to own property. Alas, the land bank has done little to aid the individual in owning property. So it must go and in its place will be put a new program that will allow people to own their own land in a very significant way.

Because the voters of this province placed their faith in us last April 26, in quite a substantial way I might add, we have a real obligation to carry out the wishes of those voters by fulfilling our election commitments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — One of those commitments, Mr. Speaker, was to end the failures of the past administration. The voters wanted us to stop the dillying and dallying of the men who now sit on the other side of the House. Well, we have certainly done that. Oh, they still dither, and they still dally, and they always will. But we have stopped them from dithering and dallying with the public interest; they can only harm themselves now. They no longer fiddle with the public good, Mr. Speaker.

The land bank legislation was bad legislation. It was bad for the farmer. It was bad for the taxpayer. It was part of the litany of failures enacted by the previous administration. In an entire decade it only enabled 152 farmers to own their own land. By comparison we are told that within 27 months under the farm purchase program some 5,500 starting-out farmers will be put on the road to farm ownership. So we know where we all stand. One side of the House stands for success; the other side does not. And the voters of this great province have said no to failure.

I see them whimpering on the other side of the House, and well they might, Mr. Speaker. They whimper because they know the voters have found them out, and they're now like the king without any clothes — their failures stand naked before the,, and what a pitiful sight.

Let me give you a few more facts about the land bank. Actually, Mr. Speaker, there are very few facts to give you. We already know it created only 152 owner-farmers. What you may not know is that at the end of 1981 the land bank owned about 1.2 million acres of land. Mr. Speaker, governments should now own land; people should own land. Land bank assets, depending on current market value assessments, totalled between \$400 million and \$0.5 billion. Yet, in 1981 the land bank reports a net loss of \$1.06

million. That brought its deficit up to \$7.36 million after 10 years of operation, assets of between \$400 million and \$0.5 billion, and a deficit of \$7.36 million.

How do they do it, Mr. Speaker? What a picture of failure. What a demonstration of short-sightedness of the previous administration. What a waste of time, effort, and money. How many potential dreams could have been fulfilled over those 10 years with a better, more imaginative, and innovative program? I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to compare the results of the farm purchase program in a year or so with the sorry record of land bank. I think you will see a point has been proven. The point is, of course, that people in large numbers prefer to be owners rather than tenants.

The farm purchase program will enable them to be owners rather than tenants. I might add that the farm purchase program provisions will apply to anyone eligible under those provisions to buy land bank land that goes up for sale. Current land bank tenants will also be able to buy the land they now lease without any waiting period as is no enshrined in land bank legislation. They too may qualify under the farm purchase program for rebate. As members of this House know, under the restrictions imposed by the former administration, tenants could not become eligible to purchase their lease land until at least five years had passed since they originally started leasing. We don't think that's right. We think a farmer should be able to purchase the land he farms as soon as he feels financially able to do so. We do not think artificial terms should be placed on farmers. In fact, why place such restrictions on tenants except to discourage them from buying the land they farm? Why not encourage farmers to own the land they farm rather than force them to lease it for a certain period of time? If they want to lease, that's fine, but if they want to buy, why not help them in a very positive way? That's what we intend to do, Mr. Speaker.

I hope this step towards private ownership does not upset members opposite too much. We, on this side of the House, well know the socialist thrust when it comes to private property. That thrust is that private ownership is wrong. In fact, to a true socialist, it is not only wrong, it's a downright evil.

In every nation in which the socialists have managed to achieve the power they sought, unbridled power, they have worked to undermine private ownership of land. I have detected a hint of that in this province, Mr. Speaker, and so did the voters who rejected that philosophy in no uncertain terms last April 26.

You can look at Russia in the 1920s and 1930s and see what that legendary socialist, Josef Stalin, did to the Russian farmer. He collectivized the Russian farms and sent Nikita Khrushchev to massacre the farmer who owned that land. That's right, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Khrushchev, the so-called lovable bully, was the man who shot and starved Ukrainian farmers to death simply because they wanted to continue owning their own land and not be serfs to the state.

We all know what happened then, Mr. Speaker, but the socialists throughout the world have turned a blind eye to it. Rather than hand over the land at the point of a gun, they burned their crops and killed their livestock. The farmers were either shot or shipped to Siberia for the simple fact that they wanted to hold the land they legitimately owned.

The result of the Soviet socialist agricultural policies was that a massive famine in which millions died swept Russia during the 1930s. Now, or course, very true socialist in his own heart sees the light. He sees, but he won't admit the error of his ways.

In Russia today, some 3 per cent of the farmland is worked privately by Russian farmers. This 3 per cent supplies approximately 20 per cent of Russia's food. That's quite a compliment to private farming, Mr. Speaker, and quite a condemnation of state ownership of farmland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Blindly though, the socialists go on with their ill-conceived ideas. They are too afraid to admit they were wrong.

East Germany today (another so-called state of socialist utopia) is facing its worst shortage of food since starvation and near famine swept the nation after World War II. Imagine more than three decades of a benevolent socialist fuhrer. The fuhrers have so ruined that once agriculturally productive nation that bread and meat are severely rationed.

Look at Africa, Mr. Speaker. In 1945 and the early 1950s, most African nations were either self-sufficient in food or net exporters. Now, starvation sweeps that continent, Mr. Speaker. Now we have strange socialist agricultural programs such as those forced on the population of Tanzania, and we see pictures of innocent but starving children. The lesson is obvious. Let people own their own land and work it how they want, and they will provide wealth for themselves and food for a nation of people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Force them to be tenants and bring down agricultural policies from on high and farm production will drop. Governments, Mr. Speaker, should not own land. People should own land.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — In Saskatchewan the day when the government decided what the people should be given, rather than open the doors to the people themselves to have the opportunity to have what they wanted, is over. This legislation recognizes that. We are saying to our residents: if you want to own land rather than be tenants, then we are going to allow you to be owners rather than tenants. We are saying to them; if you want to be a tenant for one, two, three, four, or five years and you feel, through your own financial resources or through provisions of the farm purchase program, that you can work out a method of buying land bank land you currently lease, go right ahead. We'll help you do it.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we will encourage you to do so, for this, Mr. Speaker, is not a government that feels it must have an armlock on everything and everybody in this province. This is not a government that wants to meddle in someone's private life. This is not a government that wants to quash the legitimate dreams of the people of this province. It's quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that respects the people of this province and trusts them to work out their own way of life.

True, we are not academic theorists. True, we do not shut ourselves off from the people and sit in ivory towers and decide what new law to bring down on the people next. True, we don't seek the ever-increasing acquisition of wealth and power that so many other government of a left-wing orientation lust after.

Governments really have no wealth or money of their own, Mr. Speaker. The only money they have comes from the taxpayer. And that money, Mr. Speaker, should be gathered with care and spent with even more care.

In every sense of the word, this government believes it holds the taxpayers' money in trust. The taxpayers' money should be spent as carefully by the government as every government member would spend his or her own money. Actually governments should spend the taxpayers' money even more carefully since it is not in any real sense of the word the government's own money. No government has any right to spend or continue to waste taxpayers' money on programs or schemes which have shown themselves to have failed. And the land bank scheme has failed — just 152 owners in 10 long years. Our experts tell us we can handle 5,500 applicants for rebates under the farm purchase program in the first 27 months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Imagine, Mr. Speaker, young farmers out there waiting to own their own farms and the land bank created just 152 in a full decade. It's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. It's never been good enough. The people of Saskatchewan deserve a little better. We're going to give the people of Saskatchewan something better, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to embarrass the gentlemen on the opposite side of the House with any more figures on this program or comparative figures between this program and their land bank program. I am even more touched by the shame, the way they are holding their heads, hanging their heads I should say, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of this bill.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Speaker, it is about 11 years since I first entered this legislature, and this is the worst legislation and the toughest legislation I have ever heard in my life. It's bad legislation; it's vicious legislation; it's unnecessary, irresponsible and vindictive. It demonstrates, Mr. Speaker, that this government has gone mad with power, and that there are no bounds to its destructive rampage. The minister calls this legislation simple. I am glad he brought it forward in the dark of night, Mr. Speaker. He said that the land bank must go; this is just housekeeping legislation. He doesn't talk about the aspects that are included. He said, betraying a trust, that land bank tenants have nothing to fear, Mr. Speaker. If they have nothing to fear, why doesn't he write section 4 out of the bill? Why doesn't he put their rights into legislation?

AN HON. MEMBER: — Why don't you bring in an amendment if you don't like it?

MR. ENGEL: — We will do that. If the land bank is a failure, Mr. Speaker, why doesn't he do as I suggested in my budget speech? Let the land bank stand side by side with his new legislation and let the farmers decide which they would prefer. Let the farmers decide if they want land bank. I asked the Minister of Agriculture last summer how many land bank applicants there were waiting to get into the land bank program — this awful piece of legislation, this dastardly piece we were jiggling with, in his words — how come he didn't tell me that number?

Why the Devine government is so bound and determined to destroy the land bank will be a mystery to many people in Saskatchewan. Not only are they calling a halt to the program, it is obvious they are going to try to strangle existing lessees in order to force them to buy their land. The reason they are doing this can only be because they know their half-baked farm purchase program fall short of the expectations, and it won't

stand up in comparison to the benefits of the land bank program.

I ask again, Mr. Speaker, why can't the land bank live side by side with their wonderful, famous farm purchase program? They serve two completely different needs. The farm purchase program is designed to help farmers who qualify for the farm credit corporation loans with high interest rates. The land bank will help those who don't qualify for FCC financing or who may not want to use their financing for perfectly good reasons. They want to farm; give them a chance to farm. The land bank gave 2,700 people a chance to farm, not 150 people, like the minister is trying to deceive this House; 2,700, Mr. Speaker. The land bank provided a means for passing land from father to son. The retiring farmer got his money; the son got the land without taking on an exceptionally high burden that he couldn't handle or preferred not to handle. But all of that is going down the tubes, Mr. Speaker.

The really vicious aspect of this bill is the treatment accorded to existing lessees. The government has made a big play about honoring these existing leases, and the right to assign existing leases to family members. That's the only thing that is honored, Mr. Speaker. These two features are of limiting value if everything else is thrown wide open. In particular, rental charges are thrown wide open. The existing leases which are contracts have a rental clause with an escalation feature that enables farmers to make long-term plans for their farms, knowing what rent they will be charged for leased land.

The Devine government . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I certainly do. The Devine government, with this dastardly piece of legislation, is going to break those contracts. New rents will be made by regulation, depending on the purchases of plans and the money that they require. That's not fair. Saskatchewan farmers and, in particular, land bank tenants recognize that the Devine government is not being fair with them.

There are other rights contained in existing leases which are going to be cancelled. For example, the right to quick possession is no longer secure. Lessees' rights on chattels and improvements is no longer secure. The least that could be done is to write these rights into the legislation. As things stand, chattels and improvements made by the tenants could be sold, seized, given away or destroyed under the new regulations that this bill allows the Minister of Agriculture to make.

As a matter of fact, the regulations section even provides for the management and control of leased land. The farmer may have the lease, but it'll be possible that regulations could prevent him from working the land, and would allow someone else to work the land. I ask: is that fair or reasonable? Saskatchewan farmers will recognize that it isn't fair and that is unreasonable. If the government can break these contracts with farmers, they can break any other contract with farmers.

I must also draw attention, Mr. Speaker, to one other special group. And that is the number of people I've been talking about earlier that had obtained commitments from the land bank commission prior to the change of government but where the transactions had not yet been finalized. Many of these people had made arrangements arising out of those commitments. Now they are left high and dry. They are stranded. These people have been double-crossed by this government, and members opposite maybe laugh about it, and maybe they say somebody blew his head off. I never heard that.

But the people of Saskatchewan expect more of their government. People expect governments acting on their behalf to be fair. This legislation isn't fair, Mr. Speaker. The

bill establishes no guidelines for appeals. It simply provides for possible regulations governing appeals. Maybe the minister will pass on appeals on his own decisions. The Land Bank Act spelled out the policy governing appeals.

There are many other bad features of this bill that require consideration. As I said at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, it is unjust, it's unfair legislation, and I do hope the government will reconsider its position and withdraw this bill.

I have further comments on this bill after reviewing the minister's remarks and I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Ordinary Expenditures — Vote 16

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Would the minister introduce his officials?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Sitting on my right, Mr. Chairman, is the deputy minister, Mr. Jack Sutherland; behind him, associate deputy Merv Clark; Myron Herasymuik, who is sitting right behind the deputy minister; Al Schwartz, directly behind me; and Paul Fitzel, directly over here. Let's let the good times roll.

Item 1

MR. LUSNEY: — I have a couple of items here. There isn't too much a person can ask, I guess, when the minister hasn't done too much this year. It makes it difficult to deal with estimates when there wasn't too much work. But I do have a few questions for the minister. I see you have one extra position for 1982-83. Could the minister tell me what that position was, and does the minister have some figures as to the salaries of his top executives?

HON. MR. GARNER: — First of all, Mr. Chairman and the hon. member, the new executive position was implemented by the former government.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Pardon?

HON. MR. GARNER: — It was the executive assistant under the former minister of highways.

MR. LUSNEY: — Could the minister provide me with a list of salaries of the new position and of his deputy minister and assistant deputy ministers?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, the new position is now vacant, but we will supply you a list of the salaries of the staff.

MR. LUSNEY: — Just off . . .

HON. MR. GARNER: — Just a minute, pardon me. Could you be more specific as to which positions you would like the salaries for?

MR. LUSNEY: — I would ask for the salaries for the executive positions of the whole department, the top level executives. If the minister can provide me in written form with information of some of the other salaries; that would be fine. He doesn't have to have them here today, but if he agrees to send that over to me that would be fine.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Do you need the top level in subvote 1? We will send you the information; we would just like to clarify which positions you would like to have. Do you want them all right now, or all later on in written form?

MR. LUSNEY: — I could take them later on in written form if you don't have them. If you have the top level salaries here, you could provide them here; if you don't you could send them over in written form later on.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Just to clarify this, this is just for item 1?

MR. LUSNEY: — If you want we could discuss this on item 1 right now; we could . . . (inaudible) . . . later on.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Okay, we're on item 1 and it's executive administration, and we can provide you with those in written form later.

MR. LUSNEY: — Very well, Mr. Chairman, the minister agreed to provide with those figures later on. I have another question I would like to ask of the minister. This is not dealing with item by item; I'm just sort of moving around in highways on subvote 1.

Could the minister tell me today just how many of the projects which were on last spring's project array he has completed and how many he has carried over for 1983-84?

HON. MR. GARNER: — We haven't gone through the final array yet, but when we receive that information you will receive it.

MR. LUSNEY: — Is the minister going to table, sometime during the session, his project array for the '82-83 year or does he not have one that he can table for us?

HON. MR. GARNER: — For the '82-83 year? Okay, we can give you . . . Just a minute. Mr. Chairman, we don't have it all right now, but we can provide the hon. member with a complete project array for '82-83 at a later date.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I wonder if I heard the minister right. He is saying that in December he is not able to provide this House with a list of the projects which he has undertaken since last April 1 . . . (inaudible interjections) . . .

The question was: what is the project array for the fiscal year in which we are in? . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . That's right, the year we're in. And I'm now getting to the member for Souris-Cannington; he's got a grip on it, this is year 1982 — he's right.

The previous government, and every government that I have known in this province, were able to put forward a project array in March of what they intended to do in the next fiscal year. We now have a minister who cannot put forward in December the project array which he did last summer . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Yes, the project array — that's right. He simply hasn't been able to manage to do it. I wonder when the Hon. James, the minister, will be able to give us the project array that he built last summer. Was he able to do that?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, we did not think that we had the information right here at our disposal. One of the officials has found it. We are not trying to hide anything or cover anything up. I'll send this over to the hon. member . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . We are going to take this nice and cool . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Oh, you'd better give it to Mr. Lusney; he can understand it.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, may I point out to the minister that, so far as I can recall, this is the first budget which we will have dealt with in this legislature where the Minister of Highways did not stand up during the budget debate and give his project array. This is the perfect norm, and he knows this since he was the highway critic. Every year that he was the critic he got the project array . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right, and we indeed have a different attitude. The attitude is that there is no reason why this House should not know what the government is doing.

Mr. Chairman, when the member for Moosomin is through his outburst I will attempt to carry on.

May I ask a question of the minister? Did anything get done at the Moosomin scale site? This will be something that will be of interest to the member for Moosomin. Did something get done at the Moosomin scale site, or was that 0.6 of a kilometre a little much for the minister?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Two points, Mr. chairman, for the hon. member's information: nothing done at the Moosomin scale site; and secondly, I was not the highway critic, just to reassure the member opposite.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Chairman, it makes it a bit more difficult here when you have a project already delivered to you at the time of the estimate, rather than being able to look at it shortly before.

On this project array, Mr. Minister, could you indicate to us just how many of the expenditures you have made this year and how many you are carrying over into 1983-84 year?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, the carry-over is on the array that we gave the hon. member, and it's approximately \$10 million.

MR. LUSNEY: — I don't think we're in too big a hurry so I would like to look at their array first if the members don't mind. Could the minister indicate whether he anticipates having some layoffs within the Department of Highways? Is he making any cutbacks in staffing within the whole department, be it in Regina, or be it in Yorkton or any other area?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Are you requesting whether this takes into account normal winter layoffs or extras?

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Chairman, I was referring not to the usual layoffs that occur during the winter months; but layoffs of some long-term employees of the Department of Highways, anything from 5 to 10 or 15 years, who may be laid off this year for whatever reason.

HON. MR. GARNER: — There were some layoffs with government crews that were shut down earlier and some layoffs took place in the shops as well.

MR. LUSNEY: — Could the minister tell me where some of these layoffs that have occurred are: in what areas, what regions they're in?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, we have five in the Swift Current district. Would the hon. member like a breakdown of where they worked, or just total numbers per district?

MR. LUSNEY: — . . . (inaudible) . . .

HON. MR. GARNER: — In the Swift Current district, Mr. Chairman, and equipment operator 3, one of those; engineering technician classification 3, there were four of those.

We move to the Regina district. We had . . . (inaudible) . . . under the maintenance and shop: a transportation operator, one of those; a storeroom clerk 2, one of those; heavy duty mechanic, welder and machinist, one of those; another mechanic, one of those; a welder, one; tradesperson, two.

We move now to the Yorkton district: equipment operator, one; general clerk, two; tradesperson, five; equipment operator, two; drafting aide, one; engineering technician, classification 2, four of those.

We move over to Prince Albert: five equipment operators, classification 3: classification 2 for an equipment operator, four of those; two heavy duty mechanics; one mechanic; one tradesperson; one drafting aide; and five engineering technicians classified as a 3.

We move over to North Battleford now: one drafting aide, class 2; seven drafting aides; class 1; and six engineering technicians, classification 2.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Chairman, it appears that a lot of the technicians are getting laid off who haven't been laid off before. Could the minister indicate why he found it necessary that a lot of the tech people are being laid off this year, and he can't seem to find work for them?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Due to the decrease in the capital program.

MR. LUSNEY: — That is an answer; that is an evident reason why. The minister has allowed his budget to get to a point where they aren't going to be doing too much, apparently, for next year, so they don't require the tech people there.

We have a fair increase in this one, Mr. Chairman. I can assume by what the minister is saying, and the staff he is laying off, that we will likely see even less work on highways for next year. You have a decrease in your capital funding this year of some \$19 million or

so. The majority of this seems to be from DNS. Is the minister going to do any of the work in DNS and use capital now from the regular fund of highways for capital expenditures? In other words, there will be no more DNS funding provided from the heritage fund as has been in the past?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Okay, we'll deal with this one point at a time. The correct figures are 6.4 million cut from the northern program. It was not the majority of the cut that took place from northern Saskatchewan.

MR. LUSNEY: — Could the minister then indicate the cut of \$19 million, where that cut has gone, what areas he is going to cut with the \$19 million decrease in his budget, what projects that may be that he's cutting?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, to save taking a lot of time of the House, if the hon. member wouldn't mind, we'll send you over a detailed explanation of the projects that were cut.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Chairman, I see that there have been even more cuts than I had anticipated in. Not only did they cut \$19 million, but there's a \$22 million cut in major projects in the highways budget.

HON. MR. GARNER: — We cut \$19.2 million. We added, under major projects added, those in the bottom paragraph there. Those were major projects added.

MR. LUSNEY: — Where those major projects that were added completed in the year '82-83?

HON. MR. GARNER: — No, the majority of the work was completed. There is a percentage of carry-over on each one of those projects, but the majority of work is completed.

MR. LUSNEY: — You're saying that the majority of the work on the added projects — the \$2 million or close to \$3 million (\$2.9 million) — was completed. Could you give me a closer figure of just what percentage of that was carried over?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, if we could go to some other questions, we'll calculate that percentage and give it to you. But could we move to another question?

MR. LUSNEY: — On Highway 13, Mr. Chairman, I notice only one cut and that's from Govan west. Pardon me, Govenlock west. There are four other projects, Mr. Minister on Highway 13, or three others. There are Meyronne to Hazenmore and the access to Ponteix. The Manitoba Redvers is listed here as a new or an added major project. That was on the original project array of last March so I don't know how that qualifies for an added major project, but could the minister indicate the status of those other projects on Highway 13.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, just for the hon. member's information, from Manitoba border, the following ones I am going to list here, there was no funding in place for them. That is from Manitoba border to Redvers, from Ogema to the junction of Highway No. 34, junction of Highway 34 to Horizon, and from Ponteix access road. Now those four projects, there wasn't funding available for them. The other projects, something was done to them.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, on Highway 13, construction from Hazenmore west to access of Ponteix, were tenders called for that road?

HON. MR. GARNER: — From Limerick west, Mr. Botkin was awarded the contract on that, and there is still a percentage of carry-over.

MR. ENGEL: — The route from Limerick west was surfacing that Botkin had. I'm talking about new construction. Was Case Construction awarded a contract along Highway 13 for grading? And a contract some time in February?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Yes, and that section has been finished that Case did.

MR. ENGEL: — At what mileage, or from where to where did that go?

HON. MR. GARNER: — From east of Meyronne to Hazenmore, 25 kilometres.

MR. ENGEL: — When was that contract awarded?

HON. MR. GARNER: — The job is done. We don't have that date right here, but we can get that for you and provide you with that information.

MR. ENGEL: — Before you took office, can your ministers inform you of a tender that was let to Case Construction beyond that portion for \$1.9 million.

HON. MR. GARNER: — No.

MR. ENGEL: — No, you can't inform me about it or it wasn't let.

HON. MR. GARNER: — There was no contract on 13 there. The contract, for your information, was on 37. I think I know where you're coming from.

MR. ENGEL: — You're talking about 37 north of Shaunavon? What was the value of that contract.

HON. MR. GARNER: — 1.7 million.

MR. ENGEL: — What happened to that tender? Was that work done?

HON. MR. GARNER: — The tender was not awarded. All bids were returned, the reason being that I believed there were other highways that had a higher priority than that one.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Chairman, I just note that the minister in assuming office came out with a flamboyant statement that his priority and immediate priority was the four-laning of the No. 1 Highway and the Yellowhead. He said it was an immediate priority that he would be undertaking in the immediate future. I want to say that since the initial statements there has certainly been an indication here that we have a minister unable to make a presentation to his treasury in order to at least sustain a highway budget equivalent to what we had in the past.

We have \$19 million cut, a substantial cut in northern Saskatchewan, where unemployment is rising and increasing and where opportunities of creating jobs was available to this government in a very meaningful way. I would like to ask the minister

how he justifies the massive cuts in northern Saskatchewan, how he can justify the cut of \$19 million in highway construction at the very time that this government is seeking methods of creating jobs under the welfare department, in conjunction with the federal government, of pruning trees, shovelling snow, etc., and at a time when we could have this summer been building highways and giving employment to many young people throughout the province. How does the minister justify this massive cut?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Speaker, we'll deal with this very coolly. The previous government didn't tell the truth to the people of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . You don't have to understand it. In seven out of every 10 roads announced by the previous government for new work projects, funding was not available for those roads. The reason for the cutback quite simply put: the \$200 million deficit of the NDP. Because you were not running the people's business, you were not administering their affairs as a business, we had to make some adjustments. We are going to lay the facts before the people of Saskatchewan and we are not (and I repeat not) going to lead anyone down the garden path as the previous administration did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. KOSKIE: — I think, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that in Saskatchewan we have a large number of roads. The condition of the highways — when you assumed office, the road system was one of the best in western Canada, if not the best. I want to say that since you assumed the ministry of highways there has been a massive deterioration throughout this province. I want to say that even in so far as minor maintenance, cutting of the weeds, this minister cannot even keep the present highways in the system up to date. I want to say that I'd like the minister to be more explicit in his views in respect to his program which he announced shortly after assuming office, that he was embarking on the four-laning of the two major highways. Can the minister outline his tentative program and his idea of putting this into reality?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, to clarify one point: first of all, twinning of as many roads as possible in the province of Saskatchewan is a priority with any common-sense government in Canada. It still is one of our priorities. We were hoping to get funding from the federal government but the wealth is just as dry there as it was when we took over the Government of Saskatchewan.

Point number two: we talk about a lot of roads in Saskatchewan; the maintenance budget was not cut by this administration.

Point number three: we don't have a policy for cutting weeds on the Trans-Canada, just further for the member's information. To tell the truth to the people of Saskatchewan is something that seems to elude the members opposite. There was no funding for doing the surfacing of the section of the road west of Webb. We did go an extra two to three kilometres past where the serious bus accident took place after going out there and personally taking a look at it. As the new minister, I was concerned about it. We did extend the grading contract to go past that section of road that was not on the project array of the NDP. So how much did they really care about those people who died in that bus accident? Not caring at all, Mr. Speaker. We are going to keep moving ahead with better roads in the province of Saskatchewan. We're not going to stand up in this Assembly next spring for the '83-84 project array, stand here and read off and . . . I'd like to share with the members opposite this happy little document, that runs in the red, by the previous government.

Any projects announced by this government, construction will start in the year that they are announced. We're not going to use the format used by the previous administration. What was announced one year maybe started construction the next year. And they were still pounding their chests the third year and they still hadn't completed it. That's what I call misleading the people of Saskatchewan. That and those days are gone, Mr. Chairman.

Further, when they talk about cuts in the project array, some of the reasons why we had to move on those added projects . . . I give you for an example, the road from Redvers to the Manitoba border. It had completely failed, completely failed, and there was a safety hazard there. That's why we moved on it as soon as possible.

MR. ENGEL: — Just a little bit of this chest pounding here, Mr. Minister. I looked at the list you handed across to my colleague that's a highways critic. The project that's listed on 43 highway from Gravelbourg to junction number 19 on resurfacing — is that cut or was that done or did you just fail to print it in the list?

AN HON. MEMBER: — We just cut the weeds there.

MR. ENGEL: — No you didn't.

HON. MR. GARNER: — That is just an example of what the previous government had done. It was on the project array. There was no funding available for it. There was nothing done to it.

MR. ENGEL: — Is the maintenance crew doing their work or are you planning on calling tenders, because you can't say there's no work done? They've ripped up the shoulders on that section all summer and it's still . . . Left it for the winter without any oil on it.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Regular maintenance work was done over the summer on that road.

MR. ENGEL: — What is your regular maintenance program as far as summer work like that is concerned? If it's listed as a surfacing project, how can you say that it wasn't cut if it's not listed on the projects cut and it wasn't on either? You know, you dug up the sides to do some compaction and then left it with about one-half a track down the centre and it's still like that.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Well, that's regular maintenance work where it's ripped up, relaid, and a seal coat put on it.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, if you wouldn't have started it — you're talking about saying that your maintenance people have some bucks to do it. If you wouldn't have starved them on their maintenance money, they could have put the seal coat and packed it back down and made it look like it's a highway rather than just a narrow little black tract down the centre with gravel on both sides.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Once again, for the member's information; we did not, I repeat, not cut the maintenance budget.

MR. ENGEL: — You still fail to get through. Maybe I have a very thick skull from listening to the Minister of Agriculture tonight, but in your regular maintenance program that is carried out, what has changed or have the people gone on half-time or how come they

only cut half the weeds in the ditch? I could list about four highways in my constituency that have about two rounds of weeds and the rest are at least that high.

HON. MR. GARNER: — For the member's information we just do a top end cut, and the officials tell me that this has been going on. It's not a new policy of this government: it's been going on for the past two to three years.

MR. ENGEL: — You're trying to tell me that you are operating on the same policy that was in place in previous years. How come they had enough time to do the entire width before? This is the first time that any roads were left in my area where only half the ditch was cut — the first time since 1971.

HON. MR. GARNER: — The officials tell me that on that particular road this has been going on for at least the last three years. If there were other cuts made they were made by the farmers; they were not made by the Department of Highway crew.

MR. ENGEL: — What is your proposal as far as safety is concerned? You are concerned about safety and safety conscious. What is your proposal for the balance of the resurfacing project? Are you going to leave it like that for another year or two? Or what can the people in the area, particularly west of Gravelbourg between Gravelbourg and junction 19, expect?

HON. MR. GARNER: — The project array for 1983 will be announced in the spring.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Chairman, the minister a few moments ago was bragging about how they intend to do a lot of work, and there was no funding in place to do whatever they felt should have been down. As was mentioned by my colleague, the emphasis was seven months ago that four-laning was his priority. We have that little stretch of road that was on the project array on Highway No. 1 between Swift Current and Webb. It was slated for grading and surfacing. Instead of getting at least one section of that road completed, the minister decides to add three kilometres or so to that road and then doesn't do anything else on it, leaving a road that does not become a safer stretch of road but, as was mentioned, a more hazardous road than it was before.

Is the minister going to have that road tendered this winter for oiling early next spring or does he intend to go and build more roads that are going to be blocked on both ends with signs sitting there that the people can't use?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Just to bring it back into perspective, Mr. Chairman. There was not funding available for the surfacing of that section of road, the aggregate has been crushed — at a cost of approximately \$0.5 million. It was done, I believe, in September. Tenders will be let in January for the surfacing of that section of road, and any additional information will be provided in the '83-84 project array.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Chairman, I guess what we'll have to be doing is wait for the '83-84 project array to see just what the minister is going to do. He continues to say that there has been no funding available for it, yet there is about a \$19 million cut in Department of Highways. Would it not have been better for the minister to have tried to encourage his colleague, the Minister of Finance, to leave that extra money within his department so he could have got that portion of road surfaced?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Would you repeat that question for me please?

AN HON. MEMBER: — He can't remember.

MR. LUSNEY: — I said to the minister that he has said there was no funding available. Now, even if the funding wasn't available (and I don't know if it was or not — he would have a better handle on that one than I would). I was just suggesting that maybe it would have been better for the minister to have gone to the Minister of Finance and said, "Look, I need this money in Department of Highways, even if you say that you need it to cover off some of the other promises we made. Leave it in highways and I will be able to finish off at least that one section of road." That was, by the same member when he was in opposition, considered to be a very dangerous stretch of road. Would that not have been your priority, to finish this off, and make sure that funding was in place?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Just to qualify something, I don't want to keep repeating this, but I mean, there wasn't funding there available for it. We've announced in our fall tender schedule when that section is going to be paved. We're waiting for the grade to settle, as well, and there are many priorities, as I have stated to you. There is a section from Redvers to the Manitoba border, a section of road that completely failed. I mean, this was a section of the Trans-Canada, but this other section of road on 13 completely failed. We had another one — Highway 18 completely failed. Now, when you get a road that completely fails, you've got to put your priorities and bring them into perspective. That's what we did with that funding. We were trying to make those roads that were in existence right then and that were almost impassable, we were trying to get construction on them immediately, which we have done, and get as much completed before the fall.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I wonder if I might ask a couple of questions. I refer to Highway No. 6 immediately to the south of Regina and to a proposal there to widen the shoulder. It's a fairly high traffic count on No. 6 immediately south of Regina, and I'm wondering whether you can tell me of the progress of that project. Was anything done, is anything proposed to be done, or was it completed during this year with respect to shoulder widening some 17 kilometres south of Regina?

AN HON. MEMBER: — It's almost complete: I drive it every day . . . (inaudible) . . .

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Well if it is, it will be about the fourth time that little stretch has been done in the last 25 years; it is a rough piece of road. There's something wrong with the soil; it only lasts seven or eight years.

HON. MR. GARNER: — On that section of road, 66 per cent is completed. One side is completely done and a percentage of the other side.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, when the minister says it is completely done, does he mean that the grading is done and the surfacing, or just the grading?

HON. MR. GARNER: — The grading is done on one side and part of the surfacing on the other side.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, is it anticipated that that project will be completed by next July or August?

HON. MR. GARNER: — It depends on the weather, but July at the latest. The contractor was later getting to that job, but by July of next year, weather permitting, it should be completed.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I refer now to Highway No. 16, the Yellowhead, and particularly to some of the heavily-travelled portions which aren't so well built, basically the west end of it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Well, it certainly wasn't because the seat wasn't properly represented, because with respect to Cut Knife-Lloydminster, it's been a long, long time since that one has been so ill represented as it is now.

I refer to the project west of Battleford to Delmas which was a shoulder-widening project of some 17 kilometres, and a further one from Paynton to Maidstone of 25 kilometres. Can the minister give us any indication of the status of those projects?

AN HON. MEMBER: — The percentage completed, is that what you're looking for?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Yes, that would be helpful.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Al, I wonder, would you ask him about my riding after?

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Well, we already dealt with that, we've got the scale site. The scale site and he said no . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The scale site, 0.6 kilometres, and he couldn't manage it, he couldn't swing it, Larry. No funds.

HON. MR. GARNER: — One piece of information: west of Battleford to Delmas has been completed. On that second part, from Paynton to Maidstone, that's another one of those roads that was scheduled and I have the project array from the previous administration in my office that was scheduled for zero per cent completion, meaning that there were not adequate funds to do that project this year.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, I refer now from the west of Battleford to Delmas, both the grading and the surfacing, is it all completed. I.e. the surfacing as well?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Just a little bit of paving left to do on the widening; the balance of it is completed, but a very small percentage.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister. I am asking a question that I know even less about than I ordinarily do and this refers to Highway No. 48. I gather that some people are interested in that one and there was supposed to be a grading project just east of junction 47 to east of Candiatic. Can you tell me what the state of that project is?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Chairman, for the Leader of the Opposition's information, that's another one of those that was zero per cent for completion; no funding in place for it.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:03 p.m.