

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

November 26, 1984

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly here today, a person who is no stranger to the House, that person being Sonny Anderson. He's seated behind the rail here on the government side. As most members will know, he today is the chief executive officer and chairman of the Farm Credit Corporation, and, in fact, in past history has been the MLA for Shaunavon — some have said the best representative Shaunavon has ever had.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — So I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming Sonny here to the House today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the minister in welcoming a friend and the former member for Shaunavon. Mr. Anderson represented the constituency of Shaunavon from '75 to '78, and people in the Shaunavon area would agree that the Liberal representative at that time did an excellent job, and I'm glad that the minister is aware of the political parties that do a good job, and I thank him for that comment.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Consultation with Opposition Member

Mr. Sveinson: — Mr. Speaker, I have a question of the House Leader. I think there isn't any doubt — I'm sure there isn't any doubt — why we've gathered in this Assembly this week, and there has been some aspersions on my motives relating to a Bill that is before this House that will, in fact, deal with convicted felons who are, in fact, seated in this legislature. My question has not been one of guilt or innocence. My question has been one, and it should be addressed to the House Leader now . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please! The member is asking a question that relates to a Bill that's before the Assembly that will be dealt with later today, and I think his comments could be better made at that time.

Mr. Sveinson: — I have a question, and the question is of the House Leader, and the question relates . . .

Mr. Speaker: — The matter that you are dealing with is dealt with under the Bill and therefore the question is out of order, as I stated earlier. The question cannot be used in question period.

Mr. Sveinson: — Mr. Speaker, the question is again to the House Leader. I would ask the House Leader why, as a member of the opposition in this legislature, that I was not consulted with respect to unanimous consent that had to be given to pass this legislation through the House on Thursday, Friday, or today, or at any future time?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, the matter that the member raises, Mr. Speaker, is a matter that the Premier had asked the Minister of Justice to deal with, so I will ask the Minister of Justice to answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Well, I'd just like to respond to the hon. member so that the House has a record, that shortly after the conviction of the member from Thunder Creek I was asked by the Premier to communicate and attempt to meet with both opposition parties. My office did that. My office was advised by the member for Regina North West that he would not be available to meet with us for, I believe, the 17th. We had attempted to page him; we had attempted in his office to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Not true.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Yes, it is very true. And we attempted to leave materials at his office. The door was locked in the Legislative Buildings. We did attempt to page. Unable to contact the hon. member, we then tried to contact the Leader of the Liberal Party, who said he would get back to us. We did not hear back further. For the further statement of the hon. member, when he said he was not given the material, in fact I have a photocopy of the signatures of the internal delivery service in the building, where the hon. member signed for the material on November 20. So he had ample opportunity to review the material, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sveinsson: — A supplementary question. Basically, I didn't debate the material, and I still in principle agree with the material I looked at. The question is: the government has never outlined its position for urgency, or, in fact, for the drama that's created, or has been created, relating to this particular Bill. If, in fact, the House Leader is willing to do that now, I am willing to proceed with the second and third readings of this Bill without any further delay.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, the government has communicated its position to the public. It's communicated its position to the hon. members opposite. The reason for the Bill and the form of it, I respect, Mr. Speaker, with respect, state that that is a matter for second reading debate, and we're quite prepared at that time to indicate the legislation, the principle of the legislation, and we will deal with it in that appropriate manner in second reading speech. In terms for time, we had asked for meetings; we were prepared to meet; we indicated our intention and we unfortunately, for whatever reason, were unable to get in touch with the hon. member. The only alternative we had at that time was to submit the legislation in the internal House mail and have it acknowledged. And we did that.

Crop Insurance Pay-outs to Farmers

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Speaker, I would rather have addressed my question to the Premier, but in his absence I will address it to the minister in charge of crop insurance. The question deals with the way that your government can support Saskatchewan family farmers while helping to make jobs in rural Saskatchewan.

I'm talking about speedy, efficient pay-outs from the crop insurance plan, Mr. Minister. Your government has known since early spring that there was going to be some problems in rural Saskatchewan, in particular in the south-west. Weather conditions had predicted that we would have problems. You failed to act in a reasonable length of time, Mr. Minister. By the end of October less than 10 per cent – less than 10 per cent, Mr. Minister – had been paid out. When are you going to speed up this process of making pay-outs on crop insurance? Farmers are counting on the money; merchants are counting on the money to remain open.

Can the minister assure family farmers that he has taken every step possible to make a speedy pay-out so that the farmers can get their badly needed money as soon as possible?

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to answer the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg's question. We seen this problem arising back in June. We trained extra appraisers and adjusters at that time. I am very proud of the job that our appraisers and adjusters have done out there in crop insurance. In the south-west . . . The member from Shaunavon has made the statement that there were only five adjusters in the whole south-west. The member from Shaunavon knows better, Mr. Speaker, because he, himself, called into the Shaunavon office and found out there was 12 adjusters there. He later found out there was 80 adjusters in the south-west. And I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, to be able to say that by the end of December, 1984, that all pay-outs will be paid out. And in comparing that to 1981, Mr. Speaker, it took till the 12th of February to have the same thing happen in the year 1981.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — Adding to that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to inform the hon. member that in 1982 there were 237 field persons working in the province of Saskatchewan. In 1984, we have 290. Permanent staff in our head office is a total of 92. We have taken in approximately 60 more temporary workers. I am very proud that our people are doing a tremendous job. And at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'll give the exact figures . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. I believe what we've just witnessed is an excellent example of a very "wordy" question being answered with the same type of an answer. And I would ask members to be rather concise in the type of question and the type of answers that are given.

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a concise question. The question was: did you do everything reasonably possible to do the crop adjustments in time, this year? Was it reasonable? You suggest that you went from 260 to 290 adjusters. Is that a . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I'm sorry, but I fail to see that as a concise question. I think the member asked his question and then went on to make a speech about it, and I would ask you to leave the question and let the minister answer it.

Order, please. I just asked you to let the minister answer your question. You had raised your question.

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to that question, I'd say yes, we definitely did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Minister, new question. Do you feel you've done everything reasonable possible to collect when there are adjusters out in the field being paid 100 days for doing nothing? Do you think that's reasonable getting the adjustment done? When you said you've gone to 290 adjusters, that is a very measly increase. There are adjusters being paid that aren't adjusting. They're going to get money for not doing a thing. Is that reasonable?

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, as a politician I don't mind taking heat from the hon. member, but I think it's a sham the way he's . . . what he's put on to our good adjusters out there that's doing a tremendous job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, just for an example I would like to compare. Up till November 19, 1984 we have processed 17,588 claims. In 1983 there was 13,500. Now this year, there's a total of 45,000 claims, and in 1980-81 there were a total of 31,000 claims. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of the crop insurance corporation. If the member would just go down on 22 Albert Street some night and see the people work overtime, work late at night, and I think that he should be ashamed of himself to have stashed such sham on these people. I am ashamed of the member opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the minister in charge of crop insurance. I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you can tell us how much money, of the \$250 million that you intend to pay out, has actually been sent out to the farmers at this point in time?

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. There's been approximately \$90 million been sent out now.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the farmers of the province . . . In phrasing the question to the minister in charge of the crop insurance, I'm well aware that this is one of the longest, most drawn-out, arduous processes they have ever been through. Many of them have now waited four months since they have put in an application to the minister. I want to be very clear on this, Mr. Speaker, that the problem isn't with the adjusters, it's in the pay-out. I want to make that point clear, that the business people and small businessmen across Saskatchewan are waiting to be paid by farmers who are waiting for you, Mr. Minister, to pay out the money that the crop adjusters have decided should be sent out. And what I would like you to guarantee to this Assembly, and to the farmers, is whether or not you can assure us that the pay-out will be completed by the end of December.

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, I've already said that by the 31st of December that these pay-outs will be out. The only ones that won't be paid out by that time will be the ones that are dragging for some other reason. There's some people that haven't even put their claims in yet, and that is a farmer's own prerogative until the 30th day of November. So if there's some people that haven't put their claims in in this province, they can expect . . .

I think that the hon. member does not remember what I said a few moments ago, that in 1980, under the prior government, when we had 31,000 claims to pay out, that the last claim was paid on February the 12th. Now, we will have these pay-outs finalized by the 31st of December, and the thanks goes to the people that work in crop insurance throughout this province, and I tip my hat to all the people that are working in crop insurance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Muirhead: — And if this is . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please! The Leader of the Opposition.

Publicly Paid-for Advertisements

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Minister of Finance. My question to the Minister of Finance deals with the claim of his government, the very frequent claim of his government, that they don't have money to lend a helping hand to whoever, farmers, to persons who need jobs, and to many other people who very, very clearly need support from this government.

I bring to the attention of the Minister of Finance the promise made in 1982 to eliminate the propaganda in the form of publicly paid-for advertisements. And I bring to his attention the two-page ad which ran recently in almost every Saskatchewan newspaper, and I think some people will be familiar with this ad. I read it now so that people will know what I'm referring to. The ad reads like a campaign commercial. It doesn't give any details about any program. It doesn't contain any number for the citizen to call to get details about a program. In the light of your promise in 1982 to run only those ads which were absolutely required to inform the public of specific programs and services, could you explain why you and your department authorized these sorts of expenditures?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do not recall the ad that the hon. member is referring to, and I will certainly undertake to dig that particular ad out and read it. Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member refers back to the day of 1982 when the only ads that were on TV were those advanced by the Crown corporations in the province of Saskatchewan, the wonderful family of Crown corporations in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this government, Mr. Speaker, has, in fact, brought forward many new programs. Those new programs have to be brought to the attention of the population, so the population can pick up and travel with those.

I know a couple within the gamut that I was personally involved in, one being the most recent issue of shares in the Saskatchewan Oil and Gas Corporation. Prior to that, the shares in the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. I can advise the members of this Assembly that that advertisement, in fact, did the job, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan, in droves, bought those shares, Mr. Speaker, put their money into the province of Saskatchewan, and with them, Mr. Speaker, we intend to build a better province in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I will understand why the minister wouldn't recall any particular ad because there are so many that one or even a dozen would be difficult to recall. The question which I ask him now is: of the approximately \$12 million a year you're spending for advertisements, about how much would this ad have cost to run in the newspapers of Saskatchewan in one issue?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not totally familiar with the cost of each ad, or each pencil, or each car, or each pad of paper that the government buys. I will undertake to find that information out and put it back to the hon. member. I can say that the new process that we have involved in the Government of Saskatchewan is to try to delegate to the departments to make those decisions, let the managers make those decisions. And I can assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that those managers are performing, just as the member from — the hon. minister responsible for crop insurance demonstrated how that department is responding. And that's the approach that we're taking, Mr. Speaker, and quite frankly I believe they're doing a good job of it.

Mr. Koskie: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address a question to the Deputy Premier, the new House Leader. I want to establish, in fact, that he is able to talk, other than the Minister of Justice, for that side of the House. Mr. Deputy Premier, in the absence of the premier I want to point out to you that in the little pocket policies, "A Quick Reference on PC Policies for Candidates," it says, in fact:

We will cease all advertising by Crown corporations, except advertising which promotes specific production and programs offered by the corporation, where a monopoly does not exist.

Where a monopoly does not exist. I want to then, therefore, draw to the attention of the minister, "Developing the Resources of Saskatchewan's Growth; Building Today to Secure the Future — Saskatchewan Power Corporation." How can you possibly have a policy whereby you will not be advertising for a Crown corporation in a monopoly position, and at the same time proceed to do that?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I can't comment intelligently on the ad since I haven't seen it, and I see that the hon. member's had it for some time, and he can't comment intelligently either. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the hon. member is reading our policy booklet, and he should continue to read it from cover to cover. He might learn something, and, in fact, to help him in that regard, I'd be pleased to send over our updated, new, revised edition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Koskie: — A supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Deputy Premier if, in fact, what I've read as to the stated policy in respect to Crown corporation advertising, that your government will not indeed advertise on behalf of the Crown corporation in a monopolistic position. Is that indeed the position of your government, as stated prior to your election?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Our position, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is that we will advertise for services provided by Crowns or utilities or government departments or agencies, and from time to time, Mr. Speaker, we will advertise, to set the record straight, because of the wild-eyed innuendo going on by opposition and certain members of the media.

Mr. Koskie: — A further supplemental. In view of the ambiguity of your policy — and I know the people of s agree that you are not in fact keeping with the promise that you have indicated — I ask you again: you have an advertisement here again by Sask Power, absolutely nothing to do with Sask Power, "Making Ourselves Visible" — Lights On For Life, and this is advertised by the Sask Power, a program initiated by Saskatchewan Government Insurance, I ask: how is it consistent that you are able to have an advertisement by Sask Power which has absolutely nothing to do with Sask Power?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, please send it over and, while it's on its way over, Mr. Speaker, I will take notice of the question and, while I'm on my feet, apologize for the cheap shot I just took at the media.

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise with the Deputy Premier yet another series of ads, this time having to do with the 1984 Export Achievement Awards, a series of large ads which ran repeatedly, day after day. And I wonder, Mr. Premier, if you don't agree that these companies . . .

An Hon. Member: — Deputy Premier.

Mr. Shillington: — Deputy Premier, I wonder, Mr. Deputy Premier, if you don't agree that this advertising, that primarily benefited the companies, should have been done at the company's expense and not at the taxpayers' expense?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, for far too long, in my view, the people, the people who are making it possible for us to be successful in the international market place have been ignored. There has never been, certainly under the previous administration, any acknowledgement, Mr. Speaker, of the contribution these people have made to our economy.

So we have, we have our second annual Export Achievement Award, a month or six weeks ago in Saskatoon. And the recipients of those awards, Mr. Speaker, I think (and we take some pride in acknowledging their contribution to our economy), and I think that's fair and proper, Mr. Speaker, and I think this is a pretty good indication of the view that that party has about economic development and competing in the international market place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — New question, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Premier, that if your government continues at the present rate, you will spend \$12 million, that's twice what was spent in the year when we left office, the year you criticized so heavily.

I ask you, Mr. Premier, do you not think that that \$12 million would be better spent on equipment at the university; books for the university library; grants for social service agencies which are up to the wall; any one of a number of other emergencies, rather than being spent to try to re-elect this government?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I think what we have here is not really a question period

but a debate on the merits of advertising as opposed to propaganda, when they were sitting in government benches. I think, Mr. Speaker, that the tone of the question period indicates that they're still smarting from the advertising they were doing when they were in government.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 105 – An Act to amend The Legislative Council and Executive Council Act

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill respecting an amendment to The Legislative Assembly Act.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — By leave of the Assembly, and under rule 48, now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: — The minister has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Leave is not granted.

The Assembly adjourned at 2:31 p.m.