

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**March 21, 1983**

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**  
**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**Communication**

**ASSISTANT CLERK:** — Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the standing committee on communication, presents the third report of the said committee, which is as follows:

That the committee has considered the matter of the division of radio time in the current session. The committee recommends to the Assembly that radio time be divided between government and opposition members on the basis of the ratio of their representation in the House.

**MR. YOUNG:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Rosthern:

That the third report of the standing committee on communications be now concurred in.

**MR. KOSKIE:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a particular comment with respect to the motion and the basis of the consideration made by the communication committee.

I just want to point out to the House that there is a considerable imbalance in the number of government members in comparison to the number in the opposition. I want to say that we raised an amendment to recognize the imbalance and that was not accepted. I just want to say that the recommendation is that it goes on a formula on the number of members on the government side and the number of members on the opposition side. I want to point out, however, that on the previous occasion, with respect to the allocation of radio time, that in the 17th legislature, back in 1971, there was a fair imbalance with respect to the number of government members and the number of opposition members: 45, in fact, government members; 15 for the opposition. In the second session, the ratio was according to the number of members: that is allocation on a 3:1 basis.

I just want to point out to the legislature that in the third session on the 17th legislature there was a reconsideration of the allocation of time because of the imbalance between the opposition and the government at that time. The ratio established during the 17th legislature, third session, was pretty well on a 2:1 basis rather than the old formula of 3:1. That was carried through in the fourth session of the legislature — the 2:1 basis — giving the opposition further radio time. Similarly, in the fifth session of the 17th legislature, the ratio of allocation of time was 2:1. Using strictly the formula that had been the practice, it would have been 3:1.

I feel that, in this instance, it would have been wise for the government, with this very substantial majority, to have given the consideration and the practice which was used in the past, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. KATZMAN:** — Mr. Speaker, re the committee report, which was agreed to, to follow the normal practices of this House over the last year . . . I wish to repeat that comment: the normal practices of this House, It is interesting to note that ever since I've been a member in this House the interesting practice was the total amount of time divided by the total amount of members. Since I've been a member of this House, that was the formula. It is interesting to know that the NDP now are suggesting the formula, that was great while they were government and we were in opposition, was good, but now that they're in opposition it is no good.

**MR. LINGENFELTER:** — Mr. Speaker, just in referring to the long-standing tradition that the member for Rosthern talks about, we would like to reiterate that in the 17th legislature, 1973, '74, as well as '72, the arrangement that he talks about, where it was split on a 3:1 ratio, was not in effect. In fact, the ratio at that time was 1:2. This was an attempt to balance what was, at that time, an imbalance in the number of members in the House, which I think is in evidence again today. That point we attempted to get across at that meeting.

We would just like to have on the record that the agreement that they talked about — the long-standing agreement — that there was no such thing because it varied from time to time in the past. I think that this is just another example of large government using its majority to attempt to stifle the debate and the opposition in this House by trying to cancel radio time by the opposition.

**HON. MR. LANE:** — Mr. Speaker, responding to the hon. member, I think the hon. members opposite should keep in mind that any change from the previous policy dealt with the situation when there were two opposition parties . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, yes, it did, because I can remember hon. members opposite insisting on maintaining the radio time based on the number of members. I suggest that the hon. member is mistaken when he says that in fact we are restricting debate. That is not correct, Mr. Speaker. The hon. embers opposite will have full opportunity, and I urge them to take that opportunity, to participate in the Speech from the Throne debate. They may not like to hear that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You can should me down and take away my right to speak. But let me tell you that in fact you have every opportunity to participate to the full, and that is not being taken away from you, and I urge you to participate to the full in the debate.

**MR. KLEIN:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a new member in this Assembly, it has always been my opinion that radio time was to carry our message back to our constituents and on that basis it only stands to reason that this be divided equally. I recognize your argument about the large majority we have. But that was the people's wish. Now we have 54 members here, Mr. Speaker, that would like to carry a message back to their constituents. And they are all entitled to carry that back. I can't see why a pro rata situation is not totally acceptable.

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, I just want to again put a few facts on the record. There have, in this House in the last 15 years, been occasions when two parties were in the House: namely from '71 to '75; and from '75 to '82, three parties; and from '82 on, two parties . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I stand corrected in the sense that there were no Liberals between '78 and '82, so you are quite right. There were two parties from '71 to '75; three from '75 to '78 and two from '78 on. I thank hon. members for calling my attention to that slip of my tongue.

I want now to make the obvious point that there have been two occasions when we have substantially unbalanced Houses. That was from '71 to '75, when the numbers were 45 to 15, and the current House where the imbalance is even greater. Between '75 and '82 the imbalance was nothing like the imbalance between '71 and '75, or following 1982. The practice followed was to assume that the opposition, its spokesperson on the Speech from the Throne and the budget, had an opportunity and a right to present the party's point of view, not simply report to his or her constituency, and thereafter the numbers might be split evenly to follow the argument advanced by the member for Regina North.

This was, in fact, done in the House in 1973, 1974, and 1975 when the relatively smaller opposition was given a greater allocation of radio time per members than the relatively larger government. It strikes us on this side, representing this party, that that was a reasonable and fair thing to do when the House was substantially imbalanced and is a reasonable and fair thing to do now. We make no particular point of it. If the government wishes to take the other view, that the courtesy which was accorded to the opposition in '73, '74 and '75 when it was a small opposition will not be accorded to this opposition, that's the government's decision to make. They make it, but we record our regret that the government takes that view of the use of its majority in this Chamber.

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a few comments on what I see as a rather unfortunate argument that is being put forth by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues. I just want to make this note, Mr. Speaker, for the opposition's benefit. Up until this year, from the very day that I was elected, I was on that communications committee, since 1975. And I had to be the sole members, at one time when there were only seven of us, to fight for some time on radio. I recall one tactic that I even tried to employ. I said, 'Well can we eliminate the Speaker? You know, he's not in the debate. Can we take it over a fraction of 60 instead of 61?' when we had 61 members in the House. And that wasn't even permitted. Not one member, not one member in terms of a fraction were we allowed. Seven lonely members that sat right there and not one fraction of that 61st would you allow.

Now then, that's the history, and that's since 1975 through to '82. Now you people are eight, that's one more than seven — yes, you can count that one extra over seven — and now you're crying because you can't get some more radio time. I'll admit that it's very difficult to try and make a case against this government under the leadership of Premier Grant Devine, and now you're down to trying to make out this government as being a big, all-encompassing government that's going to tread on your rights. I tell you we also have a very good Speaker in the House that will see to it that you have your right to speak. Further to that, Mr. Speaker, in case the members aren't aware, we do have television now in the Chamber. We do have television, and you will not only be able to be heard, but you will be able to be seen, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite in opposition know that as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it would seem that those eight members in opposition have the opportunity to be on their feet every day on a variety of issue relative to a lot of backbenchers on this side of the House that don't have those same opportunities. I know in talking to some of the member in opposition, they've admitted that they're having a good time over there because they have chance to speak now. When you've got 56 members strong, it's very difficult to have them all up having a turn to speak every day and, Mr. Speaker, the opposition knows that very well. I say, Mr. Speaker, that's very unfortunate — very unfortunate that this opposition could stoop that low, to that kind of a tactic, to try and make that kind of an argument against a government that

is just following a practice and a precedent that was set by them when they were in government, and 44 strong.

Motion agreed to on division.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**HON. MR. LANE:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me today to introduce, through you to the House, a group of 10 young Canadians from across the country, who are doing volunteer work for Katimavik, volunteers, as I say, from across Canada, presently located in Fort Qu'Appelle. They are accompanied by Gail Heinrichs. I'm sure all members will wish to join with me in welcoming them to the Assembly and appreciate their efforts in Saskatchewan, particularly Fort Qu'Appelle. I hope they have an enjoyable afternoon. I look forward to meeting with them after question period. Thank you.

**HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with my colleague in welcoming to Saskatchewan the 10 young people. I hope they find today's proceedings interesting and enlightening.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, if I may, I want to take this opportunity to ask you and the House to join in welcoming to the House some members of the trade union movement who have an interest in today's proceedings. In one gallery is Nadine Hunt, president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and over my shoulder are some members of the RWDSU including Mr. Len Wallace and others. I know the government members will want to join us in welcoming these people to the Assembly.

**HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

### WELCOME TO STUDENTS

**MR. TUSA:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to the House through you, a group of 12 grade 12 students from Lestock, their teacher, Mr. Barry Davies, and their bus driver, Mr. Ed Kish. I trust that they will have an enjoyable tour of the Legislative Building this afternoon, and I look forward to meeting with them later after question period.

I ask you all, on both sides of the House, to welcome these students.

**HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

### QUESTIONS

#### Minimum Wage

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to welcome to the legislature, on his return from Saskatoon, the Minister of Labour. I want to say, by way of background, Mr. Speaker, that your timidity in not making your announcement on Friday and the way in which you handled it is your business, but the mockery, Mr. Minister, that you have made of the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy and ministerial accountability, is everybody's business.

My question, Mr. Minister, is: you said at 10 o'clock that you were not able to announce a decision until this week; it was announced at 3; precisely what time on Friday, Mr. Minister, did you change your mind?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that the opposition was so desirous to see me this afternoon, and that's the reason I came back from Saskatoon. I had to cancel a bunch of appointments with compensation people, with people concerned about lay-offs, but I'm sure we'll rearrange those appointments.

Mr. Speaker, at question period last Friday, I was still not aware of our total decision as far as the minimum wage was concerned. I had had my release ready as of March 2, but there were some other items that we wanted to check into, which we did, and we finally had our committee together on Friday at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We arrived at our decision at that time, and the press release went out.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — A supplementary. Was that a committee of cabinet that you met with Friday afternoon?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — We have our committee that I meet with.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — A new question, in light of the minister's refusal to answer the last one. Is the minister not aware that the fundamental principles of courtesy to the House suggest that announcements are made in the House, when the House is in session, where that's reasonably possible? My question to the minister is: if you are really asking us to believe that you weren't ready Friday, why didn't you wait until today to make the announcement? Why make it at a time when you were out of the city, when the opposition was out of the city, and when you were not planning on being here today?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I've been asked for a number of days by the opposition and by a number of people what our decision was going to be on the minimum wage. On Friday afternoon we were able to give you that decision, and that's what we did. We let our press release out at 3:30 on Friday afternoon.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Why didn't you observe the traditional courtesies of the House and make it in the House today?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, my plans were to be in Saskatoon today to . . . It's my cabinet day in Saskatoon, and if the opposition thinks, from the remarks that I just heard, that I'm going to go running around the legislature to get permission from you people to leave the Legislative Building, you have another thing coming. I had to go back to Yorkton on Friday afternoon. I had to go back to Yorkton on Friday afternoon to attend a benefit hockey game for a young high school student that broke his neck a year ago. We had set up a trust fund, and I intended to be at that function, minimum wage or no minimum wage. I wasn't going to miss that function.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Let me repeat the question, since you spoke about everything else but my question. Why didn't you wait until today to make the announcement?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — I don't see any difference, Mr. Speaker, whether it's Friday or

Monday. We let our decision out as soon as we arrived at our decision on the minimum wage, which was last Friday afternoon.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — A supplementary. Is the minister really telling us that you don't see the difference between making an announcement late Friday afternoon, after the House is adjourned and after you have left town, and making it today or tomorrow, when the House is in session and you could be called to answer for your decision? Are you really telling us you don't see the difference?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't see any difference. They knew where I was; I missed the whole first period of the hockey game because I was talking to the people on the telephone. So they knew where I was. I was able to talk to the media and the press and anybody that wanted to talk to me.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — New question, Mr. Speaker. Since the minister patently refuses to justify his behaviour on Friday, and it's probably because there is no justification for your behaviour, Mr. Minister, let's ask you about the decision itself. That is, I suspect, of equal concern to those on minimum wage. By way of background, Mr. Minister, let me remind you that Statistics Canada tell us that the poverty line for a family of four is 17,000 if you live in a city, and 13,000 if you live on a farm. The minimum wage gives people on \$8,000

My question is: where's all the talk about compassion from this government? When you look at those figures, how does your government justify, on social or moral grounds, a two-year freeze of the minimum wage?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I have been torn for the last five or six months as to what direction to go as far as the minimum wage is concerned. When I look at the minimum wage of Saskatchewan and find out that it is the kind of Canada at 4.25 an hour, the highest in Canada . . . It's the highest in Canada. We have no intention to be the super kings — especially when the economic conditions are such today that small businesses are going under.

**MR. SPEAKER:** — Order, please! The hon. member was asked a question; he's on his feet trying to answer the question, but he is not being given an opportunity to answer. I would ask the House to give him that opportunity.

**HON. MR. LANE:** — Mr. Speaker, with leave, I would like to make a ministerial statement. I have given a copy to the opposition prior to 2:30 . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Well, I'm asking for leave to move off question period to make a statement, then we can come back.

**MR. SPEAKER:** — The member has asked for leave. Is leave granted? Leave is not granted. Question period continues.

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — I was saying, Mr. Speaker, when we have the highest minimum wage in Canada — the average of all the provinces in Canada is \$3.77 an hour — and when you look at small business today, and I've talked to lots of them in the last few months as well as employees (I've been listening!), the bottom line in a lot of these companies is just tilting, whether it's in the black or the red. And to me, a job at \$4.25 is better than no job at all and that's what's happening in this country.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I did not ask you to

compare Saskatchewan with other provinces. I asked you, and I would ask you to address yourself to the issue, how you can justify freezing a minimum wage at half the poverty level.

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, people want jobs in Saskatchewan. In the last few months I've taken the opportunity — every time I've been in a café to meet with waitresses, or whatever — and I have asked the question: 'If you were the Minister of Labour, what would you do as far as the minimum wage is concerned?' Nine out of ten said, 'Don't touch it if it's going to mean that I'm going to lose my job.' And I would like to suggest that a lot of people would. And I have letters here in my files. I'll just read you one:

Attention Mr. McLaren: This is to tell you that the minimum wage in Saskatchewan is too high at \$4.25. Coffee at Fuller's Restaurant is 60 cents a cup plus 40 cents for one refill. That's because \$4.25 is too high. The minimum wage should be the same right across Canada, but \$4.25 or more will just put more people on welfare. Two years ago, the *Leader-Post* carried two pages of ads. Today in 1983, it is less than one page because \$4.25 is too high. From an employee who is quite happy with \$4.25, it's better than nothing.

That's from an employee in Regina.

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Minister of Labour. As he will know, when he came to office and because Minister of Labour, the minimum wage in this province was \$4.25 an hour, and the unemployment rate was the lowest in Canada. If \$4.25 is too high a minimum wage, when did it get too high? When, in our term of office, did it become too high?

**MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, it didn't get too high in my term of office. I can relate back to British Columbia. They haven't had a minimum wage increase since December 1980. They are at \$3.65. You look at Ontario — the same thing — 1981 October since they've had an increase. They're at \$3.50 an hour. I know that there are people out there, single mothers, young people, who are having a difficult time. I'm not knocking that; I realize that. It's better to have a job at 4.25 than no job at all. That's what's happening in our province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I direct to the Minister of Labour. I ask the Minister of Labour: how does he justify not increasing the minimum wage and claiming that an increase would cost jobs when the provinces he cites, Ontario and B.C., have lower minimum wage and higher unemployment? How do you square those facts?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan . . . I don't have to tell the members opposite that there are some difficult times out there. When you increase the minimum wage of 4.25, say, by 6 or 7 per cent, that will add 1 to 2 per cent onto the cost of doing business in this province. If that's going to happen, I can assure you, because I know (I am a small businessman myself), that the \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year just makes the difference on whether you make profit or not in today's times. If you're going to arrive at that bottom line, jobs are going to go. You'll do it yourself. You'll do your books yourself to cut it out. I know that's happening all over this province. I've got my files full

of letters from small businessmen saying, 'Don't raise the minimum wage, because if I do, it could mean a reduction in staff.' That's what we're hearing, and I have been listening.

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary to the Minister of Labour. He seems to be making the argument that an increase in the minimum wage will mean less employment. Is he now telling the House that a decrease in the minimum wage will increase employment, and is that likely to be his next policy statement made on a Friday afternoon?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of reducing the minimum wage, but when I look at federally released figures, as far as the unemployment picture is concerned, our work force has gone up from 455,000 to 461,000 in February alone, and our unemployment figure has come down by 1,000 people in February alone. It's the only province in Canada that can make a statement.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Labour. My question to him is this. He will recall that when, last December, we were confirming the formula which gave to MLAs an increase of 6.5 per cent, we believe that to be fair. He will recall that at that time we moved in this House that that increase will become effective when the next increase in the minimum wage became effective, and he will recall that his colleagues voted down that amendment. The question I ask him is this: if 6.5 per cent was a fair and reasonable increase for MLAs, which I believe it was, why aren't people on minimum wage entitled to at least a 6.5 per cent increase in minimum wage?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the Leader of the Opposition that that the cabinet ministers voted zero for their increase.

Mr. Speaker, I can just go back to what I've said already, that just raising the minimum wage . . . Actually, what I'd like to do is bury the thing forever. I'd sooner be talking maximum wages, because this government on this side of the House is going to make it possible for people to take their skills and upgrade themselves to be able to earn the 6, 7, 8, and \$9 an hour, instead of having this depressive mentality of a minimum thing placed over their heads all the time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. LINGENFELTER:** — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Labour. He mentioned, in an earlier answer to a question, the number of people who he would see going on welfare, had they increased the minimum wage. I would like to, just for the record, ask him how he can explain the 12,000 more people on welfare today than there were when they took over the government, and the minimum wage hasn't gone up. Can you explain the rationale and the logic for that?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I can remind the members opposite that on April 25, 1982, your government had 29,000 people on unemployment and we have been hearing about the land of milk and honey, as of April 26, which you people were supposed to have left to us, and you had that kind of unemployment figure. Now just because of April 26, all of a sudden it's the government's fault that it's gone that way. It's



because of some recessionary thing, and it's not just because of minimum wage. It's hitting everybody. And the fact is that it's starting to turn around and these people will have a chance to get higher than minimum wages because of the climate and the business that's going to be created in this province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. LINGENFELTER:** — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister will be aware that even now about 3,000 people in the province who are earning minimum wage, or near minimum wage, are already on welfare in this province. Can he give us an indication of how many more will go on welfare over the next year, during the freeze, as a result of that being in place? How many more people who are minimum wage will be also be collecting welfare, and be paid out of the taxpayers' purse, so that McDonald's and A&W can have cheap labour in this province?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the figures might change to. It may even come down. And the way things are going in this province, I think they will come down because I would have bet money in February that we would have had an increase in the amount of unemployment.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — But it's going to go down. The figure is going down because the potash workers weren't even involved with that figure at the end of February. There's 1,000 of them going back to work. All of a sudden, all last week all I heard was about the unemployment and lay-offs at Ipsco. There is some more of this coming. But the whole thing is going to start change around in this province. You know it and we know it.

**MR. LINGENFELTER:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister has made an offer to make a bet that the welfare numbers would go down next month; I would be very willing to take him up on that. But what I would like to know is: how can he justify the fact that there are 3,000 people now earning minimum wage, who are also getting welfare from the government, from the taxpayers? How do you justify that by keeping the minimum wage down? All that will do in the end is put more and more people on welfare. And how can you justify that use of the taxpayers' money?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, if I put it up they'd go into the same thing because the business people would not be able to afford to hire extra people. I've been telling you that from the very beginning. That is going to mean unemployment in this province, especially when we are king in Canada already.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Labour. By way of background let me suggest to you that if there were anything, any logic at all, to your position that freezing wages would increase the number of jobs, surely that's an argument in favour of a general wage and price freeze. My question to the minister is: why place the burden of economic recovery on those who are least able to bear it? Why make the poor pay for the mistakes which you people have made?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, is the member opposite suggesting that everybody have their wages frozen in the province? We want everybody to make more money — no freezes.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — New question, Mr. Speaker. I suggested no such thing to the

minister. I have just been suggesting to you for the last half-hour that your position's illogical, but surely the logical . . .

**MR. SPEAKER:** — Order, please. The member can't make himself heard to ask his question. I would ask all members to be quiet and let him ask the question.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Surely, Mr. Minister, if it is logical to freeze the wages of those on the minimum wage it's logical to freeze everybody's wages, and you're not doing that. My question is: why be so inconsistent?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, we don't set wages. In the minimum wage we have to protect the people that are on welfare, and 4.25 an hour is the same as \$9,000 a year . . . (inaudible) . . . \$8,900, \$8,800 plus fringe benefits, plus the works, right? So you're looking at close to \$9,000 to \$10,000. I'm telling you that the small business out there can't afford that kind of thing now, and that's what's been happening. As I've said earlier, I've had employees coming to me and telling me, 'Please don't raise the minimum wage because I want a job.' That's what we're going to do. We're going to give them that opportunity to have that job, and with the turnaround coming, they'll all have their opportunity and you'll see the social thing come down.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Mr. Speaker, a new question. I am not, Mr. Minister, interested in the details of all the people who have whispered in your ear. I am simply asking you how you justify asking the poorest in society to bear this burden of recovery.

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — Mr. Speaker, everybody in the province is bearing the results of the recovery. You are, I am, people on minimum wage — everybody is. The people that have been working for 20 years have been out of work off and on this past year or two. It's a fact of life that we're in that kind of a recession. That 4.25 is still a reasonable wage when you look at the rest of Canada. Ontario, for example: they've got young people, they've got single mothers, they've got handicapped people, and they're looking after it at 3.50 an hour. So at 4.25 we should be able to do it here in Saskatchewan.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Supplementary. Just one more time, Mr. Minister, would you tell me why your wage and mine was increased, and those on minimum wage were not? What is it about the poor that makes them so special and so able to bear this burden?

**HON. MR. McLAREN:** — I heard the remark earlier about the McDonald's and the A&Ws, the restaurants and the young people, and so on. These people make 4.25 an hour, plus tips. Most of them are staying at home; they don't have to pay board and room. They're part-time people. My answer is still the same. We're going to be creating the jobs so people can maximize their salaries.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

### **Grasslands Park Development**

**MR. ENGEL:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Tourism and Renewable Resources. A long time ago negotiations started on a grasslands park down in the south country. An agreement was signed with the federal government. The farmers in southern Saskatchewan are quite concerned that you're dragging your feet on the proposed development of that park. Can the minister tell me if he's following through on the plans to go ahead with the development of that park, to finish off the exploration in the area so they can delineate the borders? The farmers are quite anxious

to know just what your government's position is on that.

**HON. MR. McLEOD:** — Mr. Speaker, I understand the frustration that the hon. member talks about with a certain number, a small number, of farmers in that particular area of the grasslands park about making their future plans and so on — planning for the use of that land and so on. The agreement was signed, I believe . . . I'm going from memory here now, but I believe it was signed in June of 1981. The time frame that was set out in that agreement was for two years, given to come up with an environmentally acceptable method of oil and gas exploration, and a further five years for that oil and gas exploration to in fact take place. So we're operating well within the time frame that was set out.

What I have said and what I would say to the hon. member today is that my colleague here has been talking about some recessionary times and so on. We as a government have set down some priorities to say, 'Okay, what are the priorities in our province just now in terms of the best way to spend our money?' While we are operating within that time frame, we believe in the concept of the park. There's no argument about that, but we say we'll be operating within the time frame of the former agreement. We will be doing the oil and gas exploration before any lands are turned over for the purposes of a park.

I guess in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, we could say that while my colleague, the Minister of Social Services, is attempting to deal with the very personal and important problems of finances today, the Minister of Labour . . . (inaudible) . . . One of the things we could do is go out there and worry, as the hon. members seems to be doing about Val Marie, Saskatchewan, and surrounding area going under cement and concrete in the next couple of years. I don't believe that will happen. We believe in the concept of the park and when better times come, the money will be allocated.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Sale of Agra Industries Ltd.

**HON. MR. LANE:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today as vice-chairman of the CIC board to make an announcement in place of the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the Government of Saskatchewan and Benjamin Torchinsky, chairman and president of Agra Industries Ltd., have reached an agreement for the sale of the government shares of Agra to Mr. Torchinsky, who with his family is the controlling shareholder in the company. This transaction is subject to finalization of documents and regulatory approval. This sale to the founder fulfils two of this government's objectives.

Firstly, it is a concrete example of our policy to minimize the government's involvement in private business. Secondly, it returns the equity to the original entrepreneur who has made Agra into the successful company that it is today.

For the information of members, Mr. Speaker, this agreement means that we will sell our 390,530 shares in Agra to Mr. Torchinsky for a price of \$12 per share for a total of \$4,686,360. These shares were purchased in a number of transactions in the mid-1970s for an average price of \$7.62 per share. With this sale, the return on overall investment amounts to about 8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, I might advise that they were carried on the books at \$19.57 per share but never reached that level. As a matter of fact, the maximum level is the \$12 share.

Agra Industries is a multi-faceted company with operations in the food and beverage industry, in consulting engineering and construction, and in the cable TV and radio businesses. Agra started in Saskatchewan and maintains its head office in Saskatchewan. Mr. Torchinsky has indicated and made it clear that he has no intention of moving that office, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the ministerial statement of the Hon. Attorney General, and to say that we welcome the announcement that a sale has been found for the shares of Agra Industries Ltd., which will assure that the industry will continue to be in Saskatchewan. As members will know, the funds were advanced to provide capital for an expansion of the company in the Nipawin area. At the time, the particular expansion would not support the advancing of money on a bond basis, since the expansion could not be expected to pay a return on the money on a quick basis. In effect, the money (some of it) which was advanced was equity money, in the sense that if the venture failed the money would be lost.

The announcement illustrates the merit of that sort of a dealing. Money was provided, even though the company couldn't pay a return on it immediately, in the belief that the profit would be generated in future years. That has, in fact, been the case, and now the shares can be sold, since the government never had any particular interest in owning 16 per cent of the shares, but rather had an interest in financing the expansion.

That has now been achieved. A tolerable return, over the years, of something of the order of 8 per cent has been earned, and we have both had an expenditure of public funds which has not been costly to the taxpayer and an industrial expansion which we all wanted. That illustrates the wisdom of that particular policy, both the purchase and the sale.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

## **MOTION**

### **Rule 39 – Minimum Wages**

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Before orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask for leave of the Assembly to move a motion pursuant to rule 39, a motion of urgent and pressing necessity, which motion will condemn the government for its decision with respect to minimum wages, and condemn the Minister of Labour for the fashion in which this matter was handled last Friday. If I have Mr. Speaker's permission, I will proceed to explain briefly the urgency of the motion.

It is urgent, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly debate this issue, because the decision by the government is sharply discriminatory. Those who are poorest are being asked to bear the burden. That is not what is happening to other sectors of society; that's not what happened to us as members. That's not the position that the member for Melville and I are in, in our professional capacities. Only the poor are being asked to bear the burden of recovery. It is urgent that this matter be dealt with now. It is urgent that it be dealt with now, because these people are simply not able to bear this additional blow.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, in question period, that Statistics Canada states that the poverty line for a family of four living in a city is 17,000; for someone living on a farm it's 13,000. These people will get a little over 8,000. When I heard the minister try to justify

it, I can only assume that he was mistaken about these facts, and it is urgent that it be dealt with before the decision actually is implemented.

It is urgent, Mr. Speaker, because it is the exact opposite of what our society needs. Our society needs, in order to sustain a recovery, expanded consumer spending. I think it is patently self-obvious that money put in the hands of those on minimum wage will be spent; it will not be saved. Dealing, Mr. Speaker, with the urgency of the second part of the motion the behaviour of the minister . . .

**MR. SPEAKER:** — The member is not allowed to make a speech at this point in time, but rather, if you have a motion, present your motion, and if you are given leave of the Assembly then proceed with the debate portion.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — If I have Mr. Speaker's permission, I will very briefly explain the urgency of the last half of the motion, and I'll be . . . I may say, Mr. Speaker, I understood it was customary to allow members to explain the urgency of the motion. Now I may have transgressed that, but I understood that members could explain the urgency of the motion.

**MR. SPEAKER:** — What you are quoting, really, is rule 17, and at that time you are allowed, but under this one you must obtain the leave of the Assembly, so if you will put your motion then we'll see if you have leave.

**MR. SHILLINGTON:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Cumberland:

That this Assembly condemn the government's decision to freeze the wages of Saskatchewan's working poor for a second straight year, with the announcement there will be no increases in the Saskatchewan minimum wage for all of 1983, and further, that this Assembly condemns the Minister of Labour for his actions in not announcing the government's decision on this important issue here in the House where he would have been subject to the normal traditional parliamentary scrutiny.

**MR. SPEAKER:** — The member has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Motion negatived.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### Address in Reply

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Dutchak.

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, when I began my remarks last Friday I had congratulated the mover and the seconder of the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. members for Prince Albert—Duck Lake and Morse. They presented their case very well. Their presentation was good, their case was bad, but that was no

fault of theirs. They were dealing with a Speech from the Throne which it was very, very difficult to say very much about that was incisive and which directed itself to the problems of the future and this province.

Certainly, the speech was long enough. It kept mentioning things, but it failed to say very much. It would come up to an issue and back off, not indicating what the government had in mind in dealing with the particular problem or challenge which was alluded to throughout the 11 or 12 pages of the speech.

There were a number of things we were looking for, Mr. Speaker, which were not there. During the past several months we have heard a number of suggestions that there would be legislation brought forward dealing with trade unions, with labour standards and with legal aid. These had been announced in the press, but there was nothing in the speech about any of those.

Many people have been awaiting details of the promised rural development program of the government after it had cancelled the rural capital fund program. But there was nothing in the speech about that. No, I think the chief interest of this speech was not what was in the speech but what wasn't in the speech. It was sort of like the fans of a fan dancer. The interest is not in what you see, but in what is concealed. This was certainly the overwhelming impression that one got when one listened to this speech: perhaps they have something in mind, but they're not telling us.

There was little discussion, Mr. Speaker, about Canada's place in the world — Canada's place in this nation or Canada's place in the world. Little about what makes this province distinctive and different from other provinces. No, Saskatchewan is a very different province from most others, different indeed from most parts of the world. For one thing our people have come from all over the world. We are a rich mixture of the world's peoples. For another thing, we are overwhelmingly traders, a trading people. Few places in the world consume less of what they produce; few places in the world produce less of what they consume; we are forced to be traders. And because of these characteristics Saskatchewan people have a great interest in the world beyond our borders. This was not reflected in the Speech from the Throne.

Now certainly in part this is because weather conditions in the Soviet Union or a political upheaval in the Persian Gulf can affect our income. That, therefore, is likely to peak our interest. But it's also because Saskatchewan people have an interest in their fellow citizens in this global village. Reflecting that interest, during the 1970s Saskatchewan people developed a system of international aid second to none in Canada. It relied on the dedication and good sense of non-government organizations — non-government organizations like the Mennonite Central Committee, Lutheran World Relief, The United Church of Canada and the Canadian Catholic Organization for development, the Unitarian Service Committee and many others, Mr. Speaker. I've named just a few.

They developed projects for people throughout the world, people in need. They developed projects out of their world—wide contacts, their on—the—spot knowledge of what should be done by Saskatchewan people and by Canadian people to help these people throughout the world. They developed a system whereby they could inaugurate a project and carry it through from Saskatchewan, seeing the money go to Africa or Asia, and seeing it used on the ground, knowing that there would be no waste, no diversion of funds, as regrettably happens so often with foreign aid dispensed through larger organizations.

The idea was simple. The sponsoring agency worked out a project, brought it forward to the Government of Saskatchewan to see whether or not it was within the government's guidelines, and gained money from volunteers throughout the province — voluntary contributions — and the combined pool of money, which represented the voluntary contributions and the matching grant by the Government of Saskatchewan, was taken to the Canadian government, the Canadian International Development Agency, and they usually matched that. In a typical year, \$2 million would be raised by these voluntary organizations in Saskatchewan, and \$2 million would be provided by the Government of Saskatchewan, and another \$4 million would be provided by the Government of Canada. They took this \$8 million and they targeted it to the people who needed it most, with the assurance of top administration, with the assurance that these organizations had people on the ground.

The Government of Saskatchewan didn't pass judgement on each one of these projects. Frankly, I don't think that the Government of Saskatchewan has much to tell the Mennonite Central Committee on how money should be spent to bring about an improvement of the conditions in Zambia. All of these non-governmental organizations join together under the rubric of the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation and the system worked, and worked well.

Mr. Speaker, that's how it did work, but not any more. When the new government came in they froze all of these grants. Now, eventually, they've released some, but only after a detailed study of each of the projects. Now, Mr. Speaker, when you think of it, merely to state it is to ridicule that idea. For the Saskatchewan government to review in detail how Lutheran World Relief, and the Unitarian Service Committee propose to spend money to assist the people of Somalia, when you think about that you will realize that that simply is an officious and bureaucratic waste to the public money. So long as the projects meet a general guideline set by the Government of Saskatchewan, then any page-by-page analysis by civil servants here in Regina is a waste of money and an impediment to these voluntary organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan doesn't have staff to know what the conditions are in Zambia, or Somalia, nor should they have. But the Mennonite Central Committee does have, and for my part I would put more reliance on the informed judgement of the Zambia-based staff of the Mennonite Central Committee than I would on the uninformed judgement of the Regina-based staff of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that it's time the government stopped this pettifogging, junior bookkeeping approach to international aid and decided to renew its co-operation with the international agencies, the voluntary agencies who have done such an outstanding job in the past. It's time that we began to co-operate once again to restore the good name of Saskatchewan as a leader of compassionate, practical help for people all over the world who need our assistance, and for whom Saskatchewan people are willing to make sacrifices.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of other omissions from that speech. I read nothing about cruise missile testing. Mr. Speaker, for many years we've had in northern Saskatchewan a missile testing range — an adjunct of the Canadian Forces Base at Cold Lake. It's been the position of our party (and continues to be the position of our

party) that western countries must possess arms. We favour, as do most Canadians, massive reductions in arms provided that all the major powers reduce their arms at the same time. But until that progress is made, until we are able to achieve those objectives, our party believes that western countries must have arms. But from this, Mr. Speaker, it does not follow that Canada should have any part of the nuclear arms race. Nuclear arms represent a danger to the world which is different in kind from the danger of conventional weapons. It's not just a difference of degree, Mr. Speaker; it's a difference of kind. Mr. Diefenbaker took that view when he was prime minister and when he held out against Bomarc missiles armed with nuclear warheads in this country. He said:

No. Canada should not be a nuclear power. There are nuclear powers. It may be necessary that there be nuclear powers. It is by no means necessary that Canada be one of them.

That's what Mr. Diefenbaker said, and I believe Mr. Diefenbaker was right.

Until sophisticated nuclear weapons can be eliminated from the world, they must be contained. One way to do this is to have nations declare themselves as nuclear—weapons—free zones. Many countries have already done so. Many countries which could readily manufacture nuclear arms have not done so — countries like Canada and like Japan. Canada can further this policy by declining to test any of their nuclear weapons, or any of their guidance systems. That was Mr. Diefenbaker's position. I believe it ought to be the position of the Government of Canada.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, to be clear that a large number of Canadians oppose the testing of nuclear weapons on our soil, and oppose the testing of guidance systems associated with nuclear weapons. In short, Mr. Speaker, a very large number of Canadians oppose the testing of cruise missiles in Canada and in Saskatchewan. It take that position is no way an unfriendly act directed to the United States, any more for example, than Japan's refusal to have nuclear weapons on its soil is an unfriendly act directed toward the United States — no such thing.

Few governments in the world have a greater interest in limiting the number of nuclear powers than does the United States. We believe that the Government of Saskatchewan should, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, express our opposition to the testing of the cruise missile on Saskatchewan soil. We in this party ask the Government of Saskatchewan to take that stand on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, so that the people of Canada, wherever they may live, may know that we in Saskatchewan share Mr. Diefenbaker's view that Canada ought to remain a nuclear-free zone.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, I would have expected that the Speech from the Throne would contain a good deal more than it did about our basic industry of farming. I would have thought that it would recognize the problems faced by the farming industry, and have outlined a blue-print of what the government proposed to do in the face of the challenges which farmers are facing.

Mr. Speaker. I invite anyone to read that Speech from the Throne and see whether or not he or she believes it contains an outline of what the government should be doing about our farming industry. Because, Mr. Speaker, there's trouble down on the farm. The greatest threat, of course, is the attack on the Crow rate. That threat, Mr. Speaker, has been crystal clear since Mr. Pepin announced his desire to change the Crow rate



last February — February of 1982. He announced that the Crow must go in '82. At that time he appointed Professor Gilson to shape up an alternative to the Crow rate. At that time, more than one year ago, everybody in this province knew that the Crow was under attack.

That, Mr. Speaker, was clear at that time, but it was absolutely clear when Mr. Gilson brought in his report back in June of 1982. It could not have been doubted. Nobody who looked even casually at the fact could have believed that the Crow rate was not under attack. It most assuredly was. And yet the government opposite did nothing. It took no steps to rally farm opinion; it took no steps to form an alliance with the other prairie governments; it took no steps to rally Progressive Conservative MPs at Ottawa. During all those months when Mr. Pepin and Professor Gilson were planning their schemes to slaughter the Crow, no action by the government opposite. They took no steps to explain to other Canadians just what the Crow rate and the agricultural industry based upon that Crow rate meant to them. NO explanation to the people who worked at Massey-Ferguson of what that would mean to them. No explanation to the people who worked at General Motors of what that could mean to them. In fact, the government opposite, Mr. Speaker, didn't move a muscle, didn't move a muscle to defend the Crow rate during all those long months. They didn't, in fact, begin to act until Mr. Pepin announced in February of 1983 that he had a counter-proposal, one full year after the first announcement. Indeed, during much of that time when the Crow rate was under attack and everybody in Saskatchewan knew it was under attack, the government said over and over again that it had no position. To quote the Minister of Agriculture to many farm organizations, he, speaking to them, would say, 'I know what your position. As soon as our government makes up its mind, I'll let you know.' This, when the Crow was under attack, and when everybody in Saskatchewan knew it was under attack.

But by February of 1983, last month, Mr. Speaker, the farm organizations had been able to get the facts out to the public and to bring to mobile public opinion, things which the government should have been doing nine or 10 months ago. The government should have been mobilizing all of these forces who were more than willing to be mobilized in defence of the Crow, but they didn't do so. Last month, with the publication of the Pepin proposal, people became galvanized. Farmers and businessmen in communities demanded action, and when this became clear to the government — that they could no longer get away with their policy of doing nothing to defend the Crow — they mounted their horse and they rode off, and they rode off in defence of the Crow, so they said. So they said. Over nine months after they had an opportunity to act, they took their first steps; and even today, Mr. Speaker, they are doing very little to weld the coalition in support of the Crow.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make clear the position of the New Democratic Party. There never has been any doubt about the position of the New Democratic Party, but I will state it clearly now. Everywhere in Canada the New Democratic Party stands four-square against the Pepin plan, and no one has ever doubted that. So far as the New Democratic Party in the House of commons is concerned, and in every prairie legislature, every single New Democrat from wherever he comes, on these three prairies and in the House of Commons, is standing up in opposition to the Pepin plan. I'd like to know what other party can make that statement.

Mr. Speaker, the government opposite has not acted to defend the Crow rate in the way that would have been most helpful. They haven't acted to get the support of the Alberta Progressive Conservative government. That would be a great help, but it hasn't been done. Members opposite, the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier and others have not

acted to get the support of Premier Lougheed and his government.

The NDP in Manitoba took the resolution which was introduced in this House — took the very words of it, so as not to get into any partisan dispute — took the very words of the resolution introduced by the Minister of Agriculture, the member for Souris-Cannington, introduced it into the legislature of Manitoba, defended it, and it passed unanimously. Mr. Speaker, that is an indication of where the New Democrats in Manitoba stand.

Mr. Speaker, a similar resolution was introduced into the Alberta legislature. Where did the Progressive Conservatives stand in Alberta? They voted against the resolution introduced by the member for Souris-Cannington in this House, and they voted against it to a man. The only people who voted for it were the two New Democrats in that legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we would certainly believe that members opposite could do more, and should do more, to persuade their colleagues in Alberta to support the initiative of their government in opposition to the Pepin plan.

I am asking the Premier to use his influence with Premier Lougheed, with Joe Clark and with other leaders of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party, to urge them to join in a solid wall of opposition to the Pepin plan. And a New Democrat leader and caucus in the House of Commons has come out unanimously in opposition to the Pepin plan. I ask the Premier to see what he can do to get the legislature of Alberta to come out unanimously against the Pepin plan, and I ask him to use whatever influence he has to get the Progressive Conservative leaders and caucus at Ottawa to come out unanimously against the Pepin plan.

I say it is vitally important, vitally important that we have this solid wall of opposition to Pepin here on the Prairies, because I say the Pepin plan is poison for our farmers, and we have got to take every step we can to derail it.

My second plea to you, Mr. Premier, is to get the PC caucus in the House of Commons to use all the weapons it has at its disposal to oppose this bill when it comes before the House of Commons.

Mr. Nielsen's prowess in the House of Commons as an architect of defence plans is well known. Few people in the House of Commons can match Mr. Nielsen when it comes to putting up a battle in opposition to a particular bill, and he's proved it many times. I asked the Premier to use his influence to get Mr. Nielsen to use those same skills in opposition to the Pepin plan. Well, I say this, Mr. Speaker: there are few better causes that it could be used in than to defeat the Pepin plan and to save the Crow for the Prairies.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — And I say this. If the Crow rate should fall in parliament, it will stand as an indictment to the government opposite, who did not move for nine months, who on the record (which, unfortunately for them, cannot be denied) did not take any action in defence of the Crow rate until after Mr. Pepin made his announcement in February of 1983, one month ago.

If the farmers lose the Crow, they will know on whom to place the blame. They will certainly put it on the federal Liberals, but they will certainly also put it on the Tories of Saskatchewan and elsewhere who, for nine months, gave Jean—Luc Pepin a free ride without saying, ‘No, we defend the Crow.’

I want to advise this House once again of the plan of action that our party proposed in defence of the Crow, and I want to repeat it, so that people will know where we stand and where we stood, and ask them whether or not our proposals are still not pretty good proposals for defending the Crow.

You will recall that my colleague, the member for Assiniboia—Gravelbourg, put forward his plan — our plan — and it had, in its first phase, four main steps. Number one, a plebiscite for prairie grain producers. We still think this would be a good idea. We think that a plebiscite would show, beyond the possibility of doubt, that there is no consensus in support of the Pepin plan, as sometimes alleged by federal Liberals.

Two, we believe there should be an attempt to form a prairie alliance, a prairie alliance of the three prairie governments standing firm against the Pepin plan.

Three, we believe there should be special delegations made up of farm leaders from the SARM and from the pool and from the federation of agriculture, and government leaders, like members opposite, going to eastern Canada, not once by many times, telling our story, telling the importance of the Crow to prairie agriculture and telling the importance of prairie agriculture to eastern manufacturing.

Fourthly, we believe that the Premier should be meeting with Mr. Nielsen and the other leaders of the Conservative caucus at Ottawa to plan a strategy of defending against the Pepin plan in the House of Commons.

The government has not acted to order a plebiscite, to organize one, either prairie-wide or Saskatchewan-wide. The government has not acted to form a solid prairie alliance and they have not got the support of the Government of Alberta and the Premier of Alberta. They have not acted to organize a joint farm group and a government blitz on eastern Canada telling our story. As far as I’m aware, they have not acted to obtain the unqualified support of the Progressive Conservative caucus in the House of Commons to oppose the Pepin plan. Now, when the battle is at this crucial stage, where is the Minister of Agriculture? Where is he? We are told that he’s gone to Bulgaria for 10 days. He’s gone to Bulgaria. Well of course we welcome his efforts to sell Saskatchewan cattle, but we wonder whether or not that couldn’t have been delayed for a month or two while he spent all his time organizing to defend against the Pepin plan here on the Prairies.

The Minister of Agriculture is not in Ottawa where he might be, or not in Edmonton, where he might be, not in Quebec City where he might be, but he is in Bulgaria. When Saskatchewan farmers are fighting for their very economic life, when everybody who is a leader of the farm industry is attempting to organize to defeat the Pepin plan by generating opposition here on the Prairies, and by generating opposition in the House of Commons, where is our general? Where is the person leading the fight for Saskatchewan? Well, he’s in Bulgaria. I leave to Saskatchewan farmers the judgement of whether or not that is an adequate defence of the Crow rate, whether that is meeting the needs of Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Speaker, while the Pepin plan is the greatest threat, our farmers have other real

problems. Grain prices are low. Initial prices are likely to be a good deal lower than last year. We've already had Senator Argue making his announcements of an 80 cent drop in initial payments, doubtless to make us feel good when it only turns out to be 50 cents. But we all know the signals. We all know that initial payments are going to be lower, costs are still rising, and for most farmers the cost-price squeeze is on, and on with a vengeance.

The government opposite has decided that farmers should pay more taxes, as we are all paying more taxes, to provide roads free without charge to interprovincial truckers, to provide roads for streets for city commuters, to provide roads and streets for people who are just goin' fishin'. All these people have had the cost of their fuel reduced. They've had the cost of their fuel reduced, but not farmers, not farmers who are buying fuel for their tractors and combines. They've had no decrease in the cost of their fuel, far from it. In fact, since this government took office, by actual check at a number of points in this province, the price of farm fuel and diesel has gone up by 23 per cent. It's time, I say, that the farmers got a tax break the same as some other people are getting a tax break. If this government has \$100 million to give to the oil companies in tax breaks, if it has got 130 to \$140 million to give to a lot of other people, including interprovincial truckers, then they should find some money to give to farmers who are caught in the cost-price squeeze.

The tired argument, Mr. Speaker, that farmers do drive cars or their kids go to school in school buses is not enough. That's a tiny, indeed an infinitesimal amount, of the fuel which most farmers burn, and to say that for this tiny amount of fuel you burn in your car you will get a tax break, but for those thousands of gallons you burn in your tractor and combine, you get no tax break, is not longer good enough.

Major truckers like CP Express are saving hundreds of thousands of dollars because of the tax cut on fuel given by this government, and they're getting their roads free. Farmers who don't use the roads with their tractors and combines are paying the same amount, and they get no tax break at a time when farmers are in a tough cost-price squeeze, and if people deny it they haven't been talking to young farmers who've got borrowed money.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that farmers are entitled to get some of this money that the government is handing out to the oil companies and to the interprovincial truckers.

Members opposite feel, I gather, that this is not a serious problem on the farm. I am not suggesting that every farmer is in trouble, but I am suggesting that a lot of farmers are in trouble, and it's time the government responded with something that addressed itself to the cost-price squeeze, and I suggest the best way is to tackle fuel costs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Mr. Speaker, others will undoubtedly be entering this debate, and I hope they decide on what they think is the most important issue for farmers. I think that when that debate is over and when we ask farmers what their real concerns are, more and more farmers will say that they had two main concerns: one, the Crow rate, and what's going to happen to their shipping costs; and two, the cost—price squeeze, particularly the cost of inputs and what this government's going to do to lower their

cost of inputs.

I suggest to you that those are the issues as seen by farmers. Members opposite can pooh-pooh them if they like, but I think they will find that farmers are not pooh-poohing them. Farmers are concerned. I'm not saying they're panicking. Farmers are people who have rowed a good number of tough waves in the past, but they are concerned, and so should the government be concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I earlier said that this speech was noteworthy, if at all, for what was not in it. Certainly this is true respecting what this speech says to working people. Aside from the bald statement that the government is in favour of harmony between management and labour (and who isn't?), the only reference in this speech to legislation that affects working people is The Workers' Compensation Act. Now, Mr. Speaker, I hope this means that the government proposes to introduce legislation which will enact the recommendations of Judge Muir's committee — unanimous recommendations of Judge Muir's committee — and if it does that, then I will congratulate the government because it will deserve congratulations. We will look forward to seeing the bill in the hope that our already good workers' compensation scheme will be further improved.

There is, Mr. Speaker, pointedly no reference to The Trade Union Act or The Labour Standards Act. I hope this means that the government has decided not to bring in any legislation as recommended by the chamber of commerce and other employer groups, recommendations to dismantle this legislation. If the government does not bring in this legislation and doesn't bow to that pressure, then once again the government should be commended, and will say that to the Minister of Labour. In labour legislation, as in so many other fields, Saskatchewan has been ahead of Canada, has introduced things which other provinces in later years have introduced. And no case has been made, Mr. Speaker, for turning back the clock. No case has been made for turning back the clock to days when it was more difficult for working people to get together to form a union to improve working conditions. No case can be made for turning back the clock to the dark days when there were fewer unions, and as a result. Poorer working conditions. I hope that the government opposite, by not mentioning any changes in the Speech from the Throne, does not intend to dismantle our trade union legislation.

Nor was there mention, Mr. Speaker, of the minimum wage, but we had a mention on Friday about the minimum wage . . .

**AN HON. MEMBER:** — Late Friday.

**HON. MR. BLAKENEY:** — Late Friday, about the minimum wage. What was the announcement? The announcement was this. After 10 months of consideration and of study, the government has made a decision. They have decided to do nothing. They have decided to do nothing for another 10 months. This decision to victimize 60,000 of the poorest people in our province is unable to be defended by any rational arguments. It's noteworthy that the minister hasn't really tried to defend it very much. The argument used is that if we increase the minimum wage we are going to lose jobs. And we've heard that argument again. Now this hasn't been true for the last 11 years, Mr. Speaker. If it's true today, it's a sorry reflection on the government opposite.

Indeed, when this government took office it has the highest minimum wage and the lowest unemployment in Canada. That's hardly a convincing argument that a high minimum wage produces high unemployment. In fact, the argument is all the other way. I suspect that the government is intent on reversing this to try to get itself into the

position where it has the lowest minimum wage in Canada, and I suggest as a result thereof, perhaps the highest unemployment. That will be a great thing for employers. They will then have the opportunity to hire people at low rates, and they will have lots of people to choose from. It's perhaps unkind to suggest that the government opposite has that in mind, but the way they are acting, they're going to bring about a result not too different from that.

The argument is that if you increase the minimum wage you're going to have fewer jobs. And the logic, of course, is that if you want more jobs you should decrease the minimum wage. I don't know whether the government opposite would go that far, but if they follow their logic, they would. If they continue to have such a lack of success in creating jobs they may be tempted to go down that road; they may be tempted to follow their logic, however perverted it may be.

Well, I hope they don't, because they are wrong; they are wrong with their logic. The truth is very different. If minimum wage is increased, there will be an increase in the amount of money spent, and the increase in the amount of money spent will create more jobs rather than less. Where they make their error is in believing that large number of people will be discharged if there is an increase in the minimum wage that the Hotel Saskatchewan or another hotel will lay off staff.

In fact, by and large, the people who get minimum wage are in industries which are not competing with industries outside our province. The results of an increase in minimum wage will be an increase in the amount of money spent. You can depend upon people on minimum wage to spend the money you pay them. Not much of that money ends up in bond purchases, or down at the stockbrokers. By increasing the amount of purchasing power, we increase the employment. We increase retail sales, and that causes people to hire more people, not less.

This move to freeze the minimum wage is clearly a move which protects employers like McDonald's and like Woolworth's. Just think of whether or not McDonald's deserves very much assistance from this government. McDonald's, who stick their thumb in the eye of Saskatchewan farmers by buying their buns made from non—Canadian wheat' McDonald's, who stick their thumb in the eye of Saskatchewan workers . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Speaker, I see I'm touching some tender sensitivities over there. Those people should know that they are giving additional assistance to McDonald's, who, as I say, have been sticking their thumb in the eye of Saskatchewan farmers' who have been sticking their thumb in the eye of Saskatchewan working people.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when this government lowered the road tax on diesel fuel, McDonald's found that they could truck in buns from the United States, 1 cent-a-bun cheaper than Canadian buns. Without a thought, they said, 'Fine. We owe no obligation to Canadian farmers, wheat growers; we owe no obligation to Canadian working people.' This is the same organization which has consistently been using Australian or Oceanic beef in their hamburgers. With Oceanic beef and American buns and minimum wages, they now get this government giving them a freeze on their wages for two years, while they're free to raise prices, of course.

These are the industries who are primarily helped by freezes in minimum wages. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that Canadian beef producers and Canadian grain producers and Canadian workers deserve something better from their government than assistance for

industries like McDonald's, who have consistently victimized all of us.

I want to turn now, Mr. Speaker, to crown corporations and references in the throne speech to crown corporations. This government's dealings with crown corporations reveals a good deal about its priorities and just who it believes the crown corporations ought to be operated for the benefit of. We've already seen it act. It has appointed the Wolfgang Wolff commission report, and we've had the report of that commission. Even before the report of that commission, we had some action by this government.

We had the Saskatchewan Fur Marketing Service. This service was inaugurated to assist farmers and trappers — fur farmers and trappers, primarily trappers and farmers who do some trapping in their spare time — market their furs. It operated, Mr. Speaker, for 35 years without ever having a loss, so far as I'm aware. A check back for 10 or 15 years — here is the most successful operation which has served Saskatchewan trappers well. It has been scrapped, Mr. Speaker; staff discharged and the trappers turned over to the Hudson's Bay Company — the Hudson's Bay Company whose 300-year record of dealing with trappers is part of the history of our country, and a part which does little credit to the Hudson's Bay Company. This represents a straight transfer of an asset, a public asset, from the public sector to the private sector without compensation.

Or take SaskMedia. Here was a corporation which was dismantled. Part of it was transferred to a government department and part of it to the private sector.

Or take SGI. Not with some care, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, note with some care who was discharged when SGI employees en masse were fired. There were motor licence issuers. There were legal staff. There were salvage division staff. There were publicity and public relations staff. Now, Mr. Speaker, no one suggests that the publicity and public relations work won't continue to be done, or the motor licences won't continue to be issued, or the law work won't continue to be done. Of course, it will, but by insurance agents, law firms, public relations firms selected by the government opposite, not by bid or tender but, as the president, ingenuously says, 'by their suitability, by their suitability to the minister in charge.' They will do the work.

I don't know whether there will be an unseemly scramble for patronage. We have seen some unseemly scrambles for patronage and some casualties as a result thereof, but I expect that there will be more, because very clearly the moves on SGI were efforts to carve out bits of the functions previously performed by SGI so that they could be performed by the friends of the government opposite.

Let me just recall what is happening at SGI. Efforts, I am sure, will be made to see that SGI rates are a little less competitive than they have been in the past. I noted the recent announcements with respect to Auto Pak. Auto Pak rates, Mr. Speaker, have been increased by about 25 per cent — 24 per cent, 26 per cent, 27 per cent increases in Auto Pak — so that I suspect the private sectors companies will have a little bit easier time competing.

Or take Sask Tel and SPC. Mr. Speaker, I am going to predict major lay-offs at Sask Tel. I'm going to predict major lay-offs at SPC. I am going to predict that they are going to arise because management practices, going back in some cases over 50 years, are going to be dismantled so that parts of the activities traditionally carried on by Sask Tel and SPC can be carved out and given to friends of the government opposite in the private sector.

I invite everybody to look at what happens over the next year or so. I invite them to see what happens with respect to, let us say, the sale of telephone sets. And we already know that part of the business that's gone off to Radio Shack and others. What has happened to that part of the business which involved Sask Tel handling word processors and the like? We all know that's off in the private sector.

I invite people to look at what's going on to happen with respect to legal work, with respect to public relations work, with respect to a good number of subcontracting activities in Sask Tel and SPC. I cannot give you the details because I don't know the details, but knowing the way this government operates I think I can predict with some confidence that we will see an increasing degree of subletting, contracting out to friends of the government opposite. And, Mr. Speaker, this will have nothing to do with efficiency. IN fact consumers will pay more and I'll predict that took that consumers of the services of Sask Tel and SPC will be paying more, quite a bit more, and some of it will be because work is being transferred to friends of the government opposite in the manner in which the government has already accustomed itself to. Clearly it is deciding that these crown corporations can be the source of a good deal of patronage and no opportunities are likely to be lost.

Mr. Speaker, you might well ask, 'Why should we have crown corporations anyway?' This question was looked at by the Wolfgang Wolff commission. It was rather interesting that they didn't find as many horror stories as they perhaps were confidently expecting to find. They made some recommendations and I want to take one or two of the basic recommendations and challenge them. One of the basic recommendations really is that the corporations, the utilities, ought to devote themselves solely to providing services and maximizing dividends. They didn't quite say that with respect to the utilities but they certainly suggested that it was no function of the utilities to offer services at a loss.

Let's look at the history of Sask Tel. Sask Tel has been a public enterprise for over 70 years. It was started by Premier Walter Scott, and it was started because the private sector companies were unwilling or unable to provide effective telephone services for Saskatchewan people. Sask Tel was organized to do that; it's done that and it's done it well. Telephone rates have consistently been among the lowest in Canada. In fact, aside from its competing prairie provincial utilities, they have been well below others in Canada, frequently below their prairie competitors.

But, Mr. Speaker, Sask Tel has done more. Critics say that Sask Tel should provide only telephone service. Just consider what Sask Tel has done for this province in the last two or three years. A few years ago, Sask Tel had to consider how it should expand its long distance telephone capabilities. With the advent of computer technology, they were going to need many more circuits or a much greater ability to carry messages between urban centres in this province. They sat down and considered: how will we do this? Will we use the traditional copper wire? Will we use microwave? Or will we look at this new and developing technology called fibre optics, the glass fibres over which optical impulses are sent as opposed to copper wire over which electrical impulses are sent?

They looked at this, for fibre optic technology was not tried and true. It was new. Perhaps if you're only thinking of Sask Tel as a utility you would struck with the tried and true. But then Northern Telecom came along and they said, 'We know you're considering this. You've got a large system of many, many miles. We are introducing this new fibre optics technology, and if you will agree to use fibre optics, we will agree



to build a plant in Saskatoon, and we will agree to make Saskatoon our Canadian headquarters for fibre optics.' There's no doubt what people like the Wolff commission would say about that. They would say industrial development is no concern of a utility: you get on with the business of dealing with your customers and don't try to do the government's job of industrial development.

But I think that approach is wrong. Sask Tel thought it was wrong. They made the deal with Northern Telecom. The plant was built in Saskatoon. Saskatoon is the Canadian centre of fibre optics technology. Sask Tel is installing the largest fibre optics network in the world. And the Saskatoon plant has just recently received a contract for \$100 million worth of product for a link between New York City and Washington.

Now I think this is a sound approach. I think this is a progressive and imaginative use of the crown corporation. I know that some members don't agree with that. I know that they believe that the model ought to be the private sector company only, and that any spin-off benefits for the community, but not for the corporation, ought to be considered by the board. I can only think that if this narrow approach, this narrow balance-sheet and operating statement approach, is always applied, we in Saskatchewan would have far poorer utility facilities for people, particularly in outlying areas, and we would have a far weaker industrial basis.

I believe that the activities of Sask Tel in job creation, in attempting to get Saskatoon as a centre for this particular branch of the high tech industries, was a sound initiative. A base has been built upon which we can build. I believe that our crown corporations ought to be used this way in the future, as they were in the past. And we ought not to be held to any particular model. Surely we have to operate efficiently. But efficiency ought not only to be measure, and always to be measure, by the way the private sector companies operate, because they will, in many cases, have a much smaller horizon with a much narrower objectives than our crown corporations can have and should have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to another subject which was not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, in my judgement a sad omission, and that is the situation in northern Saskatchewan. There are 28,000 people in the northern administration district of Saskatchewan, and many of them have special problems. Many of them are people of native origin, whose grandparents and frequently whose parents, lived a spartan and independent life of the trapper and the fisherman and the hunter. But the population in northern Saskatchewan has outgrown the resource base. The fish and game will simply not support all of the people who now live in the North. And the alternatives for many of them are very stark, Mr. Speaker, and simple: it's either work or welfare.

Now what everybody would wish would be that there would be jobs in ordinary commercial operations so that people in northern Saskatchewan could take their place in the labour force, those who did not wish to pursue the traditional ways of life. But there are simply not enough commercial jobs in northern Saskatchewan. Of course there are some. Mining has developed rapidly in the last 10 years, and it's developed under circumstances which require that many of the ventures employ northerners, people who live and have lived in that area.

I believe that was a good policy, and I urge the present government to continue that policy of ensuring that mining and other resource developments in the northern part of our province be carried on, on a basis which ensure the people who have spent their life in that part of Saskatchewan will have first crack at the jobs. I say that because

employment is difficult to come by in the North. Opportunities are difficult to come by, and we need to do everything we can to give these people an assurance that, as there is activity in that area which in some cases impairs the carrying on of their traditional ways of life, they have alternative employment in substitution for the traditional hunting, trapping, and fishing economy.

But even if we gave Northerners every kind of preference there still wouldn't be enough private sector jobs, and we're still looking at the stark choice — work or welfare. In this town work means at constructing roads and airfields and houses and community centres and other infrastructure which is needed in the North. Now, Mr. Speaker, many Northerners are not trained construction workers, and if they're going to be the workforce for building roads and building rinks, sometimes but not always, expenses and cost are going to be high.

What does it mean? Well, it means that sometimes if we build a rink or a house we are not going to get, in direct terms, an asset fully up to the amount we spent. As much as, say, 20 per cent of the spending might not be represented by a hard asset, and that is important when I say 20 per cent and comparing it against what might have been achieved if one had used trained labour. You might say that there are questions about whether or not we should spend our money when we are getting only, in one sense of the world, 80 per cent of the value.

But what's the alternative? That's the key, Mr. Speaker. We're finding that out now, because the government opposite has shut down many of the projects in northern Saskatchewan. Many of those construction projects are no more, and there are no jobs, and many, many hundreds of people are now on welfare who were not on welfare. What does that mean? Well, it means that in their case it's not a situation where we're spending a dollar and getting value only of 80 cents. It is the case of spending a dollar and getting no value in hard assets. That is the alternative.

Mr. Speaker, that's a whole lot worse than any situation whereby on an individual project, because of lack of training, costs may be higher than they would have been had trained labour been used. Mr. Speaker, it's not only worse to pay welfare rather than work, it's not only worse to pay people not to work than to pay them to work in financial terms, it's worse in human terms. Northerners want to work. They particularly want training. I say it's far better to hire people, train them, and create assets than it is to pay out welfare and wring your hands because you say nothing can be done, because none of these private sector people, to whom you sent your invitation of open-to-business have come in and created employment.

The government opposite will be judged by their record in providing jobs for the people in the North, and they will be judged by people who have seen the record of the last 10 years. They'll see the record of this government and so far, Mr. Speaker, the record of this government is dismal, indeed.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the broad philosophy revealed by this speech. Governments raise money by taxation. They would very much like, of course, not to have to raise money, but just to spend it. Then, of course, some governments do that. The governments at Ottawa, Quebec, and other places have been spending money that they didn't raise, and the results now are becoming awfully clear, and awfully catastrophic. So we can expect, Mr. Speaker, that this government which has given out large sums of money to the oil companies and has in other ways cut off its revenues, will have to pay in some way or will have to ask citizens of this province to pay. The question

that we are all most interested in is: who is going to be asked to pay? Who is going to be asked to bear the burden?

I say, Mr. Speaker, this is already becoming very, very clear. We already are finding out who this government wishes to bear the burden. It is not their highly paid public servants, the deputy minister to the Premier whose salary the Premier didn't know, but from other sources I understand to be at least \$85,000 and due for an increase. He's not being asked to bear any burdens. When he worked for the Government of Manitoba short months ago he got not \$85,000, but \$53,000. An increase from \$53,000 to \$85,000 isn't much of a burden.

No, it's not their senior public servants, but who is it? Well, we've already detected some of them. People on minimum wage are being asked to bear the burden. They're being told that if they don't shoulder this burden, unemployment is going to go up. So they're being asked to bear the burden, and there are others. I want just before leaving that subject to mention once again that overwhelmingly the people who earn minimum wage are women — overwhelmingly they are women — who have some family responsibilities. These are not single women, but women who have dependants. These are the people who are being asked to bear the burden, but they're not the only ones. Superannuated public servants are being asked to bear the burden — no mention of any increase in their pension in the Speech from the Throne.

Children, four-year-olds, who were struck out of the dental plan by the last budget of members opposite. They've being asked to bear the burden.

Students. They're being asked to bear the burden. There is nothing in the Speech from the Throne for any special employment projects for students, and they are particularly hard hit because they are going to have a difficult time earning money this year if they wish to go back to their studies next fall. And all I can say in this regard is to say quite simply, if the government opposite is not going to ensure that there will be employment for students this summer, then they'll have to take steps to see that there is no increase in students fees either at the university or the technical institutes. I commend that to the Minister of Continuing Education because there is need to ensure, at a time when young people cannot get jobs that as many of them as possible can increase their education. If they can't work then by all means let them go to university or a technical institute so that they can be spending their time profitably in the event that circumstances permit a change in the economy in this province. Perhaps we'll need a change of government, I don't know, but they ought to prepare themselves for the possibility of a job, if not in this province then in some other province.

Other people being asked to bear the burden are natives generally. There was a native economic development program, which was well known to members opposite, which they simply bombed when they came to office. No action on it. I would have hoped that the Speech from the Throne would have included something new to provide an opportunity for native people to take their full share in our economy.

Senior citizens. What was in the speech for senior citizens? Any reference to senior citizens shelter allowance legislation? Any reference to any increase in the many senior citizens benefits? None whatsoever.

So, Mr. Speaker, the philosophy revealed is that we need to help business. We need to help the McDonald's and the Woolworth's. We need to do a great deal to open this province for business but we don't need to do anything for farmers. We don't need to

do anything for women on minimum wage or superannuates, or children. We don't need to do anything for natives or students or senior citizens. Because, Mr. Speaker, I feel that this speech fails to address the problems which are uppermost in the minds of Saskatchewan people. I am going to move an amendment as follows. Let there be added to the words of the motion, Mr. Speaker, the following.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is seconded by my colleague, the member for Shaunavon, and it adds to the words of the motion the following:

But regrets that, notwithstanding the admission by Your Honour's advisers that unemployment in Saskatchewan is too high and that our economy is in recession, the legislative plan for the second session of the 20th legislature failed adequately to address the problems of:

1. The more than 50,000 Saskatchewan people seeking employment;
2. The thousands of high school, technical institute, and university students who will need employment this summer.
3. Saskatchewan's working poor who are to have their wages frozen for two full years.
4. Saskatchewan farmers who require relief from a worsening cost-price squeeze, particularly in relation to the price of farm fuel.
5. Saskatchewan native people who need assistance as they attempt to secure their economic future;
6. The residents of northern Saskatchewan who are in desperate need of an economic development plan from the current government.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the very outset that it's a pleasure to again take my place here in the Legislative Assembly in debate of the throne speech. This obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is my first opportunity to speak respecting a throne speech that was moved by a government that I am a part of. I can say, Mr. Speaker, at the very outset that that is a very rewarding opportunity for myself and I'm sure for each member on the government side of the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not as if the members of the opposition did not have that opportunity because certainly they did. At that time, I had the opportunity to stand in opposition, and yes, like them, I found reasons to criticize the throne speech of the day. I suppose one of the differences, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that our criticism then was that the throne speech was so short that there was nothing in the throne speech, because of its brevity. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems that we're being criticized in government, by the opposition, that the throne speech is too long and there's still nothing in it. I suppose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, therein lie the battle

lines for the battle to take place over the next few days, concluding on Monday next, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Before I go into some of the comments I want to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to the throne speech, I would like very much to take this opportunity, as I have always done in the past — the first opportunity that I have had really — to thank the people of the Moosomin constituency for giving me the opportunity, the privilege and the honour to once again serve the people in that riding and represent them here in the legislature, the greatest debating forum that we have in the province, and one that in the most part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for. Oh, certainly there are times when the barbs get a little sharp, but none the less, out of these great halls come great decisions.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of the Moosomin constituency have been very consistent, very consistent in one thing in particular that I want to note. That is that they have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for over 40 years rejected socialism.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — They did that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in fact for about 40 years, when they supported the Liberal members who ran in that constituency, a time when the Progressive Conservative fortunes were not so fortunate. But none the less they took the only avenue open to them at the time to vote against the CCF and the NDP. Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe that any region of part of this province or this country that so consistently has voted against a political party cannot surely be wrong. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that it was a very happy day for me when the balance of this province saw fit to vote in the same way that my riding has been for those many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, as well I would say that it's a privilege to be one of the very few Conservative members ever to be elected in that riding. Prior to myself, there was the hon. member for Moosomin constituency, Dr. Munroe. Very briefly, for a bit of history, Dr. Munroe was the Minister of Health under the Anderson government, the coalition government of 1929. And more interesting, Mr. Speaker, he was from my old home town of Welwyn. To go even further, he delivered my father into the world.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I suppose that history repeats itself. Many, many years later, they elect a Tory, in 1975. My responsibilities are in fact to work very closely with the Minister of Health, a minister of health, Mr. Speaker, who is keeping the health problems of this province on an even keel. I say not just on an even keel, but working to be number one in Canada.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — So, Mr. Speaker, a bit of history I thought was most appropriate, and it's so often said that history repeats itself. I feel so much a part of history as I stand here being given that opportunity to be elected in the Moosomin constituency and represent those people. I have given them my commitments . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I just heard a member quipping over there — which quite often is the way' that's about the extent of their abilities, this quipping — that I was going to be the next federal member. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you of one thing: my role and responsibility to the Moosomin constituency is to represent them to the very best of my abilities, and I have been doing that since 1975. I will continue to do so as long as they so wish.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are other members who have broken new ground. I want at this time to compliment our member who moved the Speech from the Throne, the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I've had the opportunity to see a number of members speak in this House. I have met a number of members. Mr. Dutchak, the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake, is going to make one of the finest members that that riding has ever elected to this legislature.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Mr. Speaker, he has the ability to go now, not from his profession . . . Mr. Speaker, just for the member for Quill Lakes, (I wouldn't want him to miss anything) the member for Prince Albert—Duck Lake comes from a legal back ground — he practised law. Now, Mr. Speaker, he has the opportunity not just to practise law, but to make law. And make he will as part of this government. So I say, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake has certainly got off on the right foot in his speech, and I expect good things from the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Morse, as well, did an excellent job in seconding the Speech from the Throne, again, a member who has broken new ground for the Progressive Conservative Party. So I say, Mr. Speaker, that my compliments go out to both of those members and their excellent speeches. As I said, I expect to see many good things from those members in the Progressive Conservative Party . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, I heard someone across the way in the opposition suggesting that I might move into some topics on the throne speech. Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments to make on the throne speech . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, it was very, very hard work, I would say — a very hard, yes. I had a terrible time getting it down, unlike the member for Regina Centre, who has some difficulties doing a couple of things, especially when he's chewing gum.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reply to some of the comments that the Leader of the Opposition made. They were most interesting, and I want to just set the record straight. I want to start, Mr. Speaker, with the Crow rate, and his comments with respect to the Crow rate. Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I should really just remind some members of the House, since some of them many not have been here when the Leader of the Opposition started the debate on Friday. He got up and he referred to the throne speech that we have introduced to the throne speech that they introduced, as 'Jaws 1' and 'Jaws II' — 'Jaws I' being their throne speech, 'Jaws II' being ours. Well, I wish that Leader of the Opposition was here right now, Mr. Speaker, because I would just want to advise him that the difference between those two is that our 'Jaws' had some teeth in it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it makes some sense that those members would want to reflection old movies that have been seen many times. I'm sure that many of them must have seen the 'Towering Inferno.' Obviously, they're pretty much burned out. Mr. Speaker, I think it's very fitting that the members of the opposition talk about things that were, because, Mr. Speaker, consistently, since the day I was elected, when they were here in government, they talked about the way things were. They were always living in the past, always living in the past. And now they're in opposition and they're still living in the past. Now, I suppose, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say it is somewhat more comfort to them in talk about the past now, because they were government then and now they are in opposition. But it seems strange to me, Mr. Speaker, that they haven't learned anything. They haven't learned anything from the election of April 26. They

haven't learned anything from the Prince Albert-Duck Lake by-election, so, Mr. Speaker, it makes one wonder if they can learn anything.

Now, what did the Leader of the Opposition, in espousing the opposition's position on the Crow rate, say? What did he say? Well, it was difficult to grasp at times but he was saying that the NDP stood four square behind the farmers as it related to the Crow rate. Well, that's maybe so, but it's hard to understand how you can be four—square behind the farmers of Saskatchewan when you are at the same time four-square behind Pierre Trudeau and the federal Liberals. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand that. It was the federal new Democratic members in Saskatchewan that took Joe Clarke and the federal government of that day out of office, and put Pierre Trudeau and the Liberals back in office.

Also, Mr. Speaker, for members that maybe weren't listening too closely, and I can appreciate that as the Leader of the Opposition whined and whined and roared, they might have noted, as I did . . . Did you hear the Leader of the Opposition state that they were opposed to the Liberals? No. No, they didn't. They were opposed to the Pepin plan. That's what they are opposed to, and he was very careful to say that, Mr. Speaker. Their opposition to the Pepin plan, that's all I heard, not their opposition to the Liberals, because, Mr. Speaker, they do not oppose the Liberals. Furthermore, I would suspect that maybe the Leader of the Opposition is hoping for an appointment to the Senate, or some green pasture, because he certainly hasn't any future as the Leader of the Opposition, because the Leader of the Opposition hasn't any future.

That's not anyone's fault, Mr. Speaker, but theirs. Certainly at one time I wondered if we had any future. Certainly I did. But we pulled together, Mr. Speaker, and we listened to the people of Saskatchewan. But we listened to the people of Saskatchewan, we formulated policies that were in line with the thinking of the people of Saskatchewan. We built our party on those grass roots foundations, and we took it to the people in three elections since I became involved. In 1978 we came very, very close to becoming government, and in 1982 we did become government, based on those solid policies. Mr. Speaker, it's because those policies of the New Democrats are not in line with the thinking of the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, I don't want to give them any advice on how they could get back into power. I mean, far be it from me to do that. But I would advise any politician, Mr. Speaker, and it's something I remind myself of as well, that you never ever want to stop listening to the people that elect you. Because whether you like to or not, you were not elected to represent your own thoughts and views particularly, but rather, those that elected you to hold this office.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Mr. Speaker, further, the Leader of the Opposition speaks of the Crow rate, and the cost of production going up, and the fact that the farmers can't afford to pay more, and that their position has always been the same, and he tries to make the case, and I say he tries to make the case, Mr. Speaker, that the Progressive Conservatives now in government at onetime waffled on that issue or were not strong on that issue. Well, I want to remind them, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind all members of this House, Mr. Speaker, that prior to the election of April 26, our position was (and it was enunciated very clearly in the election campaign) that, number one, improvements were required to the railroads, but the farmers should not have to pay, rather the federal government should have to pay. In other words, when we say the farmers shouldn't

have to pay a cent more, that is true — not a cent more than the average taxpayer of this province or of this country. So we had a solid position.

In my mind, I saw no cracks in that position at all, Mr. Speaker. The NDP now attempt to make some case that it wasn't strong. Even now after they voted with a resolution that was introduced in this House, even now after voting for that resolution, they attempt to make the case, Mr. Speaker, that in some way their position is better on the Crow than is ours. Now, how one could understand that, I don't know. I can't understand that. If two parties vote for the same resolution, then how can one's position be uttered better than the other's? All I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that in the interest of the farmers of Saskatchewan, I was very happy to see the New Democrats in this legislature support us on that resolution. That might have been the only sensible thing you've done since you've come in here.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to go further to elaborate on the costs of production. The Leader of the Opposition, the former premier of this province, said, 'You've got to do something about the farm costs.' He said he had heard enough about us talking about the farmers driving cars as well, and taking some advantage of the fact that we removed the gasoline tax, the road tax, and they don't have to pay that any more. We argue that that is in the interest of farmers. They argue that it is not. Now, we argue that, of course, they don't always drive trucks. They don't go to church in their trucks. They don't always travel in their trucks when they take their holidays unless it's got a camper on it. So, Mr. Speaker, one knows how flimsy their argument is.

One knows how flimsy that argument is because you go back a ways and you take a look at a program called the farm cost reduction program. Now, we had a minister of agriculture and he was the member for Saltcoats. Prior to the election in 1975, they removed the farm cost reduction program. They removed that bit of assistance that the farmers had. They removed that from the books. I remember we in opposition said, 'Oh no, you can't do that. Their costs are rising fast enough. They need some protection in the cost area.' But, none the less, they removed it. Come the election in 1975 it was right back on again.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that cost very dearly the member for Saltcoats. He lost the portfolio of agriculture and he was given the responsibility for rural affairs. So, they had a new minister of agriculture and he was the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood. He came along and he brought on the farm cost reduction program. Prior to the election in 1978 he removed it. We said the same thing, 'We're removing the farm cost reduction program; the farmers need the cost protection.' Big Mac said, 'No, we don't need that.' He removed the farm cost reduction program. So, Mr. Speaker, not only did the New Democratic Party in government remove the farm cost reduction program once, but they removed it twice. Now, Mr. Speaker, now we're government, they're opposition and they're asking for us to come on with some kind of a farm cost reduction program or fuel petroleum relief program for the farmers. Well, I thought about that myself. I've thought about that.

As a matter of fact, I spoke to the member for Indian Head-Wolseley, the now Minister of Health. We were discussing it one time; the member may not recall this but this was just not too long before the election on April 26. I said, 'I wonder what we could do in that regard. How much would it cost us?' so we took a look and we used the figure of 70,000-some-odd farmers. We said, 'Well, what about \$500 for each farmer, \$500 for



each one in the province?' \$35 million — that's what it would cost to set up a program that would provide a \$500 grant to every farmer in Saskatchewan. And then we began to think on that. I don't know what the member for Indian Head—Wolseley's final conclusions on it were because he had to go home and I went back home. But when I got home, I got thinking about that. Mr. Speaker, do you know what I thought? I figured it this way. If my farming operation was just balancing on \$500 whether it made it or broke, I think I'd get out while the getting was good. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm telling you that the measures that have been taken by this government have been fair across the board, not just to farmers but to all of the people of Saskatchewan.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it's a bit hypocritical because they argue that we shouldn't have a deficit. They do that repeatedly, and on the same days or very shortly thereafter they argue that we should be giving more money over here and more money here. So they want us to give lots of money away on the one hand but balance the budget on the other. And if we ever considered any means of raising revenue, well, I'm sure they'd criticize that as well. So, Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about here is whether or not the opposition in this 20th legislature is responsible. Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously they're not responsible because nothing about what they're saying on that issue alone makes any sense. To catch an old cliché, you can't have your cake and eat it too. You just can't have it both ways. So it makes it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition is just playing some politics with all of the issue, trying to dig themselves out of a hole. And I won't deny they're in a heck of a hole.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of his members is trying to do is tie the Progressive Conservatives to the Crow rate, because he's hoping the Crow rate does down, Mr. Speaker. That's what he's hoping for. He's hoping the Crow rate goes because then he can blame it on us and hopefully get back into power at the expense of the farmers. That's what he's up to. That's his only motive for trying to tie it.

He said it today. When he spoke I sat there and I thought, how irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, could a former premier of this province be? I never thought a man could slide down so fast. I mean, I go skiing and I don't go downhill that fast. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very disappointed. I'm not just disappointed in a former premier, now the Leader of the Opposition. I'm disappointed in all seven and a half members of the opposition. I think it's a deplorable tactic, Mr. Speaker, to try and tie us to the Crow rate. Mind you, it's better than what they were tied to. They were tied to the Titanic, Mr. Speaker, I tell you this. Like it or not, we are government and we like it. It's like death and taxes. I wish they came in that order. Mr. Speaker, we have the Crow rate to deal with, and as a government, deal with it we will.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — If the Crow rate, Mr. Speaker, in fact does go, it certainly will not be because of the efforts of the Progressive Conservative Party in Saskatchewan, but it will be because of non-caring, irresponsible federal Liberal government supported by New Democrats consistently in Saskatchewan and across this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, I tell you, I don't mind being tied to the Crow rate. It's a solid issue, and we stand with the farmers on that issue. We have members every day, Mr. Speaker, every day we have members that are somewhere in Saskatchewan at a meeting on the Crow rate. They're taking our government's position to the people and to the farmers.

Before I move off that Crow rate issue, I just want, Mr. Speaker, to remind all members

of the House what the NDP's position on the Crow was when they were in power, just in case some people have forgotten. Theirs, as set out by the then minister of agriculture, the former member for Last Mountain-Touchwood, was entitled 'The Saskatchewan Solution.' Now what was 'The Saskatchewan Solution'? I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, what 'The Saskatchewan Solution' was. It was very interesting, not just to the farmers, but to every taxpayer in Saskatchewan.

'The Saskatchewan Solution,' very simply, Mr. Speaker, was an NDP plan to buy into the CPR. Now can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker? After hearing the debates in this House, and hearing them criticizing the CPR? All of those years, damnation for the CPR; then roll back the sheets and jump in.

Now, Mr. Speaker, anyone in their right mind would know that that was an irresponsible solution. They took their position, in their election of April 26, on the Crow, to the people. I might add that to a large extent they took it at the taxpayers' expense, as the minister of agriculture roamed around the province. We took our position to the people as well, on the Crow, and this, Mr. Speaker, is the result. We were not elected just on the Crow, but that was part of the parties' platforms. — both parties.

So to stand here now and hear the Leader of the Opposition, and see him as well . . . Difficult, but to see him criticize us for our position on the Crow is to know that, without a doubt, from henceforth they have no position that's of any responsible nature at all, none whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. As I said to many farmers during the election campaign, 'How many of you want to own some tunnel in B.C.?' I didn't hear any that wanted to.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have members that are out talking about the Crow all the time, and I'm not going to belabour that issue. I want to move on to some of the comments of the Leader of the Opposition with regard to the minimum wage.

Again, a former premier of the province of Saskatchewan refers to the government's position of the day, minimum wage, as perverted. I remember, Mr. Speaker, the day when I used to sit in opposition and look at the man who was the premier, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, and say to myself, 'I don't agree with the things he says but he has credibility. He's a man I respect.' As I said earlier, he's gone down and he's gone down fast. To hear him say that our government's position on the minimum wage is perverted has to make one wonder what runs through the mind of the Leader of the Opposition; what runs through his mind when he uses those kinds of terminologies — those kinds of terminologies to describe a government's position on minimum wage.

What the New Democrats in this province fail to realize as it relates to the minimum wage, is that when you increase the minimum wage you don't just increase the minimum wage, but you increase it right clean to the top. Right clean to the top, Mr. Speaker, because that variance, that difference has been there and it will remain for a long time. So, Mr. Speaker, when the opposition wants an increase in the minimum wage, and knowing full right well that as it vibrates its way to the top, it widens and the people at the top, the very people they criticized earlier — McDonald's and all those kinds of people — the top executive officials would end up getting the increases. They don't understand the economics of it. They don't understand the economics of it, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding, as the Minister of Labour has said many time, we have the highest minimum wage in the country.

Now, I'm not going to comment too much about the thumb in the eye of Saskatchewan farmers, as it relates to the minimum wage and Crow rate, and those kinds of things. I

had a few comments to make on that, but I want to move along into the main address of my remarks, no, Mr. Speaker. I was just kind of making a few comments here.

I want to talk about some of the items that we were criticized for by the leader of the Opposition. He talked about the water resources. He says, 'Well you haven't done anything about the water resources of our province. You haven't addressed yourself to that.' Whenever I hear the Leader of the Opposition talking in those terms I say, well, why would he want to criticize us? We just got here and they had 11 years. On the water issue, Mr. Speaker, the fact is the problem didn't just arrive when we became government. The water problem is along problem. It's been here a long time. They did absolutely nothing with it. We undertook, through our member for Arm River, to study that particular problem. We have. The report has been delivered. The government has made a decision, and that is more, Mr. Speaker, than we can say for the opposition of the day.

I suppose, Mr. Speaker, what it takes me back to is the doom and gloom attitude that is always employed by the members in the opposition. I've always thought, Mr. Speaker, that it must be a very saddening thing to one's own personality to go about being unhappy and talking about gloom and doom, and everything's bad and nothing's good. I spoke to a very strong member of the NDP not too long ago — about a week or so ago. I told him, 'Oh come on, you have to be optimistic.' 'Ah yes,' he says 'that's what you guys would like us to be, optimistic, wouldn't you? You'd like us to be optimistic because that's a politician for you. Well,' he says, 'I tell you, it isn't optimistic.' He says, 'It's really bad.' He says, 'We're going to blow up any day.' Well, the NDP in Saskatchewan did blow up. But you know, I said to him, 'Look, I'm happy as heck today and I'm going to be for the whole day whether you like it or not.' And I was. I can't understand how the members of the opposition continue to preach this gloom and doom. If you would start to be positive instead of critical — if you would start to advance positive proposals to the government — there's nothing to say that we wouldn't listen. You give us a good deal. Give us a good deal. Let us consider those ideas. We're looking for that, Mr. Speaker. What they fail to understand is the election is over. Now is the time, Mr. Speaker, for all members of the legislature to earn the salary the taxpayers pay them, and work together in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan — not to nit—pick and criticize constantly. Mr. Speaker, that's a lesson that they have to learn, and it could be that they're going to take a long time to learn it.

The Leader of the Opposition is a tired and rusted leader. I won't say any more than that. As I said, when I hear him using these words like perverted, I have to wonder. More than tired and rusted? Like a voice in the past, he cannot come to grips with the realities of the day; he cannot bring himself to admit that he had something to do with their party's failure, and each and every member of the opposition had something to do with their party's failure on April 26, 1982.

Mr. Blakeney referred to the Speech from the Throne as barren. He would know about barren as he looks around behind him. The only things that's seriously barren, of course, is in the leader of the Opposition's camp. They are barren — they're barren of ideas; they're barren of leadership; they're barren of members.

I won't make the forecast the former attorney general made. He used to sit over here and take a look at us in opposition and give the old throat signal there, and the thumbs down; you're gone, you're gone, and you're gone. I tell you, I learned my lesson when I watched the attorney general doing that. It turned out that it was he who was the one that was gone. So I'm not going to say that you're gone, because you're already gone.

I'm just going to say that, given enough time — 15 or 20 years — there'll be an opportunity again for you people to serve in government — maybe. That depends entirely on whether or not you can find a leader. There are a number over there that espouse to be leaders. There are none there in their camp. They have no choice, Mr. Speaker, but to go with someone from outside their elected membership.

I have some very important remarks that I want to make. Mr. Speaker, if you don't mind, I want to refer to the comments that the Leader of the Opposition made with regard to crown corporations. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I should tell the members here what the definition of free enterprise is as I heard it spoken at a meeting not very long ago (just this past weekend) by our Attorney General. He said, 'Their definition of free enterprise was one crown corporation competing with another.' I thought that was pretty good. In fact, that's the only room there was in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, for competition — within the government. There was no opportunity outside of government for free enterprise, for private initiative, none whatsoever. He has a lot of suspicions about how we're going to run the crown corporations. It's enough to make him blink, and blink he did today.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have the crown corporations, in our minds and the mind of this government, figured out. We know there are crown corporations that should make money. Those are our commercial crown corporations. And then we have crown corporations that are utility corporations. Those are the ones that we would like to have to provide a service to people at a basic cost. Well, they had it all turned around, Mr. Speaker. They were making money on the utility corporations, and they were losing money through Saskoil, which was supposed to make money. In short, Mr. Speaker, they mismanaged. They mismanaged not just the government generally, but they mismanaged, in particular, the crown corporations.

There was no need for the kind of advertising that they had through Sask Power and through Sask Tel. Here, you had to ask yourself: well, do I have any other source? Is there another source of power? Is there another telephone company that I could be using?

They like to use quotes. I don't often use them, Mr. Speaker, But I want to use one, and I want the members of the opposition to make sure that the Leader of the Opposition gets this quote. It's made by the Premier of Manitoba — a member, of course, of the NDP, the NDP in power in Manitoba — Howard Pawley. The headline is: 'Auto Pac Juggles Fees for '83.' So this is Howard Pawley. 'Pawley said a sudden hailstorm could wreck MPIC if the insurance company didn't have money in reserve.' Now it's continued on page 4, and we'll just turn down over here:

The Saskatchewan public insurance corporation failed to put away its earnings and had to charge its customers a 30 per cent increase two years ago, he noted.

Now take this message, Mr. Speaker, and members of the opposition, take this message to your leader . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Here is what the Premier of Manitoba says . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, we'll just have to wait until the member for Regina Centre finishes his babbling across the way so that I can get this quote off, Mr. Speaker, for the record, because the people of Saskatchewan are waiting right now with bated breath to hear this quote. Here's what he says, the Premier of Manitoba. He says:

I don't think Manitobans would want that kind of irresponsible handling of their crown corporations he told reporters.

Now how about that? So, the Leader of the Opposition who thinks that they ran the corporations in a very efficient and right way, should maybe want to give his counterpart over in Manitoba a phone call and say, 'Look. Watch what you say about us.' Can you imagine Howard Pawley doesn't want to run the crown corporations in Manitoba in that kind of irresponsible way that the Saskatchewan government did?

Mr. Speaker, obviously that had to be one of the main reasons the people of Saskatchewan rejected this government: because they mismanaged everything. We used to tell them, and tell the people of Saskatchewan, and it was so true, that it's so bountiful here in this province that they could mismanage and still break even. And that, Mr. Speaker, that in essence was what they were doing.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** — Great business philosophy.

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Great business philosophy is correct. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me move very briefly now into, and I say briefly because I've taken up a good amount of time and I know there are many other speakers and this is just the beginning, so you may want to take turns sitting in the House, I say to members opposite in the opposition, because it's going to be hard for you to take . . . I want to speak very briefly of some of the matters that were contained in the throne speech that I thought were highlights. The speech contained the framework of the legislative program encompassing, I believe, initiatives in a wide variety of areas. They range from streamlining government structure and changes in taxation to new or expanded programs and policies dealing with adult education, municipal government, health, agriculture, business, mineral and industrial development, labour, co-ops and the justice system.

The speech said the government has already undertaken a number of significant measures to strengthen the agricultural sector including establishment of the farm purchase program. The speech said there will be major initiatives to make the province's adult education system an even greater engine for growth in Saskatchewan. The goal is substantially to increase the range of training programs offered, to broaden the range and greatly increase the number of people served, and to increase access to credit training programs for young people and adults throughout Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the area of tax policy, the speech notes that steps have already been taken to lower the tax burden. It says the government remains committed, Mr. Speaker, to the overall objective of lower taxes and will continue to take steps to reduce taxes wherever they are excessive and reductions are possible.

In the areas of social services and health care, the speech said the government is committed to improving independent living opportunities for the disabled and disadvantaged. Many changes, Mr. Speaker, some of the highlights of which I have touched on. I have touched on the crown corporations; we believe they will play a key role in the province's economy. We don't intend to mismanage them, Mr. Speaker, rather, what we intend to do is have a proper mix and balance of private sector and government crown corporations working hand in hand together for the people of Saskatchewan.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Mr. Speaker, I enjoy the opportunity I have to speak here this afternoon, and the members who know me well know that I could go on for a considerable length of time; but I want to close on a highlight, Mr. Speaker, I want to close on a highlight of the throne speech. The throne speech said that the Government of Saskatchewan was going to take major initiatives respecting the ambulance industry in the province of Saskatchewan.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** — Hear, hear!

**MR. BIRKBECK:** — Mr. Speaker, like they said they would remove the road tax, like they said they would reduce the mortgages of homeowners, like they said they would deliver to the farmers a farm purchase program and thrown out the land bank program, they too have delivered when they said they would improve the ambulance industry, and the proof, as they say in the old cliché, is in the pudding — there it is. Mr. Speaker, we have an ambulance program unlike the old program, the MRAP program as was commonly used to define it, that has set out a basic foundation and structure for an ambulance industry in the context of total emergency health care to grow here in Saskatchewan as technology and need became evident. We have that framework in this report, and we have a basis by which an industry now can work.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but the report in itself is a credit to the people who are employed in government as well, who work with me, because they were able to assist me in correlating all of the ideas, and the thoughts, and the presentations that were brought to us, and they did a good job. They didn't worry if it was past 5 o'clock or through a dinner hour, or if it was in the evenings; they worked hard and they worked diligently to help to put this report together. The report in itself, Mr. Speaker, is in fact a culmination of a great deal of work of a committee that received 69 submissions, met with 26 agencies and associations. The questionnaire that we distributed to the ambulance industry provided a 71 per cent — a 71 per cent response. That tells you, Mr. Speaker, two things: one, we're prepared to go to the people of Saskatchewan and ask them, 'How do you want to matters set out and resolved in your interest?' It tells you the second point: that they're prepared to speak with their new government. They're prepared to come and visit with us and they feel free and comfortable in doing so.

In conclusion I say, Mr. Speaker, the report itself is a reflection. It's a reflection — not of my ideas, not of the ideas of a big government, not just of the ideas of the committee — it's a reflection, Mr. Speaker, of all of the representations that were made to the committee. In effect we acted as think-tank to properly correlate all of the thoughts and concerns and ideas that were presented to us. All I can say is that it's a credit, Mr. Speaker, to our Minister of Health for initiating the study and it's a credit to everyone that worked so diligently to put it together. It's my hope, and I'm very confidence, that it's going to serve the people of Saskatchewan very well as it now unfolds and becomes a very real program in the minds of the people of Saskatchewan.

So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying again that it's been a pleasure to take an opportunity here to speak in the House and take my place. It always is, and I certainly look forward to hearing the other debates in the House. I would just advise you, Mr. Speaker, that I would be voting against the amendment and supporting the main motion.

**MR. SCHMIDT:** — Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I listened to the throne

speech a few days ago and I intended to start a rather lengthy address at this time.

I notice that the Leader of the Opposition has been watching movies lately, and my colleague from Moosomin has pointed out that the Leader of the Opposition has watched 'Jaws.' Well, I remember watching a movie called 'The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly' and I can tell you that since April 16, the movie in Saskatchewan has been good and prior to April 26, it was bad. The first part of my speech . . . I was going to tell you about the ugly situation we found when we took over government.

I see, Mr. Speaker, it's approaching 5 o'clock. I wouldn't want to spoil anybody's supper talking about the ugliness we found and I would ask that we call 5 o'clock.

The Assembly recessed until 7:00 p.m.