

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
June 14, 1983

EVENING SESSION

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 18 – Economic Plight of Saskatchewan Farmers (continued)

MR. ENGEL: – Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before we called it 5 o'clock this evening, I was informing this House that things are tough for farmers in Saskatchewan. Grain prices are down; farm costs are up; the PC government cut the agriculture budget by \$12 million; they rejected our advice to introduce a farm fuel rebate program; they've abandoned their fight on the Crow rate and left the farmers with the only option, and that is, to dump Trudeau and change the government – and you've even destroyed that option for them last week-end.

I think one of the most crucial issues that are facing farmers of Saskatchewan today are saying: what is the future for us? What have we got as an alternative? Here we have a millionaire from Montreal running the country. During an election campaign he told us that he's going to help the farmers in Saskatchewan by double-tracking all the way from Winnipeg to the West coast, and we got an election and the farmers are getting Pepin's plan to change the Crow rate.

You had a golden opportunity to endorse what Joe Clarke was trying to do for the farmers and the people, and the recognition he had of western Saskatchewan. But instead of going with that and helping the farmers out and having a prime minister that could see what the problems are that are facing Saskatchewan people, you elect another Easterner – a millionaire like we've got in there today, who comes to Regina and according to press reports that I've read, said, "Where are the Rocky Mountains?" A leader that said, "Pepin's on the right track." For a province like Saskatchewan . . . And to watch the 55 of you down there endorse that kind of leadership saddens me very much, because I think when you look at the reputation you had at the polls and the possibility your party had of forming the next government, those hopes are dashed in western Canada – those hopes that you're going to do something about farm cash receipts . . . I have an article here from the *Star-Phoenix*, the 30th of the 5th month, '83:

Crop receipts were down by \$15 million. Receipts for rye, flax, canola and oats were all down. Farmers also deferred a little less of their wheat payments than last year.

I think there's an indication, there's an indication of where it's at out on the farm in southern Saskatchewan. I'm sure my colleagues are going to get into this debate and the member for Pelly, who knows what's happening in northern Saskatchewan But the cash receipts for southern . . . I'm not sure how many farmers in his riding defer their cash tickets when they haul. I know in the Minister of Agriculture's riding that's not a new thing. I'm sure that he even does that himself.

In May, the end of May, the agriculture writer for the *Star-Phoenix* says that farmers deferred less of their wheat payments than last year. That's an indication of what's happening. Here we are getting close to the end of the crop year when the people have sold most of their grain, and they're deferring less than they normally would.

The real threat to a farmer's income is the price of grain. Wheat was announced 12 cents down per bushel; durum down 26 cents per bushel; barley down 33 cents a bushel; oats down 23 cents a bushel – when everything else is doing up. Who in this country is prepared to take less? And yet here we as farmers, who are subject to the world prices, are taking that much less for our grain. This will take a further slice off our farm income. In 1982 the total cash income was four thousand and ten million dollars. I wouldn't be surprised if this will drop to less than 3.5 billion in '83.

At the same time, what's happening to our input costs? And I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you're aware of the costs that were facing when you were putting your crop in this spring. They rose to \$2.9 million from 2.8 million the previous year. I predict they'll hit more than \$3 billion this year. When you take costs that are that high and only a \$4 billion income, we can see where what's going to happen to the farm income, and as I said earlier, before we adjourned; what has this government done for the farmers?

I think Manitoba is on the right track, and I think the Tories in Alberta are on the right track when they have a farm fuel rebate program. One of the costs that shocks me most is when Woodrow Co-op sends me out my statement for my fuel bill. And that's double already this year to what it was last year – my fuel costs right to date. Now your tanks aren't always full exactly the same time, so it's hard to tell, but my fuel bill is twice as high as it was at this time last year.

In another month I'll have spent more on fuel than I did all last year. And the fuel bill is of serious, serious matter for farmers to face. And they can't take their crops off this fall if they haven't got money to pay their fuel bill. And all you'd have to do is introduce a farm fuel rebate program. You promised it in your election campaigns and your government that's sitting to your right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you're a member of that caucus, and you have some influence there – I think you should use your power and your muscle to encourage the Minister of Agriculture and say, "Hey, everybody hasn't got it as good as you do. The rest of us are hurting a little bit. Why not introduce a farm fuel rebate program similar to what the Tories have in Alberta?"

And if you can't do it that rich, at least do as good as Pawley's doing for his farmers in Manitoba – at least do that good. If you can't do 38 cents, at least do 32. And just imagine what 32 cents a gallon would mean when you fill your 1,000 gallon tank. That's \$320 less. That's a shot in the arm. That's coming close to what the truckers are getting here in Saskatchewan from your government's generous reduction of the cost of their gas when they were all able to buy purple.

All you've done in Saskatchewan is transfer the costs of maintaining and building and grading roads to the people of Saskatchewan, to the ordinary Joes. And you let the CP trucks and Reimer motor express and all the other larger firms that are running their trucks through the province ... you're letting them get off scot-free.

There was a tax where each one of those truckers was paying \$12,000 and \$15,000 a truck in tax to maintain the roads. And what do you people do? You give CP trucks ... You've let CP trucks have that benefit, and they're saving \$12,000 to \$15,000 a year a truck – a truck!

I know firms that have 100 trucks on the road. I know firms that have 100 trucks on the road and they're saving \$12,000 to \$15,000 a truck. And what are you doing for a

farmer who's got one tractor? Nothing! Nothing! The car driver ... (inaudible interjection) ... Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we can get some order in here so I can be heard.

There's been some discussion in the House about size and the Minister of Agriculture brags about his large, beautiful body. Well, there's a member represents one of the Regina seats that can't be outdone when it comes to the size of his mouth, because there's been interference ... (inaudible interjection) ... I don't think the Minister of Agriculture can outdo him.

Can I get back on topic? Many of you people across the way as I mentioned earlier, helped to elect a multimillionaire, a Montreal millionaire as your leader. And here we have a man that's going to tell Saskatchewan the alternative to doing away with the Trudeau Liberal philosophy. Here we have somebody that steps out on the street in the Regina and says, "Where are the mountains?" and says that Pepin is on the right track. And our Premier, our Premier really disappointed me. Instead of saying, like the Minister of Agriculture did, "I'm going to lobby with them," ... (inaudible interjection) ...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: – Order. Allow the member to make his comments.

MR. ENGEL: – Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's very difficult to try and carry on when I can't hear myself. But I was impressed with the Minister of Agriculture who said he's going to get a hold of Brian Mulroney and he's going to tell him what direction we should go. I appreciate that. But our Premier, he's still down there ... Our Premier said that the Saskatchewan Tories are 150 per cent behind him. I wish he'd have said they're 150 miles behind him or 1,500 miles behind him or something like that. But to be 150 per cent behind a person that says Pepin is on the right track doesn't give us much hope – doesn't give us much hope when you're leading at 51 per cent of the polls. I'm going to do everything in my power between now and the next federal election to inform the farmers of Saskatchewan as to where they can get some help and what party will help them when it comes to defending the one issue that's costing them as much as their fuel – and that's the Crow issue.

I think we need a Westerner who knows what happening. They knocked off a Westerner; they knocked off a Westerner, like I said in an earlier debate, that was the ordinary Joe. They said to him, "Look, we don't care if our leader doesn't know where the mountains are; we don't care if he doesn't know anything about the West." I'm afraid the Minister of Agriculture is whistling in the dark if he thinks he's going to persuade the new boy from Montreal that the Crow rate is great and that western agriculture needs some protection.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the Minister of Agriculture's Legislative Secretary say, "What does this have to do with the farm cost-price squeeze?" You ask any farmer in your constituency, Mr. Member from Rosthern, and you tell them what's the major concern they have today, and they'll tell you – energy and transportation. Those are the two issues that are hurting, and they hurt as much in Rosthern as they do in Gravelbourg. And if you have a leader that said that Pepin is on the right track, you haven't got a solution for us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we're talking about a normal crop year in Saskatchewan ...

With a normal crop year with the figures I cited earlier and the prices that we expect for grain with a normal year, the gross income in Saskatchewan is going to be less than \$540 million. Net income, I'm sorry. The net income is going to be less than \$540 million. When you divide that amongst all the communities in Saskatchewan, and then you think of a \$600 million increase in our freight costs, you know what the picture's all about. The freight alone is going to eat up the meagre profit we're going to make on our farming, and the members opposite say, "What is Mr. Mulroney's idea about the freight got to do with farming in Saskatchewan?" This is as far removed as those members are from the reality and the facts of life, and I'm really surprised that they can't understand the comparison between somebody that they're holding forth as being the next prime minister of Canada, and asks in Regina, "Where are the Rockies?" and says that Pepin is on the right track.

This shows just how serious a situation farmers in Saskatchewan are facing, and we're facing a crisis . . . And what has this government done about it? In agriculture they've cut \$12 million from last year's budget. They've rejected a farm fuel rebate program. What are you going to do? What are you going to do to help the farmers of Saskatchewan? What is this Conservative government going to do, and what is the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, going to plan in the next short little while to help us in this time of distress? I think this is what this debate is all about tonight, and you maybe feel there's nothing we can do. Well, I think there is and you're accusing us sometimes of being negative . . . Well, let me give you some positive things that we can do. We still can do a lot

Saskatchewan's economy and Saskatchewan's fiscal resources under the NDP government were built up over 11 years to appoint where we had some real clout – we had some clout, and we could help the farm economy. But what did your government do? What does the minister of industry and commerce do when we had a 35 per cent share in the packing industry in Saskatchewan, in Intercon? What did the minister do? He stands up and says the NDP made a bad deal. He says the NDP made a bad deal. Here was a packing company that was going to move hundreds of jobs out of Saskatoon and we were able to buy into the company and hold it for Saskatoon and he says we made a bad deal. They don't consider the cost of what those jobs mean to you. You don't consider the cost of those jobs.

And what kind of guarantee have you got for the farmer that have spent lots of money building hog barns and going into hog production? What kind of assurance have you got? You know, maintaining 45 per cent share in Intercon was like if we dredge the Saskatchewan River and put an inland port at Saskatoon. That's what it was. It was that kind of a guarantee, because if we'd have an inland port at Saskatoon then the Minister of Agriculture could go and frit away the Crow rate and nobody would really suffer because we could ship our grain – but we just don't happen to have that kind of facility. But in the hog industry, if you'd take that packing plant out of Saskatoon, and you ask my friends from Meyronne, or from Flincoff, or from anywhere down in that south country, to ship their hogs all the way to Vancouver or to Montreal, the freight is going to eat up the price of the pork, and that's why we made an investment in Saskatchewan. That's why we said it's good for government to have a piece of the action, because we had a window into the industry and we had a plant there that we knew we could guarantee to our hog producers that there would be a hog plant there and that they would have a close market.

We had some real clout in agriculture, but what did you do? Give it to private enterprise. Trust private enterprise. They'll do us good and we'll buy it back for 4 million, or 4.5 million. That's the way you consider helping farmers in Saskatchewan. Well, I'm afraid you've got a lot of hog producers very nervous in Saskatchewan. I'm afraid a lot of hog producers are nervous as to what is going to happen to their margins. What are you going to do to their margins? And how can you help farmers ride out the storm and continue to sell off industries like that, that could help to diversify in agriculture?

I think there's other things that the government should have done. They should have restored the Agriculture budget to its proper level to bring it back to a place where it was. If they would have had the same level of budget taking into account inflation, their budget in Agriculture should have been more than a hundred million dollars this year but what did they do? A drastic cut? They could have – like I said earlier – they could have introduced a farm fuel rebate program. We had a \$16 million program in place and that would have gone a long ways to help the farmers through this tight times and the squeeze they're facing.

And I think the government should have dug in their heels on the Crow rate, and they could have told the federal government in no uncertain terms that the Crow rate should remain non-negotiable. It's time the conservative government switched from its double-talk and the double-talk line that they are using now. It was critical whether Saskatchewan would bite on the bait dangled by Jean-Luc Pepin when he opened the door a wee bit to the proposition that freight rates be tied to the price of grain. But what did they do? What did they do? They didn't fall through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you consider that the grain prices are down, that the farm costs are up and that the PC government has cut \$12 million from their budget in agricultural, they have rejected a farm fuel rebate program, they've abandoned the fight to save the Crow rate, they've introduced legislation to the farm debt protection legislation, they've got lots of money for oil companies but reductions for agriculture, they haven't done anything for farmers as far as machinery costs and services are concerned, they've jiggered with stabilization programs and other programs that would help small and average-sized farmers. I think the government has amply demonstrated that they've rejected and they've failed dismally when it comes to recognizing the increasingly severe economic plight of Saskatchewan farmers, who are suffering from a grave cost-price squeeze and regrets that the Devine government has not implemented adequate measures and programs to address these problems. "I so move, seconded by my colleague, the member from Pelly.

MR. LUSNEY: – Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I take real pleasure in joining the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg in talking about the plight to the farmers. The plight of the farmers in Saskatchewan is something that is very important to me; I represent a basically rural constituency.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency and the urban centres in Pelly constituency are dependent on farmers. They are dependent on the prosperity of farmers because if the farmers prosper, so do the urban centres. I think that applies to many constituencies in Saskatchewan. That appear to be something that the government opposite does not recognize. Many of the members opposite, especially the urban members, feel that the farmers in Saskatchewan are not important. They feel that somehow it doesn't really matter what happens in rural Saskatchewan. Their main concern is somehow to look

after the chambers of commerce and the large businesses in the urban centres and forget about the rural areas. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that I am also concerned about business people, but I am concerned about the small business people . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — . . . the business people that operate in small towns, in smaller cities, and some of the small business people that operate in the large cities. Those, Mr. Speaker, are the roots of Saskatchewan. Those are the people who have made Saskatchewan what it is today, but we have a government here that continues to cater to large multinational business. They are not concerned about farmers. They are not concerned about small business, although they try to say through the chambers that they are.

The cost-price squeeze that has come upon the farmers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has affected the total economy of this province. I think we recognize that by what is happening in Saskatchewan today, what our economy is like. When you try to ignore — or you do ignore, as this government has — any sector of our economy or of our society in this province, we are going to have hardships. And today we see the province in a situation where things are getting worse and worse and worse.

Why are they getting worse? Well, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say they are getting worse because this government has not addressed itself to the problems that are out there. There are problems in rural Saskatchewan; there are problems in urban Saskatchewan; there are problems with farmers; there are problems for labour people; and this government fails to address many of those issues. They have gone in the direction totally of free enterprise and saying that somehow the multinationals, not only of Saskatchewan but of the world, are going to come into Saskatchewan and they are somehow going to get this economy booming.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that has not happened in the past. It will not happen now. There is no multinational company that is going to come into a province and invest money if they cannot see a good return on their investment. I think this government is wrong when they put all of their eggs in the one basket, as the Minister of Health would usually say, if they put all their eggs in one basket, they are going to find that they are going to run into a lot of trouble, because when that basket falls, they will have no eggs left in it.

That is what is happening in s, Mr. Speaker. Farm costs have gone up. WE have seen the price of grain go down. We see increased prices in fuel. We see increased prices in chemicals, in fertilizers — something that the farmer has no choice in. he has to buy the fuel, the chemicals, and the fertilizers to produce his crop, or to produce whatever type of food he requires of has to produce on his farm. Your hog producers, your dairy producers, find it costly to produce the grain that they have to use for their hogs. The dairy people have to use the fertilizers to produce more hay for their livestock. And, Mr. Speaker, as long as these costs continue to increase, the farmer is going to continue to find it more and more difficult to survive.

It is predicted that farm income could drop as much as \$500 million, Mr. Speaker. Now if farm income drops by that much, we can expect that there are going to be more and more hardships in this province we can expect that this government is going to go into a larger deficit, because the more income that is made by farmers . . . or the less income that is made by farmers, the less income is going to be made by labour people,

and less income tax is going to be paid. And when less income tax is being paid, this government is going to have to go a larger deficit, Mr. Speaker. They're going to have to go into a larger deficit just to maintain the programs that we have . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And as a member opposite says, "Unless we have more taxpayers." Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can see what has been happening in this province to this point. We are not getting more taxpayers; we are getting more people on welfare, and that is costing the taxpayers. That is what is happening in this province today. We are not getting more taxpayers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is what has been happening here.

Rather than a province that should be prosperous, we are finding Saskatchewan as a province that is going down and down, and is going into a recession when there really was no reason for it. We see today the possible lowest farm income since 1972 – lowest farm incomes, Mr. Speaker. We see farm costs about three times higher than they were back in 1971. How can the farmer survive today when you see incomes, farm income, going down and costs continuing to go up? Mr. Speaker, that is what has been happening . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . One member, one member with the government has stated and has said just now, "What was the cost of fuel when we went out of power?" Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say that the cost of farm fuel at that time was cheaper than what it is today. We have seen the cost of fuels continue to rise under this government and they have done nothing to alleviate that problem. They have done nothing to support the farmers of Saskatchewan in order that all of Saskatchewan can prosper.

As I mentioned before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the farmers prosper, all of Saskatchewan prospers. We see small manufacturers, implement manufacturers . . . And the Minister of Labour is here – not in his seat, but he is here. But an industry like Morris Rod-Weeder of Yorkton, in his home constituency; or Leon's; or Ram Industries – those are small manufacturers that prosper when the farmer shaves the money to spend. And that is why it is important, because as long as places like Morris and Friggstad and Leon's and every small manufacturer in Saskatchewan – Schulte's – and many others continue to have a market for the equipment that they produce that is going to provide jobs; that is going to provide revenue; that is going to provide income through income tax for the government – and that means that the economy of this province is going to be much better.

But this government has gone in the opposite direction. They have said, "The farmer is doing not bad, so we will just ignore him. In fact what we'll do is let him pay a little more through the Crow rate, and we won't fight too hard for that. We won't be that concerned about the small business man." Because if they were concerned about the small business man." They would be concerned about the farmer also, because that is where it starts. And when one area of the industry prospers, it seems to snowball and it continues to go and you have every business man in the province prosper.

But that is something that this government continues to ignore, and they don't even consider the fact that agriculture is the number one industry in Saskatchewan. It is because we have always been dependent on agriculture, and I think we will be dependent on agriculture for a long time to come.

What has the government offered farmers of Saskatchewan? Well, in a year that they've been in office, they offered to them a farm purchase program. Well, Mr. Speaker, what

has the farm purchase program done for the farmer? True, there may have been a good number of farmers that have purchased land through that purchase program, though farm credit, but how many of these were young farmers that were able to start on their own? How many of them were young farmers that were going into agriculture, going into farming to produce food? Well, Mr. Speaker, I venture to say that there would be very few of the young farmers who are interested in farming, interesting in starting out in agriculture, that had an opportunity to participate in that program. There would be very few of those farmers, Mr. Speaker.

The only ones that would take advantage of that program would be current farmers, established farmers, who may have had a son that they want to pass some land over to and that would give them the opportunity to sell this land at low interest and keep his son in farming, and at the same time provide some revenue for the father that sold land to him. But it will not provide any kind of assistance to farmer that want to get into farming that have no way of getting established or have no one to assist them in getting established. This government has not come up with a program that will allow a young farmer to get into agriculture, and that is what is wrong with the farm purchase program.

They have introduced a purchase program on lands branch land, Mr. Speaker. Sure, there are a lot of people and I would say basically in the South, in the large ranching area, where there is a lot of lands branch land or Crown land that is being used by the for wildlife. This land, if it is sold, Mr. Speaker, will very likely be cultivated, again creating problems for wildlife. We will be destroying part of nature when we do that. And this government saw fit to go in that direction, to ignore the concerns of the wildlife federation people in the land purchase program of Crown land.

There are many parcels of Crown land in central and northern Saskatchewan, Crown land that has been used as a wildlife habitat, that has been used as pasture land by farmers, and the same time used for wildlife. This land, if it is sold, Mr. Speaker, will very likely be cultivated, again creating problems for wildlife. We will be destroying part of nature when we do that. And this government saw fit to go in that direction, to ignore the concerns of the wildlife federation people — to ignore the concerns of the wildlife federation people in the land purchase program of Crown land.

There are many people out there that are concerned about the sale of Crown land. And, Mr. Speaker, we would hope that when this government looks at selling Crown land in various areas of the province, that they would consider first the importance to wildlife habitat in the area and how much of that land is available for wildlife habitat. And if they feel that there isn't much land that is available for wildlife, that land should not be sold. That, Mr. Speaker, is what they should be doing.

First of all, I would like to think that they would not have even attempted to go into a sale program for lands branch land. But they have continued to go in the direction of selling off land in this province that has been owned by the Crown, as they have gone ahead selling off just about everything that has been owned by the Crown or owned by the people.

And when I talk about it being owned by the Crown, that is being owned by the people of Saskatchewan because that's who it belongs to. And this government continues to sell land. It has gone in the direction of selling resources. It is trying to sell off everything it could. Selling land or selling our resources is not going to help agriculture, is not going to help industry, and it's not going to help business.

The cost-price squeeze that we have on Saskatchewan farmers today . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, the cost-price squeeze that we have on Saskatchewan farmers today is a serious one. It's a serious one because we hear from farmer after farmer that is either selling his land or going bankrupt. The banks are taking over. True enough, we no longer have land bank land. What we are going to have is bank land instead, because that's who's going to take it over. That is what's going to happen. And this is what this government is telling the farmers of Saskatchewan – they should go to bank land rather than land bank.

The Crow freight rate is another important issue to Saskatchewan farmers. The Crow was very important to Saskatchewan farmers because it kept the price of freight on their grain at a level that they knew what it was going to be from year to year.

And the slogans of this government in the past were, and if we go back to the last election a little over a year ago, they said at that time, "Keep the Crow, let Blakeney go." Well, Mr. Speaker, what happened then? Yes, the people believe them. They didn't let Blakeney go; Blakeney's still here. But they became the government. And what has happened after that, Mr. Speaker? They all of a sudden forgot about the point of "Keep the Crow." They are no longer interested in keeping the Crow. They are saying now that the Crow can go.

And true enough, as one of my colleagues just mentioned, what did they do just this past week-end? They elected a federal leader from Montreal who says the Crow should go. The federal leader of the Tory party says the Crow should go. The provincial leader of Saskatchewan, or the Premier of Saskatchewan tries to say that we should keep the Crow; somehow we should protect the farmer. I shouldn't have said that he says we should keep the Crow. Because I don't think too many members on that side have ever said that we should keep the Crow and really meant it. What they are saying is that we should have some kind of a safety net for the farmer. And when you talk about safety nets, then you're talking about getting rid of the Crow and replacing it with something different.

That is what this government has been talking about from day one, of the Crow issue and the Crow debate. They talk about some safety net. They don't have anything in place for a safety net. They're going to allow Ottawa make that decision. They're going to allow the CPR to make that decision. And then they will say, Well, fine, we can't do much about it. We'll just accept it." So basically, what they are saying is that they are in agreement with getting rid of the Crow, placing another hardship on Saskatchewan farmers. That is what this government is saying.

Every issue that concerns farmers, this government just believes in allowing someone else to make those decisions. They will not stand up for rural Saskatchewan. They will not stand up for the farmers of Saskatchewan. And if they did stand up for the farmers of Saskatchewan, I think you would see a better economy here today. They should stand up for the farmers of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan, and forget about the oil companies, the CPR, the multinationals, and I think you would see more business coming into Saskatchewan. You would see the province prosper. We would not have to cut back on social programs. We would not have to put parts of Social Services into Health to make it look better if we kept the farmers of Saskatchewan strong, healthy, and making a few dollars. And I talk about only a few dollars because there aren't too many farmers that wind up getting rich.

A farmer is an individual that will spend just about every dollar he makes. If he makes a dollar, he will go and invest it either in machinery or in land or in a means of producing more food for the country. That is what a farmer is like, Mr. Speaker, this government would tend to ignore the importance of the farmer. That, Mr. Speaker, is why we have many of the problems in this province we have today . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, the Minister of Agriculture can leave if he wishes.

We would have to look at – and I mentioned this the other day – what they have done in rural Saskatchewan. And that would include all of rural Saskatchewan. In fact one would have to look hard to see what they have done in any part of Saskatchewan, even in urban Saskatchewan. They got rid of the family farm improvement branch, Mr. Speaker, another important department to the farmers of Saskatchewan. And along with getting rid of land bank, and FFIB and lands branch, and FarmStart, what happens on the week-end? This party, and many of the members within it, the Minister of Finance included, got rid of a federal Conservative Leader who was a Westerner and replaced him with a millionaire from eastern Canada. Somehow they are saying that that is going to help western Canada; it's going to help Saskatchewan. I find it very difficult, Mr. Speaker, to understand the reasoning and the rationale behind what many of the members opposite did over the week-end. That is going to do nothing more than increase the cost to the farmer. It is going to . . . Mr. Speaker, that is going to bring up the costs to the farmer in Saskatchewan, because you are not going to find an eastern leader who is going to be concerned about the plight of the farmer of western Canada. He is not going to be concerned about the input cost – a right-wing, reactionary, Easterner.

Mr. Speaker, some of the members have said: on what do I base my comments? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it'd be easy to say that Mr. Mulroney, the now leader of the Conservative Party in Ottawa, has very little knowledge of western Canada. Anyone that has very little knowledge of western Canada or any other part of Canada is not likely to be concerned about something he knows very little about. His concerns are going to be with what he knows something about, and that is multinational industry, big corporations, and profit – pure, simple, profit – the people that have the power. That, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of leader the Conservative Party has in Ottawa today.

That's why I'm saying that it will not help rural Saskatchewan, it will not help the farmers of Saskatchewan, to have an eastern member in government in Ottawa. It has not helped to this point. We have had two Conservative prime ministers in Ottawa from western Canada. We had one, Rt. Hon. the late John Diefenbaker, and he could try to do something for western Canada to try to help the farmers. Mr. Speaker, he tried to help the farmers, but how long did he stay in there? His party did not allow him to stay in there long.

What has happened last week? We had another prime minister from western Canada. He brought the party up to where they were up to winning again. What happens? Again we find this government assisting in getting rid of someone who could have been a prime minister from western Canada, and putting in an Easterner that will not be concerned about what happens to western Canada, what happens to the farmer, or to what the economy is going to be like.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that this government continues . . . (inaudible)

interjection) . . . that this government continues on the basis of that open for business philosophy. It is unfortunate that they continue to go in that direction because open for business has not worked in the past, as I have stated. It is not likely to work now. And as long as they continue that, I can only see this province going in to a larger deficit. I can only see this province suffering both in agriculture, suffering in industry, because as long as the economy is poor you will not see industry moving into this province, and that will make it worse.

So their open for business policy will never work. It never has worked. And I would only like to say that if we want to see Saskatchewan prosper, then this government should forget about the open for business and encourage farmers to get into business, assist them to get into business and to make a bit of a profit, and in turn what we will see is industry grow in Saskatchewan. We will see the economy of Saskatchewan pick up and we will see Saskatchewan get back to what it used to be a year ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Speaker, in closing I would only to say . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I would only like to say, Mr. Speaker, that in all the attempts that we have made to make this government realise — to make this government realise that everything that happens in this province is dependent on agriculture. We have tried to make them realize that if we are going to see industry grow, that if we are going to see small business prosper, and if we are going to see people back to work instead of unemployment . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — If we are going to see people getting back to work, Mr. Speaker, then this government has to change the direction that they're going in. They should be going back in the direction of creating jobs — creating jobs for the people that have no jobs now, that are looking for jobs, people that they have put out of work in the past year. They should be looking at helping that farmer. They should be looking at helping the small business man because those are the people that are going to do what has to be done in this province to make the jobs, to make all of that happen, and to create and to make the economy of this province go up instead of down.

We should forget, to some degree, about the Bill Hunters . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — I don't see the relevance between Bill Hunter . . . Order, order, when the Speaker's on his feet. Is the member from Quill Lakes challenging the Chair . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I said, "When the Speaker is on his feet, the Assembly is supposed to be quiet." And I don't believe that the member from Pelly getting into the debate has anything to do with the motion that was made by the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, and I would ask him to stay on the motion that has been made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll accept your ruling. I was only going to say that if Saskatchewan is going to prosper, then this government — if we're going to help the farmer and the system in the cost-price squeeze that the farmer is faced with now — then this government would have to make that choice of whether we in the direction of the Bill Hunters, of the CPRs, or the oil companies. We are

going to have to make that choice – if we go in that direction or if we go in the direction of helping the farmer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — . . . (inaudible) . . . employment in this province. That, Mr. Speaker, I think is the key to whether this province will continue to go down. That is what has happened. That is what has happened with this government in the past year.

They tended to ignore the real issue – the issue of what should be done to improve our economy, to improve the plight of the farmer, to improve the situation of the employed people in this province. They have been using the small people – people who cannot help themselves, really – of this province. At least I would say that they have been using what they consider to be the peasant type of people. And they have been using those people to cut back on, to generate some money to finance the rich organizations for multinationals, the bill Hunters and all those, at the expense, Mr. Speaker, of the farmers and of working people in this province.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what this government has been doing. I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that once again in closing, it is very unfortunate that this government has decided to go in that direction, because as long as they continue to go in that direction the people of Saskatchewan cannot really have much to look forward to. They will not be able to say that in the year 1983, we will be able to see an improvement in our economy. They will not be able to say that, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's unfortunate that this government continues to ignore the real people of this province in the interests of what they feel are their friends, and that is the corporations . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That I agree with the member of the government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can only say that I will continue to fight on behalf of the farmers of Saskatchewan . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — I will continue to fight for those people who really mean something to the province, who are the grass roots people and the only one that can improve this economy if given half a chance. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what this government should be doing. They are not doing it to this point, and they can be certain that I will continue to fight on behalf of those people that they have ignored for over a year, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. PETERSEN: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I fell I just have to get into this debate. And in keeping with the opposition's usual state of mind . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — What mind?

MR. PETERSEN: — Thank you. The members have oversimplified the situation once again and distorted the facts. The lease land sale policy that the member from Pelly was talking about is a very good program, widely accepted by all groups? Because before we went ahead with the policy, we had consultation with all groups – consultation. This is the government that listens. We don't dictate, we listen. In case they don't understand what

consultation means, consultation means inviting people to come in and express their views and opinions on any given subject. The wildlife federation in Saskatchewan is happy with it. The people of Saskatchewan are happy with it. The only people who aren't happy with are the people who don't understand it and that's the opposition over there in the corner.

Now if you'd have done your research, or perhaps if you had gone ahead and told some of your research workers to do their job properly, you would know that that was the case. You would also know that the lands that are up for sale are lands that have been designated as not being critical for wildlife. There are millions of acres that have been designated as critical for wildlife. And we did that before we instituted a sale policy. Now if you want to go back, just go back about a month before the election – April 26, 1982 ... (inaudible interjection) ... Give them two months? No, go back about a month, when your government was in power. When your government was in power, they sent out an invitation to the leaseholders of the province of Saskatchewan to purchase their leases regardless of whether they were critical for wildlife or not. They didn't consult with the people. They didn't care to consult with the people. But we did. We consulted with them. People accepted. People like it. The wildlife people are happy. We're happy. I don't know why you're not.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree that there is a problem in the province of Saskatchewan with agriculture. I agree that there is a cost-price squeeze. I know it because I'm a farmer. I feel it. I feel that squeeze. And after 11 years of socialism, it's no wonder. We recognize the situation. I admit there's a problem. We recognize the situation and we have taken steps to correct it. Contrary to the record of the NDP, this government, unlike the NDP government, has acted. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks a little later on, I will be introducing an amendment ... (inaudible interjection) ... Great! I'd really like that.

Now, the members opposite accused us of inaction, of not doing anything. Well, Mr. Speaker, we removed the gas tax from the people of the province of Saskatchewan — \$120 million off the backs of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. The member who introduced this motion oversimplified the situation. He said, "Go out and give the farmers a 32 cent a gallon rebate and all our problems will be solved." No problem there at all. I'd love to do it except we don't have a heritage fund like Alberta has to do it with. You guys squandered it. The government under your control squandered that money, gave it away, and threw it away. Then we came to power, the cupboard was bare, and there's nothing to give. I would dearly love to do that.

Now perhaps I'm going to have to explain the savings to the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan with the gas tax removal to these people. The opposition obviously doesn't understand it; perhaps they don't want to. But listen closely because here come some facts. Rural municipalities – you know what those are? ... (inaudible interjection) ... I will keep it simple. I want them to understand too.

Well, a rural municipality is a municipal government and they hire people to work for farmers. They collect taxes and all sorts of nifty things like that. One of the largest costs that any rural municipality incurs is the cost of the fuel for their road maintenance equipment. That is one of the largest costs that they incur – 20 per cent of their cost to run an RM was removed when we removed that gas tax. We took 20 per cent right off the top. That was a saving to the taxpayer. That was a saving to the farmer – 20 per cent right there. They didn't have to raise their mill rate to keep up with your insidious

taxation methods. They didn't have to do that. They could hold the line on the mill rates. They could hold the line on the mill rates. They could hold the line on the taxation, and that benefits farmers.

School divisions – rural school divisions – they use school buses. We heard earlier today in question period that the members opposite aren't too sure what a school bus is, but they operate school buses. And just to keep it simple, school buses use fuel. That's what they use, yes sir, indeed, they really do. And there was tax on that fuel. There was a tax on that fuel, and that tax has to be paid, and it had to be paid by the taxpayers of the area. Look farmers – they were indirectly taxing school children as my colleague has just pointed out to me. You should hang your head in shame.

The cattle industry, the hog industry . . . I heard a lot of hogwash over there; they should know a lot about hogs. Hogs and cattle in the province of Saskatchewan are usually trucked to markets in trucks . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You're right, you've got it, that burn fuel. That's right. And we took that tax off them. We took 20 per cent off that tax; 20 per cent off the cost of their fuel.

When hogs and cattle are taken to market they travel in semi-trailers. I'll have to clarify that – semi-trailers.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: – Order, order. It's getting a little difficult to hear the debate and I think members on both side of the House should try and show a little respect to the speaker.

MR. PETERSEN: – Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was speaking about semi-trailers that haul cattle and hogs to market. Cattle and hogs in these semi-trailers were indirectly being taxed, because those semi-trailers were running on fuel that had a tax against it. But, we removed that tax and now those truckers don't have to pass that cost along to the farmers who own those cattle and hogs.

Let's talk about canola. I see the member from Quill Lakes can't take the truth. Canola is transported in the province in semi-trailer units to local crushers. That fuel tax that was on there was an indirect way of taxing that farmer for moving his canola to market. Well, we took it off. And that's a saving to those farmers, because that trucker didn't have to add that into the cost of his trucking bill. A \$12,000 to \$15,000 savings per company was what the member opposite quoted me as what an average trucking company saved. Well, thank God, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank God, because that was \$12,000 to \$15,000 that he didn't have to add on to his bill when he handed it to the farmer, and that's an indirect saving to that farmer, right there.

When you buy your farm parts, when you buy your cultivator shovels, you buy them at a local dealer, what have you; they come in on semi-trailers. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those semi-trailers were running on fuel previously that was being taxed, now it no longer is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Not all of us are lucky enough to have our own airplane so we can just hop in it and fly to Regina, pick up our parts and fly home; some of us have to buy our parts at a local dealer.

Let's talk about grain transportation for a minute. Grain transportation is a cost – definitely, it's a cost; it really is. The Pepin plan that was introduced by our federal government would have quadrupled the cost to the farmer to move his grain to the

export position. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask this Assembly; who put that government in there? The comrades of that motley little crew in the corner over there The federal NDP, the members from Saskatchewan put that Liberal government in there. They rejected a Conservative government under the leadership of Joe Clark. And then they turn around and put it onto us. Boy, they shove it to us. They put 67 cents a gallon tax on our fuel – that's the federal Liberals that they helped to put in power.

Well, when we get into transportation of grain to the export position, we have to talk about CP and CN, and we have to talk about costs.

The member from Pelly went on and on about big multinationals; CP being a terrible, terrible thing – really bad, horrible. Oh, it was just awful, raking us off something fearful. This government, this previous government didn't have the foresight to tax them. At the same time that the people of the province of Saskatchewan were paying \$120 million in an insidious fuel tax, those big multinationals were only paying \$3 million to move over 28 million tons of goods across the province. Thanks a lot, guys. I wonder who your friends really are.

We changed that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We changed that. We moved the tax up. Now we take 12 million off those big, terrible, multinationals. I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, but I think they've had enough for one evening. So therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to move that resolution no. 18 be amended by striking out all the words after the word "Assembly," and by substituting therefore the following:

commends the government for recognizing the severe economic plight of Saskatchewan farmers who are suffering from a gross cost-price squeeze, and furthermore, commends the government for implementing complementary measure and programs to address these problems.

Moved by myself, seconded by the member from Humboldt.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. DOMOTOR: — Mr, Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague on the amendment that he has offered. I certainly agree with him wholeheartedly. Since there's much more that a person can say on this topic, and there's more business before the house, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Resolution No. 21 – Provincial Minimum Wage

MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I want to address some remarks to the House with respect to this resolution. And the resolution, as members will know, reads:

That this Assembly condemn the Saskatchewan government for its callous disregard for the plight of the most needy in this province, and urge the Saskatchewan government to implement immediately a substantial increase in the provincial minimum wage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with this under two headings: one, those who are needy and who need government assistance that would come other than by an

increase in the minimum wage; and those who are needy and will require assistance through an increase in the minimum wage.

I won't attempt to review all of the people in the province who are in need. Regrettably, in our society as in most societies, there are a number of people, and a distressing number of people, who are in need, and they fall under the familiar categories of the old and the very young and those who are handicapped, physically or mentally or educationally. I just want to touch on three or four or five of these classes and recall to this house what the government has one or not done about their particular needs and concerns, and in the course of so doing, express my opposition to the policies being pursued by the government and invite the House to condemn those policies.

Let me turn first to senior citizens as a group of people who are in need. Not all senior citizens are in need; not all senior citizens who have modest incomes are in need. Some senior citizens have reasonably ample incomes and some senior citizens, even though with quite modest incomes, manage quite well, and they therefore cannot be classed as being in need. And any examination of the plight of senior citizens in this province reveals that those are in the best shape, the best circumstances who have adequate incomes. Those who have modest incomes frequently are able to manage quite well if they are healthy and if they have accommodation which does not cost too much – and that tends to be the key. If they are healthy and if they have accommodation which does not cost too much, they seem to be able to manage quite well.

I know that I have gone about this province and met senior citizens in senior citizens' accommodation in smaller centres of this province, and found people with relatively modest incomes who were doing quite well; and they were happy and they did not feel that they were under financial pressure. However, I did find in other circumstances people who did feel they were under financial pressure, and those tended to be people who did not own their own homes or did not live in subsidized accommodation. Those who live in senior citizens high rises and the like tend to be pretty good and pretty well off financially. Those who own their own homes, in most circumstances, do fairly well. What we should be directing our attention to then, Mr. Speaker, is to assist that small number of people of people who own their own homes who still are under financial pressure, and that substantial number of people who are renting at market rates and do not have subsidized accommodation. They are people who are under financial pressure.

The previous government attempted to deal with this by introducing a senior citizens shelter allowance which was aimed specifically at those groups, so that senior citizens would not be called upon to spend a disproportionate amount of their total income on shelter. And it wasn't going to be a large number of people, probably one-quarter of one-fifth of the number of senior citizens family units in the province. That struck me as being prudent and it struck me as being compassionate. It struck members opposite as being profligate and they struck it out of their budget. They struck it out of their budget, Mr. Speaker, and I condemn them for it. And this is one group in society who I think we should be doing something for, and members opposite feel otherwise, and they have not provided a senior citizens shelter allowance.

I now turn to another group who are certainly under a pressure in our society, and they are people who are mentally handicapped and who are trying to live in the community.

I won't review the history of people who have had mental illness or mental retardation in this province and who used, many years ago in this province as in other provinces, to be institutionalised in large institutions. And I won't review the fact that in recent years

many of these people are living in their communities. I do say that they are under pressure; they are among the most needy in our province. They need some drop-in centres; they need some support services in the community.

We did not see in the budget that was presented to us any adequate provision for increased support services for psychiatric patients or for former psychiatric patients in this province. We saw a cut – a cut, Mr. Speaker – in the modest grant that went to the former mental patients who were setting up a little club for themselves – the organization known as By Ourselves. A modest amount of money was needed in order that they might have a little drop-in centre because they don't have that many friends in the community, and they have some difficulty in relating to other people, partly because of their problems and partly because of the problems of other people not being sufficiently sensitive to the concerns of people who have suffered from mental illness. But nonetheless, we had this government deciding that in its \$3 billion it couldn't find \$30,000 for the needs of this group called By Ourselves.

We saw, in looking at the budget of the Department of Health, a cut in the psychiatric services branch. Surely if there are any group in society where we perhaps have not fully met their needs, it's in the psychiatric services division of the Department of Health. And yet this government decides to cut staff in that area. I won't deal in detail with this government's reaction to people who are suffering from mental illness or mental retardation, save only to recall that over at Valley View they decided to cut staff and cut the PIC (Pictogram-Ideogram Communication) program and the originator of that program. We dealt with that in another debate in this House.

May I now turn to another group who I say are in need of special assistance from this government, and that is young people, children, who are starting in life and who need all the assistance we can give them to start their life in a healthy state? We are aware of the general health programs, but we are also aware of a children's dentistry program that used to be provided to four-year-olds in this province on the advice of dentists, who said that if we can start young people getting dental care at the age of three or four – it was provided at four – and then have them go to school and know that they will be provided with dental care in their school years, we will have people entering their adulthood with dental health of a standard which has not previously been enjoyed by a great number of people in this province.

Now that is the advice of dentists. I am sure no hon. members would wish to deny that, but I am sure they will equally not wish to try to defend the fact that they have cut out dental care for four-year-olds. Out of a \$3 billion budget, they couldn't even maintain the program that was already there. It wasn't a case of expanding it, it was a case of simply maintaining what was there.

Now I want to turn to another group of people who I believe are in special need in our province who would come under the category of the most needy in this province, and I speak of the people of northern Saskatchewan. I don't think that many people would wish to challenge that fact . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Members opposite are enquiring of me to what fact I am referring. That is that a very large number of people in northern Saskatchewan fall into the category of the most needy in our province. If they deny that, then I think they deny it only from a massive ignorance of the social conditions in northern Saskatchewan. I invite anyone to go to some of those communities as they now exist and see the conditions under which many people in northern Saskatchewan live. They live under those conditions not because they choose to live under those conditions, but rather because there are no economic opportunities

for them in northern Saskatchewan, and they do not have the skills, and they do not have the cultural background to see economic opportunities in other parts of Saskatchewan.

Members deny that, but I invite them to go to a community like La Loche. I invite them to go to a community like Pinehouse and see some of the conditions that are there. If members opposite feel that not enough was done in the past to deal with the situation or that what was done was done improperly, I know they will move and they will have moved in the last 14 or 15 months to cure that. That is the test: have you done it? Have you moved to see that the people in northern Saskatchewan are less needy than they were 12 or 15 months ago? And I say that that is not true. I say that there are higher levels of unemployment there now than there were 15 months ago. I say there are fewer jobs than there were 15 months ago. I say there are fewer opportunities for people to earn their own living and to live their own life the way they want to than they were 15 months ago. And I say there are more people on welfare in northern Saskatchewan than there were 15 months ago. And if you deny that, then please explain the figures put out by the Department of Social Services which assert that there are more people on welfare in northern Saskatchewan than there were 15 months ago.

Now those, Mr. Speaker, are facts, and I don't think anyone can deny the fact that these people are among the most needy, as are some of our senior citizens, as are some of our people with mental illness or mental retardation, and as are some of our young people to whom I have previously referred.

I invite hon. members to see whether or not there aren't projects in northern Saskatchewan – such as a water system in Sandy Bay, such as some improvements to the sewer and water system at Cumberland House – that could not be proceeded with, that could not provide employment and provide valuable assets and an opportunity to relieve some of the need that is there in northern Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, members opposite are offering their comments as to what should be done. And I don't say that all the answers are clear. I do say that previous little has been done in northern Saskatchewan in the last 12 or 15 months to alleviate what is very much a circumstance and a situation of need.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I outlined at the outset that the motion had two headings: one, instances of need that did not fall under the category of minimum wage; and two, instances of need that did fall under the minimum wage. And anyone who was not able to read that in the motion, I invite them to read it once again because very, very clearly the motion deals with all those who are in need in the province. I have dealt with senior citizens and mental retardation and mental illness and young people and people in northern Saskatchewan, and now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to turn to the people who are in receipt of Saskatchewan assistance, and I ask whether or not it is right, just, fair and equitable to cut back on Saskatchewan assistance, as members opposite have done, in a belief that somehow it is easier to get along on Saskatchewan assistance now than it was a couple of years ago. In the belief, apparently, that the levels of assistance have been increased sufficiently to take account of inflation, which isn't true, and members opposite know it isn't true.

Notwithstanding the fact that the levels of Saskatchewan assistance have not been increased, categories of assistance have been cut out; categories of clothing assistance for the first three months, shelter assistance for the first three months, or

aspects of shelter assistance – furniture and the like. These have been cut out despite the fact that the effective level of Saskatchewan has been reduced in the last 15 months. Now if people opposite don't believe that people who are in receipt of Saskatchewan assistance are people among the most needy in our province, then they have a very warped view of average incomes in this province. If they feel that people on assistance are not among the most needy, then they must feel that there are a great number of people with low incomes who have an income well below the level of Saskatchewan assistance, and that, Mr. Acting Speaker, is simply not true.

I turn now to the second issue, the question of whether or not there are people who are needy in this province, and who, in order to relieve their needs, require an immediate increase in the minimum wage – and I say there are. I say that there are approximately 60,000 people in this province who receive the minimum wage, or who have wages which are directly related to the minimum wage. When I say that I think all of us know to what I refer. I am aware of major employers in this city whose wage rates are stated in terms of 25 cents above the minimum wage, or 35 cents above the minimum wage. Sears is one of those in their mail order operation, and there are many others – many others. These people may not be getting the minimum wage in the strict sense of the word, but they do not get an increase until the minimum wage is increased, and when the minimum wage is increased they get an increase, so they have very much a minimum-wage-related income and they're almost universally low incomes – the minimum wage was plus 25 cents or 30 cents or 35 cents. And, Mr. Acting Speaker, a very large number of those people are women. A very large number of those are women and all of the statistics indicate that it is not true – it is simply not true – that a majority of anything resembling a majority of that group are young people just leaving school. They are, for the most part, people who have been in the work-force for a goodly number of years and who are using this income to support themselves and their families. In a large number of cases, they are people who have children and who are supporting families.

These people are people who are in need. I did not detect 15 months ago that they were indulging in riotous living, that they had excessive income, that they simply had too much money. And nobody opposite, when they were in opposite, said that they were indulging in riotous living or that they had too much money. And if they were getting the right amount, or perhaps even something less than the right amount . . . But let's assume for a moment they were getting the right amount 15 or 18 months ago. They are now getting significantly less than the right amount, because they're getting no more dollars. You know and I know that their cost of living has gone up the same as everybody else. Their income is eroded by the same inflation that erodes your income and mine, that decided, that made us decide that we would increase our incomes by 6 per cent, or whatever the figure was. We said that that was fair and just because inflation was eroding our incomes. I have no quarrel with it being fair and just, viewed in isolation, but if it's fair and just for us and fair and just for public servants, it is equally fair and just for people who are on minimum wage. Their income is eroded by inflation just as surely as yours and mine, just as surely as the employees of this government.

Now what reasons are offered for not increasing the minimum wage? Well, I hear different reasons every time I hear them offered, but they're almost equally unconvincing. It is argued that many of the recipients are simply young people out of school, that it is pin money or spending money and does not represent the amount they need to support themselves because they're still living with their parents. We hear that; unfortunately, the figures don't justify the characterization of the people who were receiving minimum wage. Obviously, there will be some in that category but the

overwhelming number are not in that category.

But what are some of the other arguments? That it will make us less competitive, and that one, always, I find particularly amusing. Less competitive in what sense of the word? Where do the recipients of these minimum wages work? Well, they work in hotels. And it may well be that hotels in Toronto will be able to operate cheaper, but somehow I don't think that that's going to make the Regina hotel any less competitive. The market which they serve is a localized market and it does not affect their competitive advantage if all of the hotels are paying an extra 25 or 50 cents. Another large group of these employees work in restaurants and similar establishments, and the same arguments apply.

It's simply not true that any small businessman is made less competitive, so long as all of his competitors are required to pay the same amount. And that's true equally of the service industries which are about this province. It may well be that you can hire someone to pump your gas in Montreal cheaper than you can hire the person in Moose Jaw if we have a minimum wage of \$4.50 an hour, but this is not likely to cause you to go to Montreal to get your gasoline. And members opposite better consider that because the argument that somehow it kills our competitive edge has never been effectively made, and if it's going to be made, I invite hon. members opposite to make it in this debate.

No one denies that our wage has some very, very modest effect on total costs in any community; that we can see. It also, incidentally, has a very significant effect of the amount of money that's been spent and the amount of retail business which will be available for the merchants. That's a little point which is often overlooked by members opposite. They think that merchants can make a whole lot of money if every employee in the city has a wage cut. The difficulty with that is that there is nobody left to spend any money with the merchants, and nothing leads to more prosperity for small businessmen than a good flow of income, be it wage income or any other kind of income. It makes for disposable income and that makes for tills which are ringing and sales which are rising.

Now, I ask all hon. members to think what we export from this province. What are the big exports in this province? And I want someone, when they enter this debate, to tell me how an increase of 25 or 50 cents in the minimum wage is likely to raise significantly some of these costs. Is it really thought that the cost of producing grain goes up very much because the minimum wage goes up 25 or 50 cents? I've heard a whole lot of reasons why the cost of grain production goes up, but I've not heard very many to suggest that it's due to increases in the minimum wage.

I think of cattle production, and I ask right from the cow-calf operation to the sale of the feeder or whatever: how much are we going to add to the costs by increasing minimum wages 25 or 50 cents? I say almost infinitesimally, if at all.

I think of potash, and I'd be interested to think of how the cost of producing potash could be very much increased by changes in the minimum wage. There's nobody who is in any way directly related to the potash industry who is earning the minimum wage, and it has to be a very, very indirect relationship, and I suggest to you that it will have a next to nil effect on the cost of producing potash.

And as for oil, it must be very close to a nil effect on the cost of producing oil. And now I've dealt with potash and oil and grain and cattle and those are the four biggest items of

export from this province. Even turning to uranium, or farm machinery, the production of farm machinery, or electrical components which are some other smaller exports from our province, it is next to impossible to figure out how an increase in the minimum wage is going to protect the cost of producing those so as to adversely affect our competitive edge. It isn't there. So the argument that we are ruining our competitive advantage by raising the minimum wage is a fallacious argument.

I say to members opposite that they should ask themselves whether or not they are acting to deal with the plight of the most needy in this province. I say they are not. I say they have not done what they should do to raise the minimum wage on July 1, 1982, and on January 1, 1983 and they have now stopped it again for July 1, 1983 – and that is clearly a policy aimed at the most needy in our society; clearly aimed at those who need an increase in the minimum wage, and no justification has been offered for it.

I have listened to the Minister of Labour on many occasions attempt to justify this and I have never heard anything which is a valid argument which would justify the failure to increase the minimum wage. We have not heard any argument. I'm sure members opposite will mount their arguments this evening and I will listen to them intently; I will listen to their arguments intently. But I suggest that there are no valid arguments for refusing to raise the minimum wage. I suggest there are no valid arguments for failing to deal with these most needy in our province. And accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Shaunavon . . . for Regina Centre . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Acting Speaker I move the motion as earlier set out in my remarks and in the blues:

That this Assembly condemns the Saskatchewan government for its callous disregard for the plight of the most needy in this province, and urge the Saskatchewan government to implement immediately a substantial increase in the provincial minimum wage

Seconded by the member for Regina Centre, I so move.

MR. SHILLINGTON: – Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to take this . . . It may be the last opportunity I have to implore this government to rethink its hard and cruel freezing of the minimum wage for two years. I want to take the opportunity to remind the Minister of Labour of the role of his department. The role of his department is not to protect the business community from the working people. That is not the role of his department. He has consistently behaved as if that was the role of his department. But I say to the member from Moosomin, and you may be kind of enough to pass that on to the Minister of Labour who isn't here, that is not the role of his department. If he knows what the role of his department is, he has it very cleverly disguised, because everything he has done has been consistent with a very different concept for that department.

There is no more apt illustration of that minister's misunderstanding of the role of his department than the minimum wage. Who in this Assembly would suggest for moment that the minimum wage was frozen in the best interests of working people? Of course it wasn't . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I know I don't believe it. Of course it wasn't. It was frozen to assist the business community, and that's the only reason it was done. No adequate explanation has ever been offered for freezing the minimum wage. The explanation offered by the Minister of labour is by far, I think, the most bizarre. He suggested that people should not be thinking of minimum wage but should be thinking of maximum wage – should be thinking of maximum wage. I'm sure that means a lot.

I'm sure that means a lot to the young people trying to earn enough between session to go back to school, and for whom in the short run there is no option but to continue working at minimum wage.

I'm sure it means a lot to single-parent families whose entire energy is absorbed in trying to keep together a family and a job and a house. I'm sure it means a lot to them. The member from Saskatoon Nutana put it more clearly. The member from Saskatoon Nutana put it more clearly when she said with respect to the minimum wage, "I made it and I'm successful and so why can't they?" That is the attitude of members opposite. That is their attitude – that those who are on minimum wage are there because they're lazy and they're stupid, and if only they had their energy and their gifts, they wouldn't be on minimum wage. I say that that elitist attitude permeates your thinking. It was said by the member from Saskatoon Nutana; it was said by the member from Yorkton.

What freezing the minimum wage has done, Mr. Speaker, is to sharpen the inequality in our society. In January of 1982, the minimum wage was about 44 per cent of the average industrial wage in Saskatchewan. By January 1983 this had fallen from 48 per cent to 44 per cent – 44 per cent of the average industrial wage in Saskatchewan in your first year in office. By the end of January 1984, by the end of your second year in office, the minimum wage will be 40 per cent of the average industrial wage. What you do when you freeze minimum wage is quite simply to sharpen inequality.

It's in sharp contrast to the way government members have treated everyone else. Everyone else got at least 6.5, including the members of this Assembly. And if it made good sense for members of this Assembly – If it made good sense for those on minimum wage to make this contribution to pull the economy out of its recession, then surely it should have made good sense for members of this Assembly to make the same sacrifice.

There is no credible evidence that reducing or freezing the minimum wage will create more jobs. I have stated before and I remind members that during the '70s this province had consistently the highest minimum wage, the lowest rate of unemployment. And I should add, as well, while members opposite are freezing the wages of those on minimum wage, it has scarcely done the same thing with respect to their costs, even where they directly control them.

Have they froze the SGI rates? Hardly. Have they froze Sask Tel rates? Hardly. Have they froze the SPC rates? Oh, we wish that they had? SPC rates are likely to go up three times in the next month.

I may say that this something of a new low. Not even in the days of Ross Thatcher, the dark days of the Liberal government in the '60s, did we go for two years without an increase in the minimum wage. This is unprecedented within recent memory.

The suggestion by members opposite that somehow or other this will make Saskatchewan business more competitive is just simply nonsense, and it flies in the face of the obvious facts. The facts are that almost everyone who pays the minimum wage is in the service sector. Almost everyone who pays the minimum wage is in the service sector catering to a local economy and not in competition with people from Manitoba or Alberta . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Well, I say to the member from Saskatoon Nutana who asks me to talk about women's rights – I am. This is an issue which affects women in a very real way. And if the member

from Saskatoon Nutana had a little more sensitive feel for the average women and for women who are raising children, for single-parent families, I think the member from Saskatoon Nutana might realize that this is an issue which affects women and affects them very directly. The vast majority of people on minimum wage are women, and I'm surprised that the member from Saskatoon Nutana does not know that.

I say, Mr. Chairman, in speaking in support of this, I say that this government has done some harsh, cruel things to some undeserving people, but this is as cruel, as unwarranted, and as illogical as anything they have done, and I ask the members opposite to rethink this and give those on minimum wage an increase.

MRS. CASWELL: – Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity in a very small way to express my utter contempt at the hypocrisy of the opposition motion. It is interesting in a province where we have had too much first-hand experience with socialism that I have noticed if you are rich you can survive socialism, but if you are poor, it will destroy you. I have noticed that the NDP do not have a total disregard for the most needy in society. They use them, and they use them, and they manipulate them, and they use the best political pawns, and they control them with fear and bureaucracy, and they intervene in their lives in such a way that it destroys their initiative, it destroys their pride, it destroys their dignity. I am very pleased to realize that they realize they do not have a total disregard for the most needy. They have needed them to put themselves in power and to create their fine bureaucracy that is still with us and is still harming Saskatchewan.

There is a basic difference between this government and the past government. We made . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It's people like Colin. Besides which they don't have a sense of humour like the Tories have. We in this side believe that people have a right to have an opportunity to better themselves. The socialist philosophy is that, in their arrogance, they must control other people's lives, they must spend other people's money to have programs that benefit a few controlling the programs in the guise of helping the poor.

Consistently while in question period, I have seen over and over again they have used groups of the most needy in society to score political points, not because they are concerned about those particular groups, but because they are some of those their friends who have a cut.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have found in North America that left libs find the poor is a great moneymaking enterprise. There have been more people who made money trying to fight the war on poverty than anything else. There are many people with \$60,000 jobs because there is somebody who they classify as poor who needs a program, and they want to run their life. And they know if they run their life, they could have a nice, fat government job. So the real people on welfare in this society are those who are using the poor to create a bureaucracy.

We have writers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, such as Thomas Sowell, who has written a book, *Pink and Brown People*. He is what we would call a black and grew up in Harlem. His book describes over and over again how what we call the left-lib philosophy has harmed the poor, has caused family breakdown, has in fact benefited those people who believe they can run lives of the poor more than it has benefited the poor.

There's one line I consistently use in Westmount. I ask . . . When I campaign against an

NDP incumbent, I say, "Take your pick. Do you want the government to run your life, or do you want to do it yourself?"

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MRS. CASWELL: — And do you know what they did? Do you know what they answered? They decided that somebody with the highest majority in the last election could be dispensed with. I'm not saying, Mr. Speaker, that I have all the answers for all the constituents out there, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that my constituents have answers for themselves and I believe my job as a constituent is to help them have the freedom to run their own life and to get government off the backs of the poor . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MRS. CASWELL: — . . . so that the poor may have a chance at the economic pie in their own terms, that they may feed their own children, that they may have their own dignity and pride that comes from raising themselves in society, rather than a benevolent, all-domineering, all-dictatorial bureaucracy, so-called, interfering in their lives. This past government was masters at creating problems so that they could have a bigger bureaucracy. Consistently in the North, year after year after year, I have seen people's lives grow worse because of government intervention, not better.

It is time that those peoples who call themselves Conservatives, those people who want government out of people's lives quit apologizing and thinking that socialists care about the poor. The socialists have used the poor for their own power. They consistently do it. They refuse to go by the most basic elementary economic facts a grade 6 students could understand, because it does not help him to have a government department here, a government department there — experts to run other people's lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was asked by my colleagues, who have endured day after day of listening to the opposition, to keep it short. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will keep it short because the subject of what the opposition has done to the poor would take at least a week. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must address an issue that is becoming ludicrous in this House, and that is the issue of women.

It seems to me that one of the absolute most arrogant games in this House is that the opposition members care about women and this side do not. First of all, we care about women to a point that we believe that women have sometimes different views on things. Some women are Conservatives; some are socialists. Some women wish to stay home with their children' some women wish to work. We do not believe there is an absolute pattern that women must live, so we do not believe that we need experts, such as the hon. member from Regina Centre, to run our lives.

Now, he calls this being sensitive to women. Frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I tend to think it's being insensitive to miss the hon. member's desire to be a champion of a group of people who he can wield some power over. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are so kind to them, we even occasionally allow them a little bit of humour. I wish, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the socialists who continually like to parade this group of the needy, this group of the needy, this group, and so on and so on, in their check-list of dah, dah-dah, dah-dah, would start seeing people as individuals — people who are tired of being categorized by their problems instead of categorized by their assets; people who are tired of being categorized by their sex instead of by their views, by their strength, by their opinions and by their politics; people who are tired of being categorized

by their race instead of their abilities, people who are tired of being categorized because they live north of P.A. instead of the fact that they are of Saskatchewan people and, to quote one of the great many Conservatives, “wants jobs, jobs, jobs, and furthermore employment.” Incidentally, that was . . . I thought at least I would get a laugh from my side on that one. I’m sorry, I didn’t speak it in Newfie. I’ll go back . . . I promise to learn Newfie by 1985.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to notice a real difference between that side of the House and this side is our treatment of the poor. I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very easy to give the poor this bureaucracy, this program, that program, on and on and on – tentacles of government running their life. It’s very easy to do it and to use other people’s money to do it and to call it compassion. That’s a very easy and very deceitful game. But it is a much more difficult, it takes much more integrity, much more honesty, to look at those people and see them as individuals, individuals who want to have the opportunity to raise themselves, to have upward mobility in society in their terms. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have chosen the hard route, but the route of dignity and the route of freedom. I make no apology for that.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot fully address the issue at this time how their philosophy has harmed the needy in society, has kept the needy needy for their political goals. I cannot honestly address that, so I ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I may adjourn debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

Return No. 50

MR. YEW moved, seconded by Mr. Shillington, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 50 showing:

- (1) The total amount paid by the Department of Environment during the period May 8, 1982 to April 12, 1983 to commercial airlines for air fares; (2) the name of each individual for whom air fare has been paid and the amount for each individual.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: – Mr. Speaker, I’m going to ask that this be adjourned, as I will the rest of them. I don’t mind that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh sure, go through them, I’m going to adjourn them. And I give the undertaking, Mr. Speaker. I’m quite surprised quite frankly, that we went through the whole list standing them, and quite simply I don’t have the amendment with me that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, move them, I’ll adjourn them. So for item 1, resolution no. 50, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Return NO. 74

MR. YEW moved, seconded by Mr. Shillington, than an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 74 showing:

(1)The name of each person whose services were retained after May 1, 1982 under a written contract, under which such person was paid or entitled to be paid an amount of \$1,000 per month or more, by or with the Department of Environment; (2) the date on which each written contract was entered into; (3) the amount, terms, and conditions of remuneration for each contract; (4) the experience and qualifications of each person retained under contract; (5) the duties of each person retained under contract; (6) a copy of each written contract.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: – Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Return No. 75

MR. YEW moved, seconded by Mr. Shillington, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 75 showing:

(1) The name of each person whose services were retained after May 1, 1982 under a written contract, under which such person was paid or entitled to be paid an amount of \$1,000 per month or more, by or with the Department of Northern Saskatchewan; (2) the date on which each written contract was entered into; (3) the amount, terms, and conditions of remuneration for each contract; (4) the experience and qualifications of each person retained under contract; (5) the duties of each person retained under contract; (6) a copy of each written contract.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: – Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Return No. 76

MR. YEW moved, seconded by Mr. Shillington, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 76 showing:

Regarding the period May 8, 1982 to March 24, 1983: (1) the number of out-of-province trips made by the Minister of Northern Saskatchewan on Saskatchewan government business; (2) in each case his destination, the purpose of the trip, the names of the person who accompanied him at government expense; and (3) in each instance the total cost of the trip, including air fares, hotels, meals, etc.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: – Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Return No. 77

MR. YEW moved, seconded by Mr. Shillington, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 77 showing:

(1)The total dollar amount paid by the Department of Northern Saskatchewan for air fares between May 8, 1982 and April 12, 1983 to commercial airlines for air fares; (2) the name of each individual, excluding the names of person receiving payments of air fares as part of a general program for needy persons, for whom an air fare has been paid and the amount paid for each individual.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: – Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Return No. 109

MR. SHILLINGTON moved, seconded by Mr. Yew, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 109 showing:

Regarding the period May 8, 1982 to May 3, 1983, the name and position of each individual in every department, crown corporation or agency of the Government of Saskatchewan whose employment has been terminated due to being dismissed for cause or laid off.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: – Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Return No. 111

MR. ENGEL moved, seconded by Mr. Lingenfelter, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 11 showing:

(1)The total cost to the Government of Saskatchewan of the Agriculture Outlook Conference held in Saskatoon on February 7 and 8, 1983, and particulars of: (a) the cost of rental facilities; (b) the cost of all meals, lunches and banquets provided; (c) the cost of entertainment at the banquets on February 7, 1983; (d) the cost of receptions; (e) the cost of expenses and fees for each speaker at the conference; (f) other expenses.

(2)The amount paid to or on behalf of each person who received or benefited from the payment of expenses by the Government of Saskatchewan or any of its agencies or crown corporations for attendance at the conference.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: – Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr.

McLaren that Bill No. 104 – **An Act to amend The Trade Union Act** be now read a second time.

MR. LINGENFELTER: – Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we left off last day on dealing with Bill 104, we were debating some of the inequities that are very obvious in looking at this bill. And at that time we had asked for leave to adjourn debate because of what we saw as the representation with this bill which allowed for many changes which were directed in favour of the employer. And we wanted to see and to hear from the people of the province – the working people of the province – to see whether or not in fact there was anything in this bill which was worth salvaging.

I must say, after having a week to review and to look at the details of the bill, to talk to a number of people, we find that this bill is as bad as or worse than it looked at first glance. We find, as mentioned earlier, that it is a bill which takes up on about 13 of the recommendations of the chambers of commerce, and doesn't take up one of the issues that has been raised, over the year or 15 months since this government took office, by the working people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Last day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I raised the issue about morality in dealing with labour and the fact that we in the New Democratic Party and we in the New Democratic caucus in Saskatchewan, I think, feel comfortable with the fact that we were seen to be and will be seen to be defenders of the rights of workers in the province of Saskatchewan.

I think it's fair to say that this is not the first time in this Legislative Assembly that we have seen this type of reactionary legislation brought in by a reactionary government. I look back to the debate that went on back in on September 7, 1966, to another bill – Bill No. 2 – which was being debated by the then Liberal government under Ross Thatcher. I choose one little paragraph which was given by the then leader of the opposition, one Woodrow Lloyd. And he said that this bill is a "compost heap of many of the most vicious, least democratic statutes in Canada. If it is not a contravention of the Canadian and Saskatchewan bill of rights, it is at least a total contraction." Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that this Bill 104 which we are dealing with here tonight, and will be dealing with during this week, is very much the same as that bill, Bill No. 2, brought in by the Thatcher government back in the 1960s.

I said last day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we felt comfortable with the fact that we were on the side of the working people of the province and lined up against the multinationals and those who would take away from the workers and the rights of workers which have been built up over the last number of years in Saskatchewan. I say we are comfortable, because in reading many of the programs of very many of the churches, the traditional churches, we find that we are in good company. I would like to quote from a document issued by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, titled the "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis." Last day I mentioned that there was reference to unions in this document, and references to the working class people and the poor, which we have been debating here in the House today. I have this document now and I would like to take a moment to quote from it, on page 2 of this document. And it won't take a great deal of time. But in part the bishops say:

In developing strategies for economic recovery, we firmly believe that the first priority must be given to the real victims of the current recession, namely the unemployed, the welfare poor, the working poor, pensioners, native people, women, young people, small farmers and fishermen, some factory workers, some small business men and women. This option calls for

economic policies which realize that the needs of the poor have priority over the wants of the rich; that the rights of workers are more important than the maximization of profits; that the participation of marginalized groups takes precedence over the preservations of a system which excludes them.

Well I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that bill 104 moves us backwards in this process of giving rights to the working people in the province of Saskatchewan.

And the document has more to say about unions and people who do the real work throughout the world. And in part they are giving a response to the current economic problems. Then they list out a number of solutions which they would see as part of an economic solution. And point 5 says:

Labour unions should be asked to play a more decisive and responsible role in developing strategies for economic recovery and employment. This requires the restoration of collective bargaining rights where they have been suspended; collaboration between unions and the unemployed and the unorganised workers; and assurance that labour unions will have an effective role in developing economic policies.

Well I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that kind of company that we are in, in dealing with Bill 104, is not bad company to keep. I think that all people in this Assembly would agree that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is not a left-wing organization that is out to do in the economic planning of this government or any other government. They are simply interested in protecting the rights of the workers throughout Canada and I believe throughout the world, if you would read the last encyclical of the Pope John Paul II when he talks about the role of workers and what the role of workers will have to become in the coming years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I mentioned earlier I've had an opportunity to review, with some care, the bill itself – these anti-worker amendment – and to review the record of the minister's lame and weak attempt to explain and to justify these amendments. I have also had the opportunity to listen to the worries and concerns expressed to me about the bill by many of our constituents and by a great many other resident in Saskatchewan, both in the cities of Regina and Saskatoon, as well as in my own constituency of Shaunavon.

It is obvious, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that like other right-wing governments this Tory government chose to abuse its huge majority and bring this bill in in what we believe are the dying moments of the session here in this legislature. And it's not only this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were other bills that were brought in at the last moment – the legal aid amendments; planning and development, which we got only yesterday on the order paper; and today we see agriculture incentive program or act which has been brought in to the legislature, which I understand will do away with the FarmStart program; and the liquor act which we are dealing with at the present time here in the Assembly – all of these brought in in the last few days of the session.

It is also obvious, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government has no intention of undertaking a true consultative process with the ordinary working people on Bill 104 in the province of Saskatchewan. It is willing to consult with the multinational oil companies when it rewards their political contribution by cutting oil royalties. Of course I refer to the fact that earlier this year the royalties to the oil companies were cut by an estimated amount of \$130 million. And I say that at the time when the government

is crying that they have no money, where social programs are being cut back, where minimum wages cannot be increased, and now regressive labour legislation, that it's interesting that that same government would be able to find \$130 million in tax cuts for some multinational oil companies. At the same time as they get out of a meat-packing plant and accuse a previous government of spending too much money by their estimation, we find that they are able to put \$130 million and give it to the oil companies – no equity position, no guarantee that that money will be spent on jobs in Saskatchewan, but give it away and yet have the audacity to accuse a previous government of protecting the rights and the jobs of workers who work for that meat-packing plant.

It is willing to, as I mentioned, consult widely and often with multinational energy companies when it agrees to double the price that they are getting for their natural gas. But this arrogant government is not willing to consult with the ordinary working people in the province of Saskatchewan and as a consequence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is clear that the government's arrogant determination to ram this bill through the Assembly will assure its passage during this session.

It is a reactionary bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, introduced by a reactionary government which is determined to get it through at all costs. What we intend to do in this debate, however, is to point out clearly and vigorously the negative principles behind this bill, its negative features and provisions, to point out to all the residents of Saskatchewan that this is indeed an anti-worker bill put forward by an anti-worker government.

As I review the remarks made by the Minister of Labour in this Assembly last week when he introduced the bill, Mr. Speaker, I noted his three major themes, and I would to just take a moment to comment on those three major themes. First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he said that this bill was consistent with this Conservative government's overall policy approach to working people and I must say I have to agree with him. Secondly, he explained how it would put more power in the hands of employers and less for those responsible to the working class people. And thirdly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he spoke about democratic rights even as he was introducing a bill which is a direct attack on the rights of working people.

In my brief remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here this evening, I should like to comment briefly on each of these three themes which the minister commented on in his second reading speech. He claimed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the provisions of this bill are consistent with the overall policy approach of this government to working people. And in that he was certainly correct, for these anti-worker provisions are certainly very consistent with this right-wing government's policies when they deal with working people in the province – very consistent and I say consistently reactionary. Very consistent in that once again we see a right-wing government like the right-wing government of the Ross Thatcher era, so fondly remembered by the Minister of Justice, which tried vainly to divide the working people of the province among themselves, tries to divide agricultural workers and farmers from the industrial workers here in Saskatchewan as well as in other parts of Canada, tries to divide urban working people from those people working in rural areas, tries to divide organized workers from the unorganised. In short, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it tries to maintain its own close link with the banks, the railways, the big multinational corporations, tries to maintain the elitist power of the PC Party with their Montreal millionaire leader and tries to maintain power with the rich and powerful by dividing the working people among themselves.

This strategy is transparent, Mr. Speaker, and their tactics are very obvious. In the cities they try to tear down the Crow rate, the fundamental basis of Saskatchewan agriculture, thus trying to turn urban workers against their fellow workers in rural Saskatchewan. I think these stories are obvious. When the minister goes to speak to the chamber of commerce at various places, he has one story, but he has quite a different story when he's out at agricultural meetings. I say that this is the story that they are peddling throughout the province and one which should not be accepted. In the rural areas and in the smaller communities, they viciously try to tear down the gains which have been made by and on behalf of the industrial workers.

But while these attempts by right-wing governments to divide workers against workers are not new, Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the ignorance of the Conservative members. I am surprised that they seem to forget that from the very earliest days of the co-operative movement in this province – from the earliest days of the CCF – there has remained a strong, unbreakable bond of solidarity between agricultural workers, urban, and industrial workers; an unbreakable bond of social solidarity among working people in the province who know, because of bitter experience, that only in co-operation, only together, only in union, is there strength for the ordinary men and women.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, all the reactionary divide-and-conquer efforts that will be marshalled by the latest right-wing government will end up in ultimate failure. The minister also was correct when he said the bill was consistent with his government's overall approach, in that their whole approach from the beginning has been the double standard; attack the vulnerable; attack the ordinary working people, but favour the rich and powerful. Freeze the minimum wage for two years; cut back in occupational health and safety; cut-backs in social services – all part of a consistent approach to policies for working people an approach that is a Tory policy, an approach which is against workers.

The minister made several statements in his remarks about how the bill would restore power to the employers, how it would once again remove the rights, opportunities, and possibilities now enjoyed by working people, individually and together, and instead enhance and increase the power of the employers. All across the province we have heard spokesmen for the largest anti-worker employers agree with the minister, agree that this bill is indeed, does indeed, enhance their power.

In its latest newsletter, the chamber of commerce boasts on this on the first page. That's why this bill should indeed be more properly called "the chamber of commerce bill," Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The minister also spoke often at some length about the rights of workers. What he totally failed to understand, however, and totally failed to admit, is that many dangerous provisions in this bill – which undermine the rights of individuals workers, and of workers together in their own trade unions – are in fact very dangerous threats to the fundamental and democratic traditions of free and democratic societies.

It is not accident, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in Poland – a nation struggling under the heavy hand of a regressive anti-democratic regime – that one major courageous voice for freedom and dignity is the voice of the working people, organized at great personal peril in their own unions. It is not accident that the name of that union, which has become a symbol of the struggle against aggression all over the world, is Solidarity. Solidarity – the concept of social solidarity which recognizes not only individual rights

and individual rights of citizens, but also recognizes that free men and women may choose to be stronger together in social solidarity in their own organizations.

Given that we believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the amendment included in Bill 104 are all regressive movements against the working people of the province, I would like to state emphatically that I will be voting against Bill 104.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to say that it is with grave concern that I rise this evening on this very important debate — this debate on the most repressive and systematically reactionary piece of legislation introduced in this Assembly since the right-wing government of the Thatcher's years.

I participate in this debate, Mr. Speaker, as I said, with grave concerns. Concerns, because of my review of this bill, but especially concern because of the many, many Saskatchewan working men and women in my constituency and from across the province, who have begun to realize that their fundamental rights are being threatened by this anti-worker and anti-democratic bill, and who have shared their views with me.

As all members will know there is no other province in Canada where there is a closer bond or a closer relationship between industrial workers, urban workers and agricultural workers than here in Saskatchewan. The patterns and the experience of my own constituency explain why this is so.

There's a large poultry processing plant in the town of Wynyard — a unionized plant — in my constituency. And I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the workers there have a deep appreciation and a respect for agriculture, and that respect is mutual. A great many of my constituents work at Lanigan at the potash mine, and most of these are workers who have their deepest roots in their own personal farm background. They and their families know about the common bonds which unite the ordinary industrial workers and the ordinary agricultural workers when they are constantly threatened by the corporate power of the millionaire Montreal lawyers the banks, and the railways.

The workers at the Lanigan potash mine and their families will well remember the long and hard struggle required in order for them to be able to establish a democratic trade union in that potash mine — a struggle made more bitter and much more difficult by the consistently anti-worker approach of the multinational mining company, which tried every trick in the book to crush these workers in the organization of their union. There was threats; there was intimidation; there was coercion. They understand that for working people there is strength in solidarity, and that this bill — and as my colleague indicated, this chamber of commerce bill — will increase the power of the employers at the expense of the employees.

Very briefly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to comment on some of the major concerns being expressed about this bill by the working people across Saskatchewan today — their fully justified concerns about the unjust provisions of a bill put forward by an unjust government.

First, they are concerned that this bill is so very reminiscent of that infamous Bill 2 of Ross Thatcher, that infamous piece of labour legislation which the right-wing Liberal friends of the Minister of Justice tried to sell under the mash of workers' rights, labour peace and open for business — the same right wing, hollow, shallow slogans that we

hear today, the same reactionary policies, the same general policy approach against working men and women, and thus the same fears and concerns are being expressed today by the labour movement and all progressive elements in Saskatchewan.

Secondly, workers are concerned about this bill, and that it enhances the power of big employers, and the government that does nothing to further the interests of ordinary working men and women.

Most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are concerned about the many ways in which this bill erodes and undermines the fundamental democratic rights now enjoyed by working people of this province: how it restricts and constrains, hinders and obstructs those rights.

Finally, they are concerned about the way this bill seems to fit so neatly into the Conservative government's overall policy approach to working people, its overall policy approach to basic democratic principles. This, after all, is the same reactionary Minister of Labour . . . Let us examine his record. This is, as I say, the same reactionary Minister of Labour, who's introducing this bill, who has frozen the minimum wage of 60,000 low-paid workers in this province; the same Minister of Labour, introducing this bill, that has cut back drastically on occupational health and safety programs; the same Minister of Labour that refused to implement the unanimous recommendation on improving workers' compensation which were made to them a year ago by employers and employees. This is the same Minister of labour, that is introducing this bill, that abolished the women's division in the Department of Labour. This is the same Minister of Labour who says that he is protecting the rights of workers in Saskatchewan, but he cut back on the pensions branch in his department. This is the same Minister of Labour who in fact did away with the environment boards that were established in the potash mines, and which gave benefits to the workers of this province.

I want to say it's all part of the same old Liberal-Tory approach. They believe that massive cuts in taxes on the rich, plus some catchy rhetoric, plus cut-backs in services to people, plus attacking the rights of workers will somehow, in some unexplained way, lead to economic recovery, more jobs, and less inflation – the same approach tried by the morally bankrupt Saskatchewan Liberals in the 1960s under Ross Thatcher. I want to say, what were the results under Ross Thatcher? During those seven years, the total productive investment in Saskatchewan actually declined by over 30 per cent. Jobs in Saskatchewan during that period, jobs in Saskatchewan's construction industry, declined by 12,000 people.

But there is another alternative, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is another policy approach. It is the positive, confident approach of men and women who are concerned about human dignity and determined to see it thrive and flourish; an approach that emphasizes the dignity of human labour, jobs for all, public sector investment where appropriate, and the clear responsibility of government to exercise positive economic and social leadership; an approach which stresses our collective responsibility to protect the victims of severe recession; an approach, which above all else, stresses the fundamental importance of our free democratic heritage to participate fully in our society, our own organization, in our way.

It is this positive approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which has been developed and defended over the years by labour movement, and the progressive elements in our churches and throughout our society. It is this positive approach to public policy which

has been so eloquently expressed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic bishops in their appointed and timely document entitled "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis." And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was this positive, constructive, and co-operative approach which was consistently pursued by the New Democratic Party administration in Saskatchewan for 11 years.

What the Conservative members fail to understand is that the four major pieces of labour legislation in Saskatchewan were carefully established and improved upon, providing distinct but complementary protection for the rights and the interests of working people. Let's take a look at the various legislation that was established. The Labour Standards Act, providing minimum standards of wages and hours, and other benefits such as holidays for all Saskatchewan working people, union members or not – not perfect, but the best in Canada. The Occupational Health and Safety Act, the first, the most innovative, and the most successful in Canada – not perfect, but a proud achievement during our administration. The Workers' Compensation Act providing by law regular financial benefits to the tragic victims of industrial accidents, regularly improved upon after extensive consultation with employees and employers. Not perfect, but the best in Canada, and another proud achievement of the New Democratic Party's approach to the fundamental interests of working people.

The Trade Union Act, the first to be attacked by this Conservative government, an act which provided statutory protection for the rights workers to establish their own democratic trade union if, and if they choose, and the protection of their right to bargain collectively. The trade Union Act was first introduced in Saskatchewan, as members opposite should know, backing in 1944 under the predecessor to the New Democratic Party, the CCF. It was the first trade union act in Canada and throughout the 1970s was the best labour legislation in Canada. Not perfect, not without the need for further improvements, but certainly a step in the right direction. It is beyond dispute, Mr. Speaker, that this complementary set of labour legislation was of benefit to the working people of this province and their democratic trade unions. And it is also beyond dispute that during the fruitful period when this positive approach was in effect, in fact because of it, Saskatchewan enjoyed an unprecedented period of prosperity, growth, job creation, productive opportunities for our people.

During the minister's second reading remarks the other day, the Minister of Labour spoke with great effort and little eloquence about the labour peace, about harmony, and about workers' rights. I was surprised that he did not review, for the record and for the people of Saskatchewan, the sad, bungled history of his own industrial relations experiences. And perhaps, in his final summary in respect to the second reading of this bill, perhaps he will enter into the debate and review some of the highlights of his own experience, some of this personal background he brings to the specific provisions of this anti-worker bill. Perhaps he will review for us the record of his experience with the legal employer acts against workers, his long sorry record of being found guilty of unfair labour practices under the law. I want to report how on December 15, 1972, the company which the Minister of Labour was employed by, was found guilty of violating the act by having wrongfully dismissed an individual worker who was merely exercising his rights. I refer all members to the *Decisions of the Labour Relations Board*, dated December 15, 1972. I want to also remind the minister how on January 10, 1973, there was a further decision of guilty of having violated the law by having wrongfully interfered with the statutory rights of individual workers seeking to establish a union of their own choosing, at the plant in which he was employed; and how in a decision of April 6, 1973, the Minister of Labour, the present Minister of Labour, was himself named in the written and published *Decisions of the Labour Relations Board*.

I want to say how their decisions, if one reads them, how these decisions make clear the undue, unfair, and improper employer influence that was exerted on individual workers who were merely exercising their legal rights. I refer the members on the government side to take a look at the record of the Minister of Labour. I refer the members on the government side to take a look at the record of the Minister of Labour. I refer them to volume 3 of the Decisions of the Labour Relations Board, pages 316 and 317, published under the authority of the Hon. Lorne McLaren, Minister of Labour. I want to refer members of this House how this same company that he was employed with was again and again found guilty of having violated the law protecting workers' rights, and I want to give you some of the citations. On November 19, 1979; on October 8, 1976; on July 5, 1977; on October 3, 1977 – that's the records of a firm in which the minister was employed and was heading up. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would . . . I very much welcome the minister spending some time on his experiences of his – the experiences in industrial relations which made him of all people an expert on labour peace and workers rights. I would also welcome the comments in this debate by the Premier, who perhaps can explain to us all why he has entrusted all of the labour legislation in Saskatchewan to such a minister, a minister with a record which I have alluded to.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to invite the Minister of Labour to cease his shallow prattling about a better way, harmonious co-operation, and labour peace. Let me stop this idle talk, which is nothing but talk, and instead let him have the courage and the foresight to lay out before us in this Assembly a solid, coherent view of industrial relations' future for Saskatchewan.

He and the reactionary employers like him should have gone from the face of Saskatchewan. Theirs is the arrogance of the past, the attitudes of the past, and with this bill they are seeking to take and to place upon us . . . not to take us forward, but to lead us backwards into the past.

What we must do, and this I believe is a challenge to all members, to all political parties, to all economic interest . . . what we must do is to begin now to build on the appositive achievements and the accomplishments of the labour legislations of pf the 1970s – build on these achievements and march forward.

And let me cite some examples, some innovate approaches, that were tried, that of course have to be improved upon, but which serve as a creative base for the future: the joint worker-management occupational health and safety committees – a solid exercise in local participation at the plant level; the very innovative worker environment board which was established by a far-sighted board of directors at the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and far-sighted unions, and which used the good office of Bob Sass, the associate deputy minister of labour.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately this government, indeed the Minister of Labour, has destroyed all promise and all potential for those progressive attempts. He has scrapped the worker environment board. He has declared war on the corporations' employees and their unions, and he has fired an associate deputy minister without notice and without cause.

I want to say the appointment of people from the Saskatchewan labour movement to be full participating members on the crown corporation board of directors was a practice of the previous government. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, if this Minister of Labour is so intent as he indicates in having a harmonious relationship with the working people, he can

explain – perhaps he will explain – how he plans to secure greater productivity, greater labour peace in Saskatchewan, greater democratic opportunities for workers, by firing the worker members on those various boards and eliminating their participation in decision-making process. Perhaps he will answer these questions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not try to assert that the labour legislation record of the New Democratic administration was perfect. Of course it was not – far from it. But it was progressive – the most progressive in Canada. And of course it needed positive and constructive improvement and I say that is the direction which we should be moving toward – that we should build on those accomplishments, build on other innovative achievements which themselves were a noble positive efforts, though far from perfect as well. And as we face the future in Saskatchewan, and as we confront the challenges of 1980s and beyond and face those challenges together, we should be making positive improvements on the solid foundations of the past, not destroying what we have built.

I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must not follow the narrow, negative approach of the Minister of Labour and his reactionary government – this government who attacks workers and their rights today in their determination to set public policy and labour policy in Saskatchewan back some 50 years. And it is for these reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I feel that the actions and the amendments to The Trade Union Act is a regressive step, a step that will undermine the workers' rights, those rights which have been achieved through collective co-operative effort of government and people of Saskatchewan. Accordingly I want to indicate that rather than getting harmony in the labour field and greater productivity and greater co-operation, this will lead, I predict, to further labour unrest and dissatisfaction rather than progress. Accordingly I want to indicate that rather than getting harmony in the labour field and greater productivity and greater co-operation, this will lead, I predict, to further labour unrest and dissatisfaction rather than progress. Accordingly I will not be supporting the amendments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: – Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is with great sadness that I enter this debate tonight. Once before in my lifetime the working people of Saskatchewan were forced into the dark ages of labour-management relations through the regressive laws of a right-winged government. In 1971 when the people of Saskatchewan rid themselves of the Thatcher government, I and many others in the progressive movement, including many working people, were convinced that the battle had been won once and for all. We were convinced that no future government would again attempt to turn back the clock. Bill 104 has proven us wrong.

When I look back, I can guess one can say that in recent years working people and their allies in the progressive coalition have forgotten the most important rule of the progressive struggle. It's this: not only does it take hard work and sacrifice to earn victory, it takes constant vigilance to defend and preserve those victories against the forces of right-wing reactionism – constant vigilance against those who would turn back the clock because, as we are reminded with Bill 104, they really can take it away. The powerful forces, not of liberty, not of equality, but the powerful forces of stark self-interest and their hand-maidens in the right-wing political party of the day – and it makes little difference what you call it; it may be a Liberal one day, as it was in the '60s; it may be a Conservative government in Saskatchewan; it may be a Social Credit government in B.C. – these forces do not hesitate to turn back the clock. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is really their only purpose in life: to undo the hard-earned victories of working people and to prevent future accomplishments; to turn back the clock and then to pull the plug. So as I rise to speak on this debate, I can almost see the

ghost of Ross Thatcher smiling that smile of his sitting opposite when he knew he had won at least in the short run. I can almost see today the ghost of Ross Thatcher and Bill 2, An Act respecting the Continuation of Services Essential the Public.

Bill 2. On that day, a generation ago, the progressive coalition of democratic socialists sitting again on this side of the House, and the farmers and the working people and the teachers who supported them, joined forces to fight a regressive law. They did not win the day, as we will not win this one. The Thatcher government, with its majority, rammed that regressive law through. But with the passage of time, the democratic socialists on this side of the House, and the coalition who supported them won the struggle. In 1971, with the election of a New Democratic government, the first time of legislation, introduced in a special session, was to repeal Bill 2.

Once again, the progressive coalition must join forces to fight yet another bad law from yet another right-wing government pandering to the needs of those who would oppress working people. I warn Conservative members that, just as in 1966, you with your large majority will inevitably win this struggle, but just as surely, with the passage of time, we will win the battle in the long run.

During the course of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I proposal to cover a number of topics in Bill 104, the chamber of commerce act. Let me list those topics quickly. First, I want to spend some time explaining for the benefit of Conservative members just what working people fought for – their right to preserve their right to band together whether in trade unions or any other form. Secondly, I will review again, largely for the benefit of Conservative members, since they do not seem to understand it, the history of labour policies, of the success of the CCF government in one generation and the NDP government in another, and the fundamental principles which underlaid the legislation which they introduced. Third, I want to discuss the fundamental principles behind Bill 104 because it stands in such stark contrast to the record of the CCF and NDP governments. And fourth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be responding to each of the so-called selling points which the Minister of Labour has used to gain approval for this despicable piece of legislation: the investor confidence argument, whatever role that may have to play in a trade union act; the labour peace argument; and most incredible of all, the protection of individual workers' rights argument. And fifth, with very considerable regret, I propose to review the record of the Minister of Labour, the man who introduced this legislation, when it comes to labour-management relations. I do not enjoy this kind of personal attack and I do not often engage in it; but when it comes to this minister, the record is so bad – and this legislation reflects your unique views of labour-management relations – it is such a horror story, that I suggest you really should exclude yourself from this debate. You should declare a moral conflict.

Next I propose to review what I believe to be the fundamental principles underlying this conservative government's labour policy, not just The Trade Union Act, but other legislation which governs labour-management relations — in particular, what the Saskatchewan people might expect from this government over the next four years.

And finally I propose to go through this legislation, this chamber of commerce act, in some detail to make some specific points about individual amendments. I plan to do that because the Minister of Labour, in his second reading speech fudged, deliberately or otherwise, the true impact of many of these amendments – and some of them will be devastating. And so I plan to take some time to review the amendments and the act in detail.

June 15, 1983

It being near 10 o'clock, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it may make no sense to continue now and perhaps we should call it 10 o'clock.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:00 p.m.