

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

December 17, 1984

The Assembly met at 2:00 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

CLERK: — The following petitions are presented and laid on the Table by Mr. Young, of Eric Reid, Douglas A. Schmeiser, Clarence J. Kirkpatrick, Phillip Griffin-Warwicke, and Donald W. Somers, all of the city of Saskatoon, in the province of Saskatchewan; and by Mr. Tusa of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Credit Society Limited, and Saskatchewan Co-operative Financial Services Limited, both of the city of Regina in the province of Saskatchewan.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

MR. SVEINSON: — I just give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I will be tabling several hundred questions for the government, and I would like to pass these on to the Table, please.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. MULLER: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, two young gentlemen from my riding of Shellbrook-Torch River. These young men competed this week-end in the western gymnastics competition, competing against gymnasts from across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Dwight Grayston placed fourth in the under 12 tier, won provincial stream; and his brother, Jay, finished first, Mr. Speaker, in the under 10 cadet AA Dominion stream. These are two young men you will be eagerly watching in future competitions. They are located in the Speaker's gallery and are accompanied by their parents, Wilbur and Pat Grayston. Would you please rise for recognition in this Chamber, and I'd like to ask all members to greet them here and wish them a good trip home.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to add to the member who just spoke, the congratulations of the members of the opposition. To have placed first and fourth in competitions of that sort is a very considerable honour, and I want to wish you the very best in oncoming competitions and in sports you may go on to at a later age.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Closure of Air Canada Offices in Regina and Saskatoon

MR. SHILLINGTON: — My question is to the Premier, and it deals with Air Canada's announcement last Friday that it will close reservation offices in Regina and Saskatoon in October of next year, throwing 43 Saskatchewan people out of work.

My question was: when was your government first informed of this decision, and was there any prior consultation by the office of the federal Transport Minister, Don Mazankowski?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question I want to make it very clear that I was not consulted until 8:30 a.m. Friday morning, and I was not particularly happy about that lack of consultation. In fact, I was somewhat disappointed with not only the lack of consultation, but particularly with the fact that it was announced at this time, which

obviously is an important time for an awful lot of people because of Christmas; and secondly, because the scheduled moves will not take place until October of 1985, which seemed to me, Mr. Speaker, that there was no real hurry and certainly didn't have to be at Christmas time.

I could add a couple of more points because I have been discussing the matter with the Hon. Don Mazankowski this morning, and I talked with him. And, as well, Mr. Berntson, the Deputy Premier, will be discussing this in some detail with Air Canada early in the new year.

But the Air Canada people advised me that they will be opening two new ticket offices, one in Regina and one in Saskatoon, and they also advised me that they will be building two new restaurants and lounges, Maple Leaf lounges, in Saskatoon or Regina. And I have been assured that they are going to be putting on two 767s wide-bodied aircraft for both freight and transportation out of Regina and Saskatoon to Toronto. When I say two, both those cities are going to be involved.

And, Mr. Speaker, as a result of those moves, Air Canada advises me that the 43 positions that they had identified that would be moved in the province of Saskatchewan are not going to be 43 but, in fact, will be 12.

So in terms of looking at the modifications, the new building, the wide-bodied jets, and the increase in construction that hopefully the service to the province of Saskatchewan in terms of the 767s — and we're going to be discussing this in more detail, and I mentioned this to Mr. Mazankowski this morning, as well as with Air Canada — hopefully the 767s and our request, Mr. Speaker, — and I throw this out, our request that we have direct flight service from the city of Regina, the capital, to the city of Ottawa — that request and others will be looked at very seriously by Air Canada.

And as a result of the opening of the new offices and the construction of the restaurants and the lounges, that the 43 positions will not be 43 in total that are moved or removed, but the net to Saskatchewan would be at most 12.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — New question. The fact remains, Mr. Premier, that you have lost 43 and have only some vague promises of something which would make up a portion of it.

My question, Mr. Premier, is: what action has your government taken to date to get the decision reversed? A number of bodies, including the city of Regina and the union representing the workers, have raised their voices in protest. My question is: where is the voice of a Government of Saskatchewan? Will you not agree that if you're going to take action and protest, you must do so in a very timely fashion, or it may be too late.

My question is: what action does your government plan to take in the immediate future to save these 43 jobs and this important service to Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I've already outlined to my hon. friend that I found out at 8:30 Friday morning about the proposal. It was a unanimous decision, as I understand it, from the board of directors of Air Canada. They make those decisions.

I phoned Mr. Mazankowski this morning, and I talked to him about it. As I mentioned, the Deputy Premier will be visiting and talking with Air Canada early in the new year about the kinds of things that we can provide in terms of transportation, both in terms of cargo and passengers, to the province of Saskatchewan.

So we will be discussing it at the highest levels possible, both myself and the Deputy Premier, Air Canada, and the Minister of Transport for the country. So the combination of those, plus the economic activity that we want to see as a result of the new 767s coming into Saskatchewan to provide us with better service to Toronto, plus a request for additional service from the capital of

Saskatchewan to the capital of Canada, are things that are under discussion, and will continue to be, early in 1985.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — New question, Mr. Speaker. this is a question to the Premier along the same lines. It is my understanding that when the ticket office is moved out of Regina and Saskatoon, then Saskatchewan will be the only province, at least west of Quebec, without any Air Canada ticket offices. And I'm not sure of the situation in the Maritimes and the Atlantic provinces, but there'll certainly be some there.

Do you not feel that this in a sense relegates Saskatchewan to second-class status with respect to our national airline? Do you not feel that your government should make some representations to Air Canada, our national airline, to see whether or not they would retain, in this province, ticket offices, as they retain them in virtually every other province of the Dominion of Canada?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I have already registered my protest with the Minister of Transport about the move, about the timing of the move, about the fact that we haven't been consulted — and I'm not very happy about us not being consulted. And I've said that.

With respect to regional representation, Air Canada informed me that the west side of Ontario was being consolidated into the Winnipeg office as was the middle of the Prairies into Winnipeg. Now, I didn't particularly like it, but that's the way they described it to me — as there was regional representation.

I believe that there was a member of parliament — well, he's still a member of parliament — from Winnipeg that had built a very large Air Canada office in Winnipeg, and they were encouraged to fill it, Mr. Speaker, as a result of a previous administration that they had a very large capacity there, and they were looking some economies of scale.

Again, I didn't agree with the decision. I have talked to the minister about it, and we will be looking at various ways to make sure economic activity and benefits come to the province of Saskatchewan with better jet service and improved quality of jet, the sizes of jets, the frequency that they're coming in here, and the increase in facilities due to new ticket offices, as well as new restaurants and lounges, and we can only pursue those, Mr. Speaker.

The Job Situation in Saskatchewan

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, new question to the Premier. Since you have appointed your part-time minister of employment a month ago, by my count, the number of jobs lost includes: 42 people at Dad's Cookies; 45 people at Molson's in Regina; 10 more from Molson's in Prince Albert; 22 part-time and full-time jobs at the Prairie Wildlife Centre near Webb; 20 at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; 23 laid off at CSP Foods in Nipawin; now 43 or some lesser number at Air Canada; 17 people with jobs lost by the closure of Valdi's in Regina; more by the closure of Valdi stores in Saskatoon; Safeways and food Barn and Natural Food Products in Regina; and Produce World in Regina and Saskatoon. — some hundreds of jobs since you have appointed your minister of part-time employment, the part-time minister of employment — either designation will work.

Can you advise the House what has been done with respect to attempting to save any of those jobs? You have indicated something about Air Canada. Would you advise the House with respect to any of the others that have been lost or indicated to be lost since you have named your part-time minister of employment?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned something like 100 jobs that he has designated . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . All right, let's make it 200, let's make it 200 that he wants to talk about.

Last week, my colleague, the Minister of Employment for the province of Saskatchewan, announced a job creation package of 5,000 people. And he raises the question whether there's 200 people that are being transferred because of a national decision of, say, Air Canada or Dad's Cookies, that lays off perhaps say 500 in Montreal and there's 30 or 40 here, and we announce at the same time a brand new winter works program of 5,000 people, and they complain about 200.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can only say that we are aware of some moves at the national level with respect to changes, and they've taken place in every administration and in every jurisdiction, and we have, in '82, the lowest level of unemployment; in 1983, the lowest level of unemployment; in 1984, the lowest level of unemployment in the nation, Mr. Speaker, '82, and '83, and '84. We now have 441,000 people working in the province of Saskatchewan. That's as high as it's ever been in our history. We have extremely rapid growth in population and in terms of the labour force, Mr. Speaker. So we rank number one in three consecutive years in terms of the level of unemployment. We come in with a package of 5,000 new jobs for the province of Saskatchewan immediately, right now, for January, February, March, and April, and the opposition stands up and says, "Well, what are you doing in terms of your record of employment?"

I can only say, Mr. Speaker, if you're number one in '82, and number one in '83, and number one in '84, and you just announced a package for 5,000 more, I know when you're batting 400 in any league playing baseball somebody that made an improvement going from 250 to 300 may feel good, but number one is number one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Thank you, Mr. Premier. For the benefit of my constituents and with respect to the 5,000 jobs that are being created immediately, would the Premier advise where young people in Regina go to apply for some of those 5,000 jobs? Can you tell me what I can tell my constituents about where to go to apply for the jobs that you are creating next month?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, when the Bill goes through the legislature, and the agency is into effect, and the minister of job creation has the machinery to deal with it, people can apply to the agency. Right now they can send their applications, if they want to send applications or letters of information or requests for information, they can send it to the minister right now, so that my hon. friend knows it. The minister is quite prepared to look at all sorts of co-operation with people in the community — rural municipalities, urban municipalities, local groups that want to build and construct various kinds of activities, have told us they're prepared to co-operate with the minister. So I'm sure the constituents of Elphinstone would be more than glad to co-operate as well.

Representations by Beef Stabilization producers Association

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture, and it concerns your decision earlier this fall to break the contracts with the thousands of beef producers in Saskatchewan under the Saskatchewan beef stabilization plan last summer, a move which has cost the beef producers over \$11 million.

In desperation, by way of information, Mr. Speaker, angry beef producers have formed a new organization, one of their own, that's called the Saskatchewan Beef Stabilization Producers Association, to try and get a reversal of your unilateral changes that you've made to their plan. Many of the producers who attended the founding meeting this past Friday did so after you refused to attend a public meeting in southern Saskatchewan to explain your government's action. You were first invited to a meeting by the people that were involved in organizing this producer organization, early in October, and have been ducking invitations ever since. My question is, Mr. Minister: are you going to display some courage and accept an invitation from this new producer group to address a public meeting in south-west Saskatchewan on these changes to the beef stabilization plan?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, and certainly, as it relates to a change in the beef stabilization program, the beef insurance program. There has been many positive changes over the past couple of years. And, in fact, I met with, I think it was a couple of hundred people, many of them contract holders, in Moosomin, Saskatchewan. And as well, Mr. Speaker, given that the changes were recommended by the beef stabilization board, I know the chairman and many of its members have as well attended many meetings. However, as I understand it, there was something like 36 that banded together out of 5,000 contract holders to put in place a new lobby groups, and I suppose, we, as politicians, that's what we're here for to be lobbied, and I would hear their views as any others.

I would remind the hon. member, however, that the changes that he refers to in the beef insurance program were changes that were recommended to the government by the board, and it was a unanimous recommendation. And if the hon. member is trying to tell us that he knows more about the beef industry than most people on there do, I would wonder about that. Because, in fact, every one of those people on that board represents farmers and farm groups, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, that they have the best interests of the livestock industry at heart, and I think that their responsible moves show that.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, supplementary question. You went to a meeting in Moosomin. The Moosomin meeting mustn't have been very favourable because you refuse to come to a meeting in Swift Current shortly after that. my question is: why did you avoid meeting with the members in Swift Current?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Speaker, I don't recall any specific invitation to Swift Current, but I'm prepared to check my correspondence on that.

MR. ENGEL: — Check a letter that was dated October the 12th. I have a copy of it here in front of me where you were asked to come down to a meeting and discuss the problem. Have producers, in general, contacted you regarding the changes to the beef stabilization plan? The premiums for the insurance on a stabilization plan may be adjusted from time to time, but what gives you the right to change the terms and conditions of coverage under the plan? That's the question. Isn't breaking a signed contract a clear breach of faith, as the producers themselves have labelled it?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that in the regulations, when levy got to 6 per cent, the board was obligated to review the plan, and that was clearly stated in the original contract. And of course we know who was in government when that 6 per cent figure was put into the regulations.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the board acted in a very responsible manner. As I would see it, they had two choices: they could raise the levy by 20 or 30 or 40 per cent, perhaps more; or, in effect, they could down size the model. And I think they took the very responsible route; 100 per cent of cash costs are still covered, and instead of 55 per cent of non-cash it is now 50 per cent.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, as the other party might have done when they were in government, the minister might have been the unilateral organ of policy making. But when we have a board made up of farmers and ranchers we tend to listen to them and not overrule them. And if there's any question about where our government stands in terms of the livestock industry, I think one has only to look at our record. And I would ask, you know, who was it that brought in the prairie livestock drought program, \$48 a head for livestock producers? Which government was it that made changes of the Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan to provide 8 per cent money for livestock producers? which government was in place when the livestock investment tax credit was brought in? And I could go on. I think our track record is clear. We are behind the farmers and the ranchers in the livestock industry.

MR. ENGEL: — One more supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, when you offered the options that you could have done, didn't your government ever consider spending \$11 million to pick up the deficit — that when the farmers are not meeting the cost of the production, rather than change the formula to say that they automatically lost 20 per cent?

Did you not consider to use some of your oil money and some of the money that . . . You have \$150 million a year extra money to the oil companies than they ever got before. Did you not consider using just \$11 million of that money, picking up the deficit from that plan? Wasn't that the option that many farmers expected to get when they bought and enrolled in that plan for six years — to get a six-year stabilization plan, not a three-month by three-month plan like they have now?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The part of the deficit that you refer to, of course, once again, was an example of ministerial interference in the plan when it was originally drafted. And of course that was the 50-feeder option plan. And we know who was in power at that time. Certainly the board has addressed that question. And once again you're coming up with the usual simplistic answer. Last week it was, you know, the \$30 an acre — one and a half billion. This week it's we should pick up something else, and I don't know what it'll be next week.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Agriculture. He has indicated here in question period today that the board of the stabilization plan recommended that the percentage be cut from 55 to 50 per cent. I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you can indicate who, in fact, appointed the board members to that board?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, the members on the beef board are drawn from a number of farm organizations as it, I believe, is stated, or as it is indicated in the Act that they should be. And that's how the members are on that board. And some of them have been there since the very beginning. And of course people will remember in this province that when we took power, there were some of your ilk that said we would destroy the beef stabilization board like it was like a coyote in the chicken house.

Well, for the information of all, especially those across the way, what have we done with the beef stabilization board? We've brought in a program for feeder-to-finish that wasn't in existence before, and one that works. We've got something more than central sales desk in the offering for them to sell their cattle through now. And the members are appointed through order in council based on recommendations from farm organizations.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister whether or not he assumes that the changes he has made to the beef stabilization plan stabilize the beef producer at a break-even point or below a break-even point? Can you give me that answer, whether they are stabilized at a loss position or at a break-even position under your plan?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, in an insurance program, Mr. Speaker, as with anything, the idea behind it is in the tough times, pay-outs are triggered, and as with anything else out there in the real world, we tend to look for most of our returns from the market-place. As I mentioned earlier, 100 per cent of their cash costs are still covered in the program, and the non-cash has been dropped from 55 to 50.

Health Services in the Athabasca Basin

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Speaker, at the last sitting the member for Athabasca asked me to inquire into the case surrounding the death of Albertine Roy of Stony Rapids, and I'd like to report to the House, my findings.

Mrs. Roy has undergone major surgery in 1979 following a head injury suffered in a fall. The

operation included installing a drainage tube from the right ventricle of her brain to relieve fluid pressure on the brain. Because the drainage device was permanently installed, there was an expectation that regular medical examinations would occur. The patient did not go to Saskatoon in 1980 for a follow-up exam and was requested to return in 1981. To our knowledge, these regular examinations were not maintained. The patient mentioned to our clinic nurse in October, 1984, that it was about time to have it checked. However, at that time she denied any physical problems, and she subsequently failed to keep three different appointments to see the doctor that were made for her by the nurse.

On November 19th, the patient saw the nurse, and for the first time complained of headaches. Another appointment was made, and the patient saw the doctor on November 21st. Apparently the medical examination did not indicate any cause for alarm at that time, and the patient herself gave no indication of desiring immediate evacuation, but arrangements were initiated to have her referred to Saskatoon for a full examination of her surgical shunt. This appointment was subsequently confirmed for December 5th.

The patient was seen again by the doctor on November 29th and by the nurse on November 30th and December 2nd. The doctor was contacted on December 2nd; medication was prescribe, and it was agreed the patient would be reassessed the following day, December 3rd. Transportation arrangements to fly the patient to Saskatoon on December 4th had already been made. Regrettably, the patient passed away during the night of December 2nd.

An autopsy has been performed, but the report is not yet available. We do not yet have either the written pathologist report or the final report from the local coroner. From the information that is available, it would appear our staff made reasonable efforts to arrange medical treatment and to maintain medical contact as complications developed during the final four days.

The procedure that follows in these circumstances is that the local coroner will submit a final report to the provincial coroner. He will also make a recommendation as to whether or not there should be an inquest. The provincial coroner will also consider whether further investigation is needed. I assure the House and the hon. member that I will keep him informed of the coroner's decision just as soon as it is reported to me.

Also, on Friday the member from Athabasca asked me to look into the situation surrounding the death of a 10-year-old girl, Sharon Robillard. This child was seen by our clinic nurse in Stony Rapids on July 16th. She was examined and given medication for flu by our clinic nurse. The illness was not severe at that time. The child was seen again by the nurse two days later, who then consulted with a physician and a senior nurse in La Ronge. Based on those consultations, the nurse decided to order an immediate medical evacuation.

The child was taken to a Prince Albert hospital immediately. She was transferred to the pediatric intensive care unit in University Hospital the next day, and she died the day after that on July the 20th.

The disease which caused Sharon's death is called Reye's syndrome. It is an illness which occurs occasionally in conjunction with a viral infection. It is very difficult to diagnose and causes very rapid deterioration. An evaluation of our own staff involvement in the case immediately following the death indicated our nurse had provided appropriate initial treatment and was correct in arranging emergency evacuation two days later.

Medical consultation was initiated by the nurse at the earliest sign that the illness might be serious, and at that time it was still not identifiable as Reye's syndrome. It is important and also very tragic to note that there is approximately a 75 per cent mortality rate for those who contract Reye's syndrome.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 25 — An Act to provide for the Postponement of the Tabling of Certain Documents

HON. MR. McLEOD: — Mr. Speaker, this being the 13th sitting day, I rise today to move second reading of An Act to provide for the Postponement of the Tabling of Certain Documents.,

Before moving second reading I have a few remarks regarding this piece of legislation that should clarify any concerns that members of the House may have.

This Bill is a copy of the Act which was passed last year. The intent of the Bill is provide for the postponement of the tabling of documents, lengthening the number from 15 to 45 sitting days before a document must be tabled. The 45 sitting days indicated in the Bill is a number arrived at upon agreement with the members of the opposition in last year's Bill regarding the same matter.

The practice of amending the tabling of documents Act to accommodate late tabling was used on several occasions by the previous government, and, as I indicated, it was used here last year.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of Bill No. 25, An Act to provide for the Postponement of the Tabling of Certain Documents.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, we object to this bill. We do not object to the idea of postponing tabling so that they will not have to be tabled during this fall session. That is not unreasonable. Many of the documents are not ordinarily tabled in the month of December, and it is reasonable that we ought to make arrangements . . . although some of them obviously could be, since they are for year's ended, and are being tabled for year's ended last March 31st.

However, there are a good number of documents which could very, very easily be tabled within a few days after the house resumes in March if the practice of the last several years is followed. And we certainly don't need to wait 45 days which will take us, perhaps if we convene at mid-March which is earlier than we did last year, we are then — and assuming this fall session goes 15 days — we are 30 sitting days and near the end of April before documents are tabled; before there's any obligation to table the *Public Accounts*, for example, and other documents which are clearly needed in order to deal with the estimates and the report of the Heritage Fund, which is needed in order to deal adequately with items arising out of the budget.

And it strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that while a provision which would postpone the tabling of documents for the month of December, or something that would postpone the tabling of documents for 15 days after we reconvene, would be reasonable in order to allow the government to get going — although even that is a difficulty if we reconvene with the budget — than, I think, for 45 days into the session, which will take us very possibly into very late April, is unreasonable. And it puts the public at a disadvantage in considering the budget; it puts the opposition at a disadvantage in making any appropriate comments and calling attention to things which we feel ought to be called to the attention of the public.

Accordingly, we will be opposing the Bill and would suggest a figure considerably lower than 45 days, or one which would be phrased in terms of 15 days after the reconvening of the session at any time following an adjournment, where such reconvening takes place in calendar '85. Something of that order which would be, it seems to me, reasonable, meet the government's point, and allow the public and the opposition to have available to them information which ought reasonably to be available to them when they are dealing with the estimates and dealing generally with the impact of the budget.

We, accordingly, Mr. Speaker, will be opposing the Bill.

HON. MR. McLEOD: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of points of clarification in response to remarks by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. It certainly is not our intent, it certainly is not our intent — and I will give the assurance to the Leader of the Opposition and to all members of the House — it is not our intent to delay unduly the tabling of documents.

The hon. member has alluded to the fact that there are documents which have traditionally come in later than December and so on. If I would recall properly, I believe that last year there was some discussion about 60 days, and we agreed with the opposition then, and we certainly agreed that that was far too long.

We came to 45 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If the member from Quill Lake will just give me an opportunity to clarify what his leader was talking about, his leader who was reasonable in his discussion of this.

And what I would say to the members of the House is that it is not our intention to unduly delay tabling of documents. I think the 45 days is a reasonable time, but I would give the House the assurance that it will not be near the 45-day limit when most documents come in.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 34

McLeod	Sandberg	Smith (Moose Jaw South)
Andrew	Klein	Myers
Taylor	Embury	Caswell
Katzman	Maxwell	Hampton
Pickering	Young	Boutin
Hardy	Domotor	Schmidt
Garner	Folk	Sauder
Smith (Swift Current)	Muirhead	Zazelenchuk
Baker	Bacon	Sutor
Hepworth	Hodgins	Weiman
Dirks	Parker	Morin
Currie		

Nays — 8

Blakeney	Koskie	Yew
Engel	Lusney	Sveinson
Lingenfelter	Shillington	

Bill read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole at the next sitting.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hepworth that Bill No. 1 — **An Act respecting the Security of Farm Land in Saskatchewan** be now read a second time.

MR. SVEINSON: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak to the second reading of Bill No. 1. I suffered . . . More recently I was out of the House for a few moments and was unable to speak to Bill No. 2 so I certainly appreciate this opportunity.

We've heard a great deal of debate in the last several days on a Bill that has been introduced by the Government of Saskatchewan with the intention of helping farmers. In reviewing that debate in *Hansard* I find that many of the government members who have spoken to the Bill have not very ably demonstrated how this Bill will, in fact, help any farmers in the province of Saskatchewan.

In past debates in this legislature relating to the plight of farmers, the Premier has, on many occasions, reiterated that his government — and one statement that I'd like to just read into the record — will go to the wall for farmers. On examining that statement I would anticipate that going to the wall for the farmers of Saskatchewan would offer them some financial support.

The year we've just had in this province has not been a banner year for crops right across the province, although in pockets we have had good yields. In other areas, such as the north-east, they've suffered from not only drought, but they've also suffered from too much moisture over the last three or four years, and that problem took this government two years to even react to that situation. Yesterday, the member from Redberry, to quote, said, "We will move toward a solution." Well, I don't find Bill 1 moving very quickly toward any solution.

(1445)

If you examine it carefully, Bill 1 simply affects the land and the mortgage on the property, whether the mortgage holder be a bank or an individual, or whether it be an agreement for sale, or whether it be a mortgage. The Bill says to the farmers that, I suppose, is in trouble — although it certainly affects all farmers who wish not to make that payment — it says to the farmer that in order to pay for the seed and the feed you don't have to make your mortgage payment after December 4, 1984.

Now what's that really translate into? A lot of the farmers in this province aren't faced with mortgages. I would suggest that of the \$3.2 million worth of mortgages on farm land that that would not include a quarter of the land mass in this province presently being farmed.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Five billion, Bill. Where do you get your numbers?

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, there's 3.2, and there's operating costs of another 1.8, so there's approximately 5 billion.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Five billion.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, the opposition says 5 billion. I think there is a point of debate there. It could be a lot larger than that because many agreements for sale may not be registered. There may be many farmers out there that are farming land that they've purchased on an agreement for sale from a neighbour or from a relative, and certainly it isn't even registered as a mortgage on that property. So, you know, the point is well taken. It could be well in excess of 45 billion.

But certainly, even though it is that the numbers are huge, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that even considering the 5 billion there's probably another \$15 billion worth of land in this province that doesn't have mortgages on that land.

Now there has been a great deal of pressure on the price of farm land over the last three or four years. I think anyone who's been in a position where he's purchased farm land, probably in the mid-70s to the early '80s, would have found that the cost of that land was relatively high

compared to the neighbour who may have bought it in 1971 or '72.

The land prices escalated in the area of \$60 to \$90 an acre on land that was assessed between 4 and 5,000 to close to \$1,000 an acre in the early '80s. Subsequently, we had some changes by the former government which affected that market-place. They legislated against foreign buyers in this province which took a part of the purchasing power that was affecting the market-place away from that market-place. Consequently, or coincidentally, there were at the same time very high interest rates faced by anyone buying farm land. And again, under the old regime of the NDP in this province, they purchased themselves 1.7 million acres of farm land.

So the pressures on farm land, outside the local buyer, the neighbour who wanted to buy the land, were severe. And, as a result, land prices escalated very rapidly. Consequently, in the last two or three years while this government's been in power we've seen, again, another player in the market-place, the government, who has been out of the market-place for that period, and I certainly salute that move. I don't believe the government should have ever been in the market-place, but it was. It was for several years. The land bank accumulated huge volumes of farm land. They presently and still own that farm land. They eliminated the foreign buyers so as a consequence today, Mr. Speaker we have left in that market-place solely and only the farmers of Saskatchewan, the young farmers of Saskatchewan primarily who would like to get into the farming field as a lifetime endeavour.

But those who got into farming in the mid-to-late 70s, with the 25 per cent down payment that is normally required by most banking institutions, found that over the last four to five years that the value of their equity has slipped below their investment. So if, for example, if they paid \$400,000 for that equity in the late 70s, today the equity is likely worth less than 300,000. That's the equity of their land. They are still making the payments. They put 25 or \$100,000 — 25 per cent or \$100,000 — up to purchase the land. Suddenly it's only worth 300 or 280,000.

Now their desire to maintain a position of ownership in many cases overrides the reason that should prevail that their equity or, in fact, their investment is now less than the mortgage on the property. That creates some drastic problems.

And we've seen the same kind of problem in the housing market, not necessarily here in Regina, but certainly in Vancouver and Alberta where a home may have been purchased for \$250,000 and suddenly the owner who put 25 per cent into the purchase of that property finds that the value of the home has dropped to 125,000, and the mortgage may still be 170 or 200,000.

So that in those cases I don't know if we can protect the farmer because we've taken from the market-place, we've taken the foreign buyer, we've taken the government, and all we have left are those local farmers who, in many cases, don't have the financing.

We found in recent days . . . In fact, I've talked to one real-estate broker who has three deals on the books and indicates that, yes, the farmer's been in to the bank for the money, but the money is no longer available. They're on hold.

So what's that going to do to the market, the farm land market, Mr. Speaker? It's going to drive that value of land down further than it is because there are certainly farms that have to be sold. We may be in a situation where a farmer's estate has to sell the land. The only buyer left in the community is a cash buyer. There's no longer competition from a young farmer who only has half the money or three-quarters of the land has to be financed. The situation is down to the position where only the cash buyer's left in the market.

And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that that's going to drive the value of that land down further. Now I know that in the Regina heavy clay we've seen a 30 per cent drop in the last two or three years in the price of an acre of farm land, with the exception of maybe an occasional purchase where several neighbours are competing for a quarter section and they all have cash. But,

generally speaking we've seen a number of the foreign buyers flog their land out on the market.

We've also seen the corporate owners of land in this province — and I refer to companies like the Credit Foncier who by 1995 under the legislation passed by the former government are forced to sell that land or it will be expropriated and sold by the government — we've seen these companies and we've seen those buyers out in the market-place flooding the market essentially with farm land and further depressing the price.

And, Friday last, I heard that farm credit says that applications for purchase of farm land in Saskatchewan have virtually dried up. I'm not certain, Mr. Speaker, whether the fact that the applications dried up is a play on words or, in fact, the farmers out there have decided . . . The young ones at least, who have to finance the purchase of not only land but also equipment to work it with, are just no longer around and no longer available.

And this government says . . . They present Bill 1 into this House and suggest that that is the solution. Well, a number of farmers . . . I would suggest that between here and Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, you'd have difficulty finding any farmer who would, in fact, resort to the tactics of Bill 1 because they all respect the fact that, while the banks aren't maybe the favourite sons of any of us in Saskatchewan, the farmer out there realizes that he may have to borrow money for his seed or for his feed or whatever, possibly for his equipment. He also realizes that his equity base, which is primarily his farm land, is dropping rapidly.

Now if we're looking at \$20 million worth of a total asset in farm land in Saskatchewan and the equity base which is, I would suggest, already has dropped approximately 30 per cent, that \$6 billion out of the pockets of the farmers in this province. And that 6 billion was used as equity to finance his operation in many cases. His land, if in fact he has it paid for and needs a cash advance, he may have to use a part of that land as collateral against the bank's offering of money to buy equipment or, in fact, to buy feed or seed or whatever is required.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 1 is going to further depress the value of farm land in this province, and it's going to further create a situation where the equity that's needed by farmers who own land and the equity that's needed certainly by those who don't have title to their land is fast being reduced. And the consequence of that happening is that many farmers in this province are not going to be able to afford, or the banks will not recognize the equity they'll have, if our land values drop to the \$90 an acre they were in the early '70s. I mean not many farmers in this province will have any equity left who have mortgages on their land. In fact, there aren't many now that, I'm sure, who have purchased land in the four or five years who have a great deal of equity left.

Mr. Devine, during the Crow debate, suggested that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. Would you refer to members by their positions or their constituencies rather than by name.

MR. SVEINSON: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member for Estevan, during the Crow debate, suggested that he would open the treasury to defend Saskatchewan farmers. Well, I have examined Bill 1 and I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there hasn't been a great deal out of the treasury offered in Bill 1.

I see the Minister of Agriculture looking cross-eyedly across the House, and I can appreciate that I mean he realizes as well as I do, I'm sure he's had as much input as I had over the last four or five days from farmers all over Saskatchewan who find that there just isn't any meat in this Bill, Mr. speaker. And they felt that when a special session of this House was called this fall to deal with farming and with unemployment that at least this government would have the good sense to offer the farmers possibly a long-term solution — something that didn't offer a lot of cash today, but could at least alleviate some of their problems. They offered the home owners in

Saskatchewan, shortly after they were elected, a situation where they paid down their mortgages to 13.25 per cent.

I believe the farmers in this province would certainly look upon that as an enterprises offering if that were made. There aren't a great number of farmers, I'm sure, that are in the difficulty that this Bill would be directed to, but there are definitely some out there. That wouldn't be immediate short term, but it would at least give the bank time to at least have a look at the situation that the farmer who is in the office and is outlining his problem to the bank manager, it would give him an opportunity to at least accept that something was forthcoming and that the government of this province had the will to help the farmer who is in desperate need out there.

They're talking about an Act that will stop foreclosures in the province. I don't know if a great number of people in this province have experienced that sad fate, but there is a great time lag between the day the bank indicates it's going to foreclose on your farm and the day that it comes in to evict you off your property. And I believe that there is also a long-standing appreciation by both parties in the situation that the bank and the farmer have to arrive at some area of co-operation. And I think initially, in a foreclosure action, the bank would, in fact, prefer that they could help the farmer out of the situation and not necessarily force him into his foreclosure.

And in communication with their bank, I find that most farmers make probably annual payments on their land. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that with proper communication with the bank, that many banks would have looked upon next year's payment and maybe accepted what the farmer could offer. And if that was nothing, of course there's grave concern. But if there was something available, I think the banks would look upon it as, at least, progress.

(1500)

I know in recent days the banks have looked on Bill 1 certainly in a less than entertaining manner. They've stopped mortgage applications. I mean that is critical. If you're in a position where you're buying farm land and you want to get set up for next spring, the time to buy it is now. You've got to have your land. In fact, even if it's an expansion, you've got to have it in the next few months. You've got to arrange for equipment that you can farm it with. And this Bill have virtually ground credit for farm land mortgages to a halt.

I phoned the CIBC, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Their girl indicated that their mortgage department hadn't answered the phone for a week, and she thought maybe they'd left town. Well, you know, I see the minister laughing cross the way . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That is a serious problem. You're right, it's a serious problem. The Royal Bank has taken a wait and see attitude to your Act and, I think, for good reasons.

The minister himself indicated that banks have done very well from agriculture — 98 per cent of the farmers have made their payments. And I would think that the minister expects 98 per cent of the farmers to make their payments next year, as well. So what he's saying is we have a Bill here that could affect the credit of all farmers in Saskatchewan when applying for credit, or for mortgages to buy farm land, and 2 per cent of the farmers that he claims he may protect will, in fact, in the eyes of the bank at least, put these purchases in jeopardy.

Now that's not the answer to a problem that has been with us since this government was elected. The plight of the farmer, at least the farmer that is outlined in this particular Bill, is not a new one. It's been with us in this province since this Conservative government was elected. It was with us, in fact, during the NDP régime. In 1981 they saw clear through their Home Owners' Protection Act to create a similar Bill that protected home owners in this province for a one-year moratorium.

At that time banks took a reasonably dim view of that Act, but there was, at least in their Act, the

ability for the applicant or the mortgage holder to waive the legislation, so that if, in fact, they wanted to buy a farm or to buy a home at the time, they could put their money up, they could purchase that home, and they could waive that legislation so they were in a position financially to make the payments.

This government hasn't included that in this Act. If a young farmer wants to buy a parcel of land, he is obligated to be under the auspices of this legislation. He cannot waive the legislation tabled in Bill 1 if the Act goes through in its present form.

So, Mr. Speaker, while the government has been very secretive, I must say, about the intent of this Act, as the member from Redberry said earlier, we're going to move. We're on the move to alleviate the farmers' problems in Saskatchewan. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, this government is gambling, is gambling with the farmers in the province, and they're gambling with the hope that we're going to have a great crop, we're going to have . . . rainfall is going to be abundant. And so let's fact it, we all hope it will be, but that doesn't solve the short-term problems. That happened in 1971. Seventy-one was a tough year. We had similar legislation again. It was introduced six weeks after the NDP were elected in 1971, but it was a more inclusive Act. It also included some of the assets that have been left wide open to seizure by banks as a result of Bill 1.

And just to go through for a moment an editorial that was, in fact, surfaced in the *Edmonton Journal*, Mr. Speaker.

Alberta's minister of agriculture, Leroy Fjordbotten, is right in refusing to follow Saskatchewan's lead in imposing a 13-month debt moratorium on farm land. The surprise move by our sister province at first appears to be a bonanza for struggling farmers, but on closer examination it may not be such a prize gift.

Mr. Fjordbotten mentions two things: number one, it was a surprise move. This Minister of Agriculture didn't discuss this with anyone. I don't believe he discussed it with the farmers out in our community. Her certainly didn't talk to the bankers. It's obvious he didn't talk to his fellow ministers in other provinces, even those with the same political faith as his own. And I have heard from 25 or 30 farmers in the last four or five days, some of whom were asked for their input to solving some of the problems that face farmers in this province, and certainly this solution that is on the table before us in the form of Bill 1, he says, in his certainly recollection, was never brought to the table, was never discussed. And Fjordbotten says that it certainly isn't a consideration in Alberta. And he goes on to say that the moratorium under The Farm Land Security Act applies only to \$3.2 billion worth of land mortgages. What happens, he says, if the lender seizes the farmer's machinery, his grain, his livestock? Having land, but no way to utilize it, is pointless.

Now I've heard answers from several members in the government benches, but I really don't think they've expanded to include the answer to the farmers who suffers this kind of action by the bank. The Act does not include any protection. And I have read the Act. The minister suggests I haven't read the Act. I have read the Act. It doesn't protect the farmer's assets. It doesn't protect the farmer's credit.

The Saskatchewan New Democratic Party passed similar legislation in 1971. It allowed farmers to withhold payment on debts on machinery, livestock, and land.

Now I think the members from Melville said it best the other day, and it relates certainly to this legislation. While you haven't gone as far as your socialist friends to my right, he suggested that you certainly are practising the philosophy that these people to my right are preaching. And that is a philosophy that I'm sure is as far from the minds of most farmers in this province as anything they could think of. And I'm sure it's as far from the minds of many back-benchers in your own government.

I'm sure you didn't discuss legislation as you've tabled in Bill 1 with your caucus, because I'm sure that some of the farmers in your caucus who are not involved in the decision-making of your government could see right through this Bill the moment it was tabled — there's nothing in it.

And while the NDP, the opposition to my right, has indicated through an amendment to the Bill that we should study it, that we should consider 7 per cent mortgage rates on farm land, they were in a position at one time, Mr. Speaker, to do exactly that. And that's when interest rates were the highest. Interest rates have come back to a reasonable rate. I don't think any of us like 12 or 13 or 14 per cent interest rates, but at least they're reasonable.

This government, the government under the NDP which was bombed out in 1982 for reasons that I think could be included, this government had an opportunity to address interest problems in this province, but they didn't have the political will to do it. They also claim to have had a balanced budget when they left office. I heard recently they said they had \$140 million in the bank — 140 million. Well even if they had more — maybe they had 500 million — why didn't they do something for the farming community? Why didn't they do something for the farmers of Saskatchewan at that time, because he was fast moving into a position where he was in severe economic trouble. If crops were great, he could survive. But one breach of nature — too much moisture, too little moisture — and a lot of those farmers are on their way out because they couldn't survive the interest rates which a lot of them still face on their farm land.

I was talking to a young fellow from Keeler who isn't here today, but he spent three or four days in this House in the last week. He's got a 17.5 per cent mortgage that was renewed four years ago. He's got one year to go on it. The only choice he's been given is don't make a payment on it. Well, he still has to pay 17.5 per cent for 1985, and he has to pay interest on that 17.5 per cent and then he has to pay his principal that has accrued over the same time. He has been given absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker.

And that's exactly what this government has given agriculture since they were elected. They feel that their base out there is the agriculture community, and they are so secure out there that they don't have to do anything for the community.

Well, they've proven with Bill 1 they're capable of coming back tot his House with a Bill that has nothing in it, and with their numbers they feel they can go to the minister of truth, along with their own press releases, convince the people of this province that, yes, they're doing something for the farmers.

They are doing nothing for the farmers, and the farmers know it. And the NDP before them did very little. I guess early in their term, before they were advanced enough to realize that the farmers, many of them were Conservatives, they at least offered some help in 1971. hey offered the help.

Well, by 1979 or '80 they eliminated one of the major players in the market that hold the price of farm . . . that, in fact, probably increased the price of land, but not knowing the other player in the market-place, who were the government bureaucrats that were about buying farm land. And I have seen cases where farm land that's been priced at 24 times assessment over a period of two years and wasn't selling, was sold to government bureaucrats for up to 32 times assessment for the same parcel. Nobody else out there was interested in the land.

Well you don't need many transactions like that, Mr. Speaker, in an area. You go into your own area, four or five land transactions at any time tend to set the tone for the value of land in that area. That's what your appraisers use; that's what the banks use when they're financing that land.

Well, going to the wall for the farmers hasn't been demonstrated through Bill 1 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I find that an interesting comment. The member from Saskatoon suggests it wasn't demonstrated by the Liberals either.

Well certainly in one case which affected the flood-torn farmers of north-eastern Saskatchewan, \$16 million did go through the treasury board. That \$16 million was taken from, or was reduced to \$8 million by the Conservatives after they were elected in September of this year, virtually stole 8 million from the farmers of north-eastern Saskatchewan and gave it to their eastern friends, the Ontario tobacco growers, the Ontario grape producers, through legislation that came through the House of Commons after they were elected. And he's right. If the present government in Ottawa, under the leadership of Mr. Mulroney, would at least . . . would even carry out a portion of the promises they made to farmers in Saskatchewan, the problem would be all but eliminated, all but alleviated. But no, they choose not to; they choose not to.

(1515)

We are, in this province, and we've been certainly used as a whipping boy over the years as Liberals in Ottawa and for good reason. But I don't see that the philosophy has changed a great deal. Even though we have a Tory government elected in Ottawa, I don't see a great rush into Saskatchewan with programs and with participation in programs that will alleviate the problems faced, not only by farmers, but also by small-business men from border to border in this province.

Farm groups like the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Mr. Speaker; the Palliser Wheat Growers say the moratorium merely postpones the inevitable, which is absolutely true. There is no meat in this Bill. There is nothing here but a delay, the delay that a debt doesn't have to be paid until January 1, 1986.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Eighty-five, Bill.

MR. SVEINSON: — January 1st, '86. The member from Last Mountain-Touchwood who would like to get into the speaking order and will certainly have an opportunity in due course.

Bankers say point plank that they'll pull their investment dollars out if they don't have access to repossession.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Let them go.

MR. SVEINSON: — And I don't disagree with the member from Melville who says, "Let them go," but who are you going to replace them with? Are the credit unions going to be bolstered so they can fill in the void that is created by the banks when they leave this province? I would doubt it. They have . . . the credit unions are there for the same reason as this Bill has been introduced, that the banks at one time looked very unfavourable at Saskatchewan farmers and Saskatchewan business people. So co-operatively, they set up their own tools to finance the purchase of farm land and equipment, not only in farming, but also in business.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Tell us about the Liberal solution. What would you do?

MR. SVEINSON: — I hear two members to me left, one asking me for the Liberal solution: "What would you do?" That's an interesting proposal. This government hasn't any idea of how to approach the problem. They have demonstrated their cerebral bankruptcy, not only with this Act, but with several Acts that have been tabled in this House. Bill 2, upon examination, is just an admission that what they've done relative to the unemployment in this province has been inefficient and insufficient. So they're going to collectively put it into one ministry and suggest that that's going to help.

Coming back to Bill No. 1, which is in debate, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that, yes, we do have some answers. We could certainly provide tools that this government could use to assist the farmers in this province, that will in fact demonstrate the will of this government to address the problem.

And one solution, and I've alluded to it earlier, is why not consider a pay-out, or why not

consider an interest reduction program for farmers? Why not? The home owners of this province receive that benefit. The farmers who are farming at 17.5 per cent interest on a mortgage and find that they only got seven to 10 bushels an acres on their land simply can't make those payments.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that 13.25 per cent is too high. That's what the home owners have been offered. The banks right now, on three-year terms, are offering 12.25. This government hasn't followed them down. They're protecting those who are over 13.25, and they're just paying out the banks. They could also ask their counterparts in Ottawa, the federal government, to show some political will in addressing interest rate problems that face the farmers in this province. And I haven't heard that that solution has been aired.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Well, where were you last week? At the agriculture outlook conference he announced they were dropping farm credit rates.

MR. SVEINSON: — And so they should drop farm credit rates. I think farm credit rates would follow very closely — very closely — bank rates across the country. They go up when bank rates go up. They come down when bank rates come down. Also, the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . He's asking for the Liberal agricultural policy. Well, I'm just trying to outline it if he'd give me more time.

But I think that it's the Conservative agriculture policy in this House that's up before the light today, Mr. Speaker. It's not whether or not the Liberal solution is going to be accepted by this House. It's the solution that's on the table today, a solution offered by this Conservative government, a solution the farms in Saskatchewan say does not help them. And it doesn't help them.

And I suggest to his government that they should come through with some reasonable amendments to this Act which will, in fact, address the problem of, not only high interest rates, but high debt ratios. And the debt ratio is growing. The asset value of farmers across this province is falling. And that's because the buyers out there just are no longer there.

Maybe they should let a few of the buyers that were buying farm land in the mid '70s and late '70s back into the market-place. Maybe other Canadians, for instance, who would like to buy an interest in Saskatchewan farming, who may have been Saskatchewan residents at one time, or who in fact may have grown up on Saskatchewan farms — maybe those people should be allowed to reinvest in Saskatchewan farms as individuals.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Lawyers.

MR. SVEINSON: — Not necessarily doctors and lawyers, as the lawyer next to me suggested. I'm talking about ordinary Canadians. I'm talking about people who left this province under a socialist regime because they couldn't get work here. This was alluded to by the member from Wadena-Kelvington. I'm talking about people who have structured their life outside this province but still have farming ties in Saskatchewan, and maybe would like to come back some day but aren't even allowed under the foreign ownership of farm land Act to purchase land in this province in excess of, I believe, it's 20 acres. It may be less, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe there should be a change to that Act, some stabilization out there. The prices are dropping as fast . . . they're just plummeting down on farm land because there are no buyers in the market-place. That hurts all Saskatchewan farmers, particularly those that decide they want to retire and take their equity and move into the city, or stay in the small community and live on the equity that they've developed. Those people are suffering because of the loss of value in their asset, which is farm land.

They've asked for solutions — address the interest rate problem. You haven't done that in this

Act. You've delayed it. We could find in January 1, 1986 that interest rates are back up at 16 or 17 per cent. This act does not offer any solution at that point to interest rates. Then we'd have to call in another special session of this legislature, get wound up in here to decide what the solution should be. Well, that's only a year down the road. Can't we at least flag the issue and maybe address it in some manner that's reasonable — not excessive, just reasonable — and let the farmers in this province know that, yes, the government will, in fact, and is willing to dip into the treasury?

The Premier of Saskatchewan mentions \$150 million in his speeches. That, Mr. Speaker, is less than 5 per cent of the total provincial budget — far less than 5 per cent of the total provincial budget — going into the asset in this province that probably involves one-half or more of our gross provincial product either directly or indirectly.

It's not time to fiddle, Mr. Premier. It's time to act. And it's time to protect, as I think the Act outlines, or in fact the throne speech outlines, it's time to protect that family farm.

In 1971 we had 76,670 family farms in this province. By 1981, under the NDP regime, under the NDP, it had dropped to 67,000. We've lost 10,000 family farms. and their Act in 1971 outlined exactly what this Act today outlines it. It's in the interest to protect the family farm. Well, they proved their ineptitude in protecting the family farm, and I suggest the Act before us today proves this government's ineptitude to address exactly the same problem.

I believe, if the banks are going to be eliminated from financing farm land in Saskatchewan, this government should maybe offer loans to farmers that address that exact problem.

AN HON. MEMBER: — We are.

MR. SVEINSON: — And yes you are, but it's limited in nature and it's limited in scope. And I believe it's been fairly well accepted by those who have qualified and who, in fact, qualify for it. And that I applaud. But it isn't broad enough, and the scope still doesn't allow most farmers in this province who want to expand to use that avenue to expand with.

AN HON. MEMBER: — It's the Liberal sins you want us to correct.

MR. SVEINSON: — And the lawyer from Melville continues to utter "Liberal sins." Well, he isn't on his feet and likely won't be in this debate.

It was he that just the other day suggested that this government is practising socialism and it can be very well demonstrated in many of their activities. So that I suggest to him, and I've outlined several suggestions in the last 15 minutes, Mr. Speaker, which would absolutely and directly help eliminate at least a small part of the problem faced by the farmers in Saskatchewan who are up against the wall.

Your Premier suggests that he'll go to the wall. I suggest to him that those farmers in the community who are up against the wall have not been addressed in this legislation in any manner which will, in fact, curb or alleviate their problem.

Surely this government should have some clout in Ottawa as well. And again, and over and over again, they demonstrate that that clout I just not there. The announcement of the loss of 43 jobs to Air Canada is just one further demonstration that Ottawa just doesn't care about Saskatchewan.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Stick to the Bill.

MR. SVEINSON: — I'm sticking to the Bill. The member from . . . the lawyer from Melville again suggests that I'm not sticking to the Bill. I was indicating that the political will in Ottawa to address

our farming problems in Saskatchewan isn't there. And it isn't there, not only relating to farming, but also in relation to many other jobs that our communities — Saskatoon, Regina, Yorkton, Tisdale, and all the smaller communities in this province — expect. the leadership is gone.

I would just suggest that the 54 members left in this House that represent the conservative Party don't count for much in Ottawa, and the actions of the Mulroney government tend to indicate that they don't count for a lot in Ottawa. Certainly our constituencies in north-eastern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, don't count for much in Ottawa. Eight million dollars is a lot of money to be taken from north-eastern Saskatchewan and put into the pockets of Ontario farmers.

And if Ottawa won't act, Mr. Premier, that leaves the whole responsibility up to the members in this House to relieve . . . to give some relief is what we're talking about. If the farmers could afford to pay they wouldn't have their hand out at times when they've reached a point of excessive difficulty. And that is the only time, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that farmers in this province expect any help: is when the difficulty is just more than they can handle personally.

We have to treat them as individuals. We have to look at a program that's more universal in nature. And I suggested earlier, at the behest and the request of the Minister of Agriculture, that that programs that I feel would address it in a more universal manner would simply address interest rates and the problem of interest rates, and could in fact be done very, very judiciously by paying down the mortgages of all farmers in Saskatchewan. And possibly in the short term, because of the huge profits that have been demonstrated in the oil industry in Saskatchewan, possibly in the short term some of those huge profits could be used if the costs were excessive in paying down these interest rates.

Also, some pressure could be put on the banks. The young man I mentioned from Keeler has got a five-year mortgage, a term tied in with a penalty attached if in fact he renegotiates the mortgage. Possibly the Government of Saskatchewan could put some teeth into an Act which would allow the gentleman from Keeler to negotiate his mortgage without having to pay the full penalty, or maybe the government should take the responsibility of paying the penalty.

There are answers. There are solutions. But this government is just cerebrally bankrupt and, I suggest to you, under that circumstance, are unable to see the solutions which are right before our eyes. They're very simple, common sense solutions. We can look in about three or four areas that have affected the farmers dramatically, interest rates being at the top of the list.

(1530)

But certainly the members to my right who formed the last government and were part of it, chose not to address those problems. Those problems were upon us in 1982 during an election campaign in which they offered nothing to the Saskatchewan farmers — nothing. And they were thrown out, thrown out conclusively, with the exception of the two farmers I see in the front benches of the opposition, which aren't very deep, I might add.

So here we have a government whose mandate was fairly broad and fairly obvious — 54 members elected out of 64 in the province.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What happened to one of them?

MR. SVEINSON: — One of them decided that there were other ways to address problems.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What happened to another one of them?

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, you can answer in due course. I think you're on your feet shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen any indication from this government that the solutions, easy solutions, are going to be addressed in this House. And if in fact we haven't a Bill before us that offers nothing in the form of help for farmers, why is this Bill before the House? I mean why are we here? We could have probably rushed this session through, given 15 million to the unemployed, and let the farmers hang out to dry without sitting in debate for two or three days on a Bill that offers nothing.

AN HON. MEMBER: — There's nothing for the workers either. Don't let them fool you, Bill.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, they haven't fooled me. The member from Shaunavon says there's nothing for the workers either. Well, that is absolutely true. They certainly could have done what they did in the form of a Bill in an announcement from the minister of unemployment through an order in council, and put people to work immediately. But they choose not to do that. That's the easy way. That would almost be the political way out of this problem.

Another solution that I could offer, if the Minister of Agriculture is still in the House, and I don't see him — oh, he's still there. We are likely . . . well, we are in fact the number one potash producer in the world. Maybe some of the profits that have been accrued over many, many years . . . I realize the last couple of years haven't been the best in the potash industry, but we have as a province accrued a great deal of profit out of that industry since its inception.

We could possibly look at a fertilizer fund that comes out of the profits of the potash corporation that would at least allow the farmers of this province, with respect to the fertilizer that they have to fertilize their land with, that will improve the output, not only of their own equity, but will certainly improve the input of the tax structure of this government. Possibly we could consider a fund that would allow for the payment of a part of the farmers fertilizer every year out of the accrued profits of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan.

It would certainly assure many farmers of the province, Mr. Speaker, that there may be a return to some better farming methods. I realize that all of them use fertilizer. But in times like this I'm sure this spring there'll be many farmers out there whose crop will go onto unfertilized land because they can't afford the fertilizer.

The member to my right mentions fertilizer row which, for those of us who aren't familiar with it, is the bank row of the government benches opposite. Well I might suggest, Mr. Speaker, that fertilizer row, while it might be the right terminology, there certainly is some ideas and some productive ideas that come out of the back-benches of that government. I suggest to you that if, in fact, some of the ideas were used, we wouldn't be in a strait-jacket that we're in this House right now, relating to a bill that offers the farmers of this province virtually nothing . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It offers them nothing. I would certainly agree with the member from Shaunavon who says that I can pull "virtually" out of that statement. I certainly will.

I see members opposite. They sit and smile and laugh and giggle. I tell you the farmers out there, the farmers out there aren't laughing and giggling. I say to the member from Meadow Lake . . . He thinks this is pretty funny. The House Leader just left on holidays, right in the middle of a Bill, supposedly one of the most important pieces of legislation that we have before us in this session, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — The member is up speaking on Bill No. 1, and I would ask him to say on the subject. And it's not permitted in the House to make reference to where members are, or whether or not members are present. That sort of thing is not part of the debate.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I shouldn't have mentioned the House Leader on holidays, and I do apologize for bringing up that topic.

So where we are. It's near Christmas, Mr. Speaker. Farmers are waiting for solutions, as are many

other people in this province. And we have a Bill before this House which offers them virtually nothing. And I've just been outlining some possible solutions. and, certainly, I'd like to stress, Mr. Speaker, that the solution that relates to interest rates, I think, over a long term, has to be looked upon as one of the most important solutions that this House could arrive at. And that solution may not, in fact, affect many farmers. It may cost them.

I don't know if they've done a study on how many farmers out there with mortgages on their land suffer interest rates in excess of 12 per cent, for instance. Maybe they could outline a program in Bill 1 that would reduce interest rates for farmers across this province, and it wouldn't cost this government a great deal of money. I can suggest to you that the Mortgage Interest Reduction Plan that was offered in 1982 cost them a lot less money than they anticipated when they offered that Act.

AN HON. MEMBER: — No one was eligible.

MR. SVEINSON: — Everybody was eligible. there wasn't anybody eligible under the NDP solution during that particular debate, but everybody was eligible under the Conservative solution. and it was a good solution for home owners.

The NDP had a solution at the time that wasn't related to farming. it was only related to those city dwellers who own homes, and certainly I was one of them. But it only affected maybe one in 25. It wasn't a solution. Consequently, they lost several members, I'm sure, in the two major cities. They lost 10 in Saskatoon; they lost eight in Regina. And that was the prime reason, and a warning to this government, if they aren't willing to address the high interest rates and the problems suffered by those farmers, that they will suffer the same fate, and that could be sooner than later.

And maybe what we have here is a short-term delay that we'll squeeze an election into, as well. There's actually rumours travelling around that they were going to fight the election this fall. They should have, Mr. Speaker. They certainly would have had a better chance than they will next spring. And if they let this go much longer, I think they should seriously look at some solutions for some people, Mr. Speaker, and solutions we haven't seen.

I think the Minister of Finance recently indicated higher taxes. Well, he shakes his head right now. Well, maybe that is . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order please. We're not dealing with restructuring of taxes. We're talking about Bill No. 1. I'd ask the member to stay on the Bill.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, I'm suggesting taxes as it applies to farmers, as it applies to farmers, Mr. Speaker. And it's certainly an increase in taxes at this time aren't the answer to those farmers who are suffering the threat of receivership, or bankruptcy, or foreclosure.

But the solutions are available, and they're forthcoming. I've even heard a solution or two that we could live with out of the benches to my right. They suggested lower interest rates, Mr. Speaker. I don't think 7 per cent is necessarily where we have to be. I think we could look at 10 per cent. And I think that at 10 per cent the farmers of this province could at least understand and realize that there was some political will, some political will addressed by this government that will respond to the requests that that situation of interest rates is being addressed.

The member from Redberry says we're moving against — we're moving onward and upward against the problems that farmers are facing. What he's saying is, we're waiting for the rain, we're waiting for the good crops, we're waiting for 30 bushels or 40 bushels to the acre. We're waiting, and that's all they're doing, is waiting. They're certainly not legislating any solutions. And I suggest to you that that wait has got to stop, and that they've got to show and demonstrate that they are the leaders in this province when it comes tow here our provincial heritage of farming,

and they've failed to do that in this Act.

We are at a crossroads in farming today. Many farmers out there are in serious financial trouble — 19 per cent of them face serious financial problems.

AN HON. MEMBER: — More than that.

Mr. Sveinsson: — The NDP opposition says more than that. Well, I don't disagree that maybe more do. But these problems are not being addressed with Bill 1. Bill 1 offers only, and solely, the opportunity for a farmer not to make his mortgage payments.

Now that, in itself, is just ludicrous when a government is trying to address the problems facing farmers, because if the rain doesn't come and if the 40 or 50 bushel an acre crops don't come, what has he got to pay off his accrued interest, and his interest that he's paying on interest, and the principal that he hasn't paid off in the interim. He hasn't got anything. And then what are the solutions?

Well, in this debate, or in the throne speech, they haven't offered any other solutions, Mr. Speaker. They're suggesting that the problems are going to go away; things are going to get better. Well, yes, we all hope that that could happen, but give us some assurance that if it doesn't happen, there's at least some insurance that some of us in the farming community will survive because this government has had the political will to address some of the problems.

And we've looked at the problems. They're interest rates; the dropping value of equity, so bankers are a little more nervous about loaning money against land as equity if you don't have it fully paid for — a serious problem faced by the banks, and rightly so. Once the community out there who would normally buy farm land dries up — and farm credit said Friday last that that access to land, those people who normally buy it, the buyers are not there any longer. The applications have dried up.

Well, I suggest to you it's somewhat because of the attitude of people who want to get into farming. And this government isn't improving that attitude. We've seen earlier in the debate that the number of family farms has dropped from 71 to 67, or from 76 to 67,000, or approximately 10,000 in number. Like, where are the solutions to the dropping number of family farms? They aren't there either.

And we haven't even looked at a lot of these farmers who leave the farming scene — have been pressured so directly by agencies like the Farm Credit Corporation or banks or other creditors that they choose not to go the bankruptcy route. They choose not to go the foreclosure route. What do they do? They quitclaim their assets back to their major creditor. And they just walk off the land. They lose their home; they lose their personal belongings; they lose everything. And what do you see? all you ever see is maybe a small classified in the *Western Producer* advertised by some legal firm that there's a parcel of land for sale for somewhere, someplace in the province. The information on the owner of that land isn't available, certainly from farm credit.

AN HON. MEMBER: — It's a repossession.

MR. SVEINSSON: — It's a repossession. It's usually a . . . It's a quitclaim back to the bank. But the problem is no less with that family. That family's suffered the loss of, likely, everything as a result of that quitclaim, so that the statistics don't even tell the actual truth. You're suggesting 19 per cent of the farmers are in serious financial trouble. well how would you know? How would you know? I think it could be higher.

(1545)

Certainly, a lot of the farmers out there, the reasons they're farming is that they don't necessarily want everybody in their business. They don't necessarily

want everybody in their books. They don't necessarily need any leadership. They don't have to be told when to get up in the morning or when to retire at night. That's why they're farming. They're independent of mind. And they're independent; they're able to grow crops and demonstrate that through their own efforts they can support themselves.

But high interest rates have virtually stopped them in their tracks, those who were forced to suffer those high interest rates. Seventeen to 25 per cent — Mr. Speaker, when that's taken right out of your net profit to pay interest rates, you cannot do it and survive in a farming operation because farming doesn't return those kind of profits.

The banks know it, so why do they lend money at those rates?

AN HON. MEMBER: — Why do they?

MR. SVEINSON: — Why do they, the member from Shaunavon suggests or asks. Normally, their dollars they lend for mortgages are supported to some small degree by deposits, but most of them are unearned dollars. So they loan out unearned dollars, and they take in fixed assets — combines, cattle, land. It's just a brilliant piece of business.

And the banks, that's their business. And they're good at it, as was illustrated earlier in this debate. The Canadian banks have the highest profits in the western world for 1984. There's nothing wrong with good profits, good management. The banks are . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Not at the expense of an entire generation of farmers.

MR. SVEINSON: — And that is exactly right. Not at the expense of an entire generation of farmers. Or at the expense of an entire generation of business people. It runs a lot deeper than the farming community.

We know how it affected the home owners in this province. Foreclosures were at an all-time high. The government reacted. The government supported an interest rate level that they thought at the time was reasonable. It was reasonable in 1982. It's still too high, it's still too high. It should have been 10 per cent, not 13 and a quarter.

But now the farmer is in exactly the same straits and, in fact, has been. He's run parallel. His interest rates haven't fallen. There's been no magic out in the farming community. The problem was in 1982 — if it's a problem — and the problem was not identified because we had an excellent crop. We had probably in '82 and '83 in this province we had some of the highest net profits ever attained by the farmers in Saskatchewan. And that was because of bountiful crops; certainly not because of generous governments, either the former government or the present government.

They had the opportunity, but still they couldn't recognize that interest rates are disastrous if they're suffered in times of drought and in times of excess moisture as we suffered in north-eastern Saskatchewan. Rates over 10 per cent are disastrous to the farming community. And this government, while I'm sure they are aware of it — they addressed the problem for home owners — I'm not so certain that they couldn't address the same problem for the farmers. A lot of that money that goes into that farming community, if it does help solve the problem, is going to come right back, right back to the province in taxes. They're going to go out and they're going to spend the money on clothes. They're going to spend it on cattle, they're going to spend it on machinery. Of, in fact, they may pay income tax. But certainly they purchase assets that do provide income for people like car salesmen, realtors, small-business men in all parts of Saskatchewan.

But they just refuse, Mr. Speaker, to address that problem vis-à-vis the farmer. they suggest that

the only answer is to go out there and stop making your payments. Stop making your payments. can you imagine a Bill before this House, and that's the only content of the Bill, that if you're in trouble, Mr. Farmer, you stop making your mortgage payment. We're going to give you a moratorium. You don't have to go into your bank again until January 1st, 1986. Well, it's a moratorium on mortgages on farm land is what they're . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And, in fact, they can fail the test, and they could lose their farm land in 1985.

But I'm suggesting that a lot of the farming community out there right now feel that the solution is not to make your payment next year and use that cash payment that would normally, that would normally be used to pay the banks for the mortgage that they've borrowed the money to own that land for, use it for feed, use it for seed, use it for fertilizer, use it for paying the power bills, use it for paying the telephone bills. And then go into your bank manager and see if he'll loan you a little further operating costs.

AN HON. MEMBER: — No they won't, though.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, we know they won't. The banks have, not as vociferously as they did in 1981, Boyd Robertson expressed his dissatisfaction vehemently in *The Globe and Mail* in 1981, relating to The Home Owners' protection Act. He's been a little quieter with respect to Bill 1 that has been tabled by the Tories in this House.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I'm suggesting is, let's put some teeth into this legislation. Let's put some cash out into the community so that they can allay some of their immediate problems which have been created by nature in 1984. And the teeth don't have to be that stinging and that sharp, Mr. Speaker.

If mismanagement is the cause for failure, I don't think the taxpayers should have to support that failure, and I don't think anyone in this House would question that argument. But if it's not mismanagement — if it's nature, and if we have to defend our farmers in this province, let's do it now. Let's do it right now. Why wait till spring? Give them some confidence that they can go into the spirit of this holiday season knowing that there's at least something there; that this government has some political will, and are willing to demonstrate that political will through legislative action that will support them in their endeavour to survive the tough farming returns that have been offered in 1984. Many of them will survive — 80 per cent of the farmers out there are still pretty healthy.

Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree with that yourself. I'm sure you're a farmer and I know you're in reasonably good health from a farming equity position. Certainly nobody is going to question that. But there are farmers in your community, Mr. Speaker, who suffer the same plight and need a little helping hand. And out in that community there are also farmers that even help their neighbours when times are tough. You know it and I know it.

But they're also expecting some help and some direction. Maybe only short term. It doesn't have to be a long-term solution. Interest rates may continue to plummet; and if they do, possibly we'll be back into a circumstance in our farming communities in Saskatchewan where the rates themselves will allow people, in times of farming disasters like we suffered in 1984, to carry their own weight simply with the bank accounts and the equity they have and they can sell. But the granaries are empty out there, Mr. Speaker.

We've got to get some teeth into this Act that will allow the farmer in this province, at least allow him to breath. All they've done is they've loosened the noose, and that noose tightens again in 1986 — on January 1, 1986, or before. If, in fact, that board that they are appointing in section 9 of the Act decides the farmer should go now, that noose will be tightened in 1985, not 1986, and he will suffer the loss of not only the equity in his land but also the equity that he carries to farm his land.

And that's a tragedy, Mr. Speaker. We're dealing with families. We're dealing with families in the rural communities that are suffering tremendously in this time of drought — families that need help.

And Tories talk of families at their annual convention. And they indicate that they have to protect those families. They also talk of families in their throne speeches, and indicate that we're going to redefine the family farm and we're going to protect it. I think the families in the Premier's eyes are number two. At least he indicates that.

If they're as important as he suggests, I think the political will has to be demonstrated, and has to be demonstrated now that we are in fact in a position in this House, this week, to put some teeth into this Bill through a government amendment which will offer the farmers some . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — The NDP amendment will do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: — The amendment before you will do it, Billy. Vote for the amendment that's on the books.

MR. SVEINSON: — Vote for the amendment that's on the books. I suggest the government of this province demonstrate the will, because we know, and you know, that there are some weaknesses in your amendment. It cannot be accepted as tabled.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Why? Why?

MR. SVEINSON: — So that the government is the vehicle through which we have to have Bill 1 amended in order to offer the farmers the teeth required, the teeth required to alleviate those short-term — and maybe they will be short term. The government's gambling that they're going to be short term. They're certainly not offering any solutions over a long term, so maybe they know something we don't.

So the problems, Mr. Speaker, are very clear. It's the solutions that haven't been well documented or, in fact, approached in any reasonable fashion through this House.

And I would like — if I could find a seconder anywhere in the House — I would certainly table an amendment to the present Act that would offer, we would offer the farmers . . . In the very short term, an amendment allowing them to waive the Act would help somewhat, with respect to some farmers.

AN HON. MEMBER: — How?

MR. SVEINSON: — That's just simple, and it offers the maintenance of credit that they may lose. Okay, that's the very simple fashion, the least they could do — the least they could do. But I think we've outlined in debate certainly some of the other alternatives, and they deal with the real problem, and the real problem is interest rates and how you pay for those rates.

Those rates are paid on unearned dollars, Mr. Speaker. Those interest rates are paid on unearned dollars, so somebody has to suffer. Somebody has to suffer. And the people that are going to suffer are those who have invested their equities — had invested their 25 per cent in Saskatchewan farm land, believed that they could survive, and have found that through drought and circumstances that are out of their control, that they cannot survive.

And of course the other circumstance in this Tory government. It's just unwilling, unwilling to demonstrate a will to help those few — they're not great in number — at the bottom of the scale, the bottom of the economic scales, who request and need the help, and need it now.

(1600)

I mean, sure we can wait until spring, table an election budget, offer them the moon and go out there and . . . I mean, we can see what happened to the promises in 1982. There's a book this thick that still hasn't been — the promises that have been broken, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Promises you made.

MR. SVEINSON: — Promises I didn't have anything to do with.

The NDP in opposition, they want me to shut her down and vote on it. They want to give the farmers of this province this Bill 1. They want to give the farmers Bill 1 because they cannot win the vote. They want to get the business of the House wrapped up so they can get home for their holidays. They don't care about the farmers any more. They're in here to get this thing wrapped up along with this government, and get home. I suggest that unless there's some teeth put into this Bill, we'll be in here for Christmas.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What about the amendment?

MR. SVEINSON: — And the amendment hasn't been dealt with. They all want to get home.

I was just trying to outline some solutions when I was interrupted, Mr. Speaker, by the opposition. Now if they'd just settle back, I'll just continue to run through my page of solutions.

AN HON. MEMBER: — You'd rather go on and on and on and on and on, and say nothing.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well the member says I'm saying nothing, the member — was it from Shaunavon? Mr. Speaker, I think I've reiterated in this debate, at least if there are some answers that could be addressed very quickly, very quickly by this government, and they relate to the paying down of interest rates, they relate to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Never, ever.

Mr. Speaker, there are solutions that are available, and I would again ask this government, on behalf of the farmers of Saskatchewan, to amend the Act that they have before us and come in with some solutions. Doing nothing, which they're asking the farmers to do, is not a solution. I mean, they're offering that solution to the farmers and they're suggesting the farmers should carry through the same solution — doing nothing; don't pay your land mortgages. And they're suggesting to this House that that's a solution.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Who said that?

MR. SVEINSON: — The Government of Saskatchewan said that through their Bill 1.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Well, that's your old party. That's what you ran on last time. Where do you get your wisdom all of a sudden?

MR. SVEINSON: — There's lots of wisdom in the back benches of that government. I see two or three members over there that agree with every word I've said.

Also one of the other solutions, Mr. Speaker, is to address, and we've got to address, the short-term cash flow problem suffered by farmers.

I think if you go back to even to the Diefenbaker days, and this government likes to go back to the Diefenbaker days with respect to everything else, but the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker did make an acreage payment when things were tough during his era. He came out of Ottawa with an acreage payment for Saskatchewan farmers. Suddenly, it's not a solution. It certainly would be a solution for maybe the covering of bills like power bills or telephone bills. It's certainly not going to bale them out of all their responsibilities.

But just recently I've had calls from farmers who've been pressured directly by Sask Power, given 24 hours to pay their bill — pay up or the power's going to be turned off. And that's during the debate on this important Bill that offers all the solutions out there, short and long term, for the farming difficulties suffered as a result of the drought of 1984.

So the problems that are suffered by the farming community — and I see another farmer is in the Chair. One left and one replaced him. But I certainly suggest to you, sir, that you're in a profession that I'm sure you understand this Bill very well. I know the farming community around Shellbrook and in northern Saskatchewan suffer more directly from this legislation, suffer more directly from this legislation than, say, the farmers in the Regina heavy clay, because I would think that the farmers in your constituency — the smaller farmers, the younger farmers — certainly carry a heavier debt load on a per capita basis.

And I'm sure that you've been approached by many farmers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your own constituency, who have suggested, and have suggested to you, that this Bill 1 offers them nothing. You know it, I know it, and they know it, that the front benches of your government are slow to react, are slow to react. In fact, they refuse to react to the needs of the farmers in this province.

And a simple change in that Act could offer an interest reduction payment to every farmer in this province with a loan or a mortgage outstanding against his land, and that would instil some confidence. It certainly did so in the housing market in Regina and Saskatoon and in other areas where it could be felt immediately, and was felt immediately. A payment right into the bank account of the farmer, paying down the interest rate on his mortgage — not a difficult change to this Act.

They've experienced it. They've had the experience with respect to the home owners of Saskatchewan. And if they held it up to the light, I'm sure the member from Rosthern would agree, it works very well and has worked very well. It's put a lot of extra dollars in those people who are suffering the plight of high interest rates, and having to come home at night at the end of the month with a cheque that just couldn't cover the costs of the high rates, and everything else that has to be paid, that a family has to pay in order to make it.

And the farmer doesn't respond any differently. It's just that his income has dropped substantially in 1984. When things were good he was able to make those payments. But suddenly the NDP take credit for the rain that we had in 1980, '81, and '82 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the early part of the 1970s weren't such great years. This was after 1971.

And of course in 1982 the people of Saskatchewan who had suffered this regime for the last nine or 11 years decided to give their mandate to the Tories, and well and right they did. And now the farmers in this province who supported them, and did so without any malice, expect, expect, Mr. Speaker, expect this government to address those problems, and to at least show some confidence. It's a matter of attitude. They don't have to do anything outstanding. They don't have to do anything ridiculous. All they have to do is show that they're willing to help.

And it is attitude, because the attitude that's demonstrated by this Bill 1 is that you shouldn't pay. Well what are the people in the city going to do? Shouldn't they pay their debts? I think when they borrowed the money they expected to pay. When they borrowed the money they expected to pay, and I think you'll find very few farmers in this province that won't, that won't pay their debts as a result of the legislation before us, this legislation.

I find very few farmers that won't pay their debts as a result of this legislation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Doesn't trust the farmers, the member from Shaunavon says. That's not what I said. I said the farmers trust their abilities to pay, and they stand behind those abilities to pay. They aren't asking for legislation suggesting they shouldn't pay. They're asking for some help,

and they're asking for some help in a fashion that this government has absolutely and totally ignored. They don't want a lot of help, but they want at least the government showing some will that the help may be forthcoming.

The throne speech, Bill 1, their two big legislative packages affecting farmers in the next six months, said nothing to demonstrate that there'll be any change of attitude by this government toward the farming community relative to helping them one iota. There is nothing. There isn't absolutely anything in that Bill that demonstrates any help forthcoming to farmers. And I suggest to the back-benchers of that government: get the Bill out and read it. I'm sure it wasn't discussed in caucus. But get the Bill out and read it and you'll find out. And study it with the farmers in your communities. Study it with the farmers in your communities and you will find out that there isn't anything in the bill, relatively speaking, that will help a farmer out of any kind of financial jam. In fact, it deepens the morass he's already covered with simply because the banks will refuse him credit.

And maybe he's already in a position where he can't get credit, and we outlined that situation earlier. The value of farm land in this province over the last two or three years has fallen by approximately 30 per cent. That's \$6 billion taken out of the equity package of farmers. That is retirement funds for how many retiring farmers? And the reasons can be they are not necessarily the fault of the government in power today, that they are directly the fault of the government who lost in 1982. They failed to meet the obligations of that government. They failed to see the plight of the farmer that was, in fact, being initiated by high interest rates, low produce prices. They failed to see it.

And the member from Assiniboia knows it. They failed to address it. There was nothing in the 1982 election platform of this government that demonstrated they were willing to go to the wall for the farmers. And there's nothing in this Act before us today that demonstrates that this government is willing to do any more.

So what have we got here? We've got a former government that wouldn't do anything and a present government that refuses to help.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Boy, but the Liberal government in Ottawa helped. Man, they made it good for us.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, the Liberal government in Ottawa did offer some help. They changed the legislation relating to the grain stabilization act. They offered the farmers of Saskatchewan \$500 million. They also offered the farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan an immediate 16 million. That went through treasury board. That was refused by Mulroney and his cabinet and his government. That was refused. And the government in Ottawa today can amend that same Act and pay out the farmers. They paid them out \$223 million this year which works out to \$4,000 or \$5,000 per farm, but that's not the help they required. They need more help.

And earlier in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I indicated this government has got to call their colleagues in Ottawa and has got to have more input in the agricultural policies that are being placed before the parliament in Canada that affects Saskatchewan.

I was into that part of the debate already, Mr. Speaker. The member from Assiniboia, I guess, wasn't in the House at the time, failed to hear that part of the debate.

But his government, this former government, while they would like to say that their amendment solves the problem — 7 per cent interest rates, 7 per cent interest rates certainly would solve the problem — but where were they when the rates were 19, 20, 22 per cent? They certainly didn't feel that they were going to be a problem. And I would suggest that after the next election we may see six, five, four, three, two, maybe none of these people back in this House, because they've demonstrated their lack of foresight.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Who?

(1615)

MR. SVEINSON: — This former NDP government. As a government they didn't have any foresight. They were part of the problem. And now we've got this government unwilling to address the same problem. And their solution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the same solution that this government offered back in 1971. It's a copy. It's a chapter, a chapter out of the same book. The only difference was that the debt moratorium offered in 1971 did include some assets.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Hear, hear! It was a better Bill.

MR. SVEINSON: — So it was a better bill, as the member from Quill Lakes just said. If they're going to copy the legislation, at least why don't they go back and take the best parts of that socialist Bill?

AN HON. MEMBER: — Right on.

MR. SVEINSON: — Right on, says the member from Quill Lakes. That was the last foresight this government had to demonstrate any will to help the plight of any farmers in this province.

AN HON. MEMBER: — You don't know what you're talking about.

MR. SVEINSON: — He says I don't know what I was talking about. I suppose the member for Assiniboia did not have a great interest load in 1980 or '81 or '82. He's got his farm paid for. His farm is not the problem. The farmers in Saskatchewan who own their land are not suffering the high interest rates that are being paid by those younger farmers, those farmers who have only been in the farming field for 10, 5, 10, 12 years, who are still suffering high interest rates. The terms roll around. Every five years they're adjusted. They started farming back in the early '70s, some of them, when rates were as low as 6 per cent.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Who did?

MR. SVEINSON: — Farmers did. What happened in the late '70s and the early '80s? The terms rolled around the second time, and suddenly they were faced with rates of 15, 18, 22 per cent. And what did this former government, the former NDP government, do? They couldn't understand the problem. They couldn't even identify it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I can say that as a provincial Liberal we would implement programs that would at least address the plight of those farmers who are suffering from the highest interest rates, and who are suffering from the greatest debt loads, and who have been suffering from the lowest yields as a result . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Let's have a little decorum in the House, Mr. Speaker. These people to my right will have their ample opportunity to speak . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm here to . . . Just a sour note . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, they're blaming the Liberals for high interest rates. Well, I can tell you, gentlemen, that with the Tories in power in Ottawa if there's a turn-around in interest rates you will not see the political will from that party either to do anything with interest rates.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What about the Farm Credit Corporation?

AN HON. MEMBER: — What did the Farm Credit Corporation charge under the Liberals?

MR. SVEINSON: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm faced with a question period from my colleagues to the right who are a long ways to the left of any solution, and a long ways out of any solution, and a long ways out of government. These people won't be back for a long, long, long while.

AN HON. MEMBER: — You hope.

MR. SVEINSON: — I hope. You're right, I hope. So getting back to Bill No. 1 . . . Mr. Speaker, if you'd control these members a little so that I could speak to Bill No. 1, I'd certainly feel a little more comfortable on my feet.

It's a sad situation when one single little member who doesn't have any ability to research outside his own efforts isn't even allowed to speak in this House . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I hear from many members around the House who haven't been on their feet relating to anything in this legislature for the last eight or nine months.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — Order. I'd ask the member to stay on the Bill or the amendment.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, but on the point of order I would suggest that I'm not the only member in the House who has interfered with the debate this afternoon, and I would ask you to ask the other members of the House — tell them — to size down as well.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — Are you raising a point of order? What is your point of order?

MR. SVEINSON: — I'd just ask for a little more respect in the House, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — The point of order is not well taken. The debate continues.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker.

But you know I find it's a travesty almost of democracy when such a huge government can sit around and laugh and giggle about a problem that faces farmers in this province that is likely as bad as it's ever been since our depression. And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that some of these people sitting around in this Assembly tonight should rise with some solutions because the solutions they've offered through Bill 1 are non-existent. They aren't there.

They've identified the problem. I believe they at least know that the problem is in existence. They have debated the identity of the problem and they've almost talked it to death with respect to this debate on the second reading of the Bill, but they haven't offered any new solutions, Mr. Speaker. And I rose today to do just that — is to offer some solutions.

And I think I've outlined those solutions in fairly glowing terms, Mr. Speaker. They're willing to copy legislation that the NDP introduced in 1971 relating to this problem: don't pay your bills. Well, the NDP said that back in 1971 so it isn't anything new. They just haven't included some of the assets so the banks didn't come in and grab them anyway. And how can you farm if you don't have a combine and a tractor? You can't.

One solution that I've heard across the House from the member from Kinistino is call your neighbour in. Well, maybe that is a solution. But it's the first time I've heard it in this debate: that rather than depending on any help from our government you should call in your neighbour. And I'm sure that several and many farmers across this province have already done that, have already called on their neighbour.

So that solutions is what we're looking for, Mr. Speaker. And Bill 1 is not a solution. It's a delay. They've loosened the noose is all they've done. And it'll soon tighten because, as we move into spring and summer next year, those farmers who have decided to not make the payments on their land mortgages will realize again that come January 1st we've got to face the problem again. It's not going to go away. And the solution that rainfall and plentiful, bountiful harvests in 1985 will solve our problems may not, in fact, come to fruition either, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully,

they will.

So that if we offer some long-term help to the farmers and the farmers find themselves in a position where they no longer suffer from the debt load that they're under today, well, some of that legislation could possibly be waived. If bountiful harvests come back maybe a one-year mortgage interest reduction program, maybe some help for those farmers who are forced to pay penalties if they renegotiate financing with the bank . . .

The Premier has said all this Bill does is allow the farmer to rearrange his financing. Well, well and good. Well and good. But if he's forced to pay three months penalty on a \$300,000 mortgage, maybe a solution is that this government should take up at least a part payment or partly involve itself with the payment of that interest penalty.

Well, the solutions are, as the Premier suggested, rearranging financing. But it costs money to rearrange financing, and that money is not on the table. This Bill offers the farmers of Saskatchewan absolutely nothing as far as additional cash flow.

Has this government even looked at what mortgage interest reduction would cost relative to those few farmers who are truly at the bottom or truly under a debt load they can't handle? As a result primarily of interest rates that are out of hand, but certainly secondarily, the result has been also a not-so-bountiful crop for the 1984 crop year.

There are solutions. It's just a matter, as the Premier himself said in earlier debate, that he will protect the farmers of this province through his own treasury. Well, he definitely hasn't demonstrated that today. And he hasn't demonstrated that, to my knowledge, since he's been elected.

He suggests there's \$150 million on the table for farmers. Well, if you look at that with a . . . if you look at it more closely many of those programs that he is outlining and identifying as a part of that 150 million are questionable as far as their agricultural involvement. And 150 million, Mr. Speaker, is only 5 per cent, 5 per cent of our provincial budget. We pay that much out in interest on our provincial deficit, or very close to it, and that deficit has only arrived in the last two years.

So the bankers in New York receive almost as much as the farmers in Saskatchewan on the accrued deficit that's surfaced in the two years or two and a half years that this government been in power. I'm just looking at their current accounts deficits, and I would suggest to them that because farming is such an integral part of our whole provincial economy, and if farming isn't successful out in our communities in this province, the car dealerships aren't successful.

There are so many areas in Saskatchewan that are directly, directly affected by the harvests that we take off the land in this province. So we have to — as legislators, we've got to address the problems of the farmer in a more aggressive fashion than Bill 1. We've got to put some money on the table. The farmers are saying it. The opposition is saying it. And I'm saying it. So I ask the 54 members opposite to take on the challenge and support this legacy that we have in this province — the farming community.

We need a cash injection into farming, gentlemen. that's the simple and the bottom line.

AN HON. MEMBER: — 150 million.

MR. SVEINSON: — 150 million would be a good start. That works out to a 5 per cent of the provincial budget. It would certainly alleviate a very short-term problem. And possibly along with Bill 1 that suggests that those who are on the very bottom of the heap shouldn't pay, it might see a glimmer of survival, at least the opportunity to survive. They might be able to pay the power and the telephone bill.

I have several letters, Mr. Speaker, that indicate that even those payments are difficult to make in these tough times. One family had to wait because of a long delay from the crop insurance corporation — were just able to make a payment against their power bills. It wasn't quite what they owed, but they certainly showed the good will of putting up at least a part of the money they had before Christmas.

AN HON. MEMBER: — They cut them off anyway.

MR. SVEINSON: — Well they haven't cut them off yet, but they're certainly under a lot of duress, because you know what it would be on a farm in Saskatchewan in December if they cut the power off — not too good.

That's only one example. There are several others out there who are in the same straits, who need that help immediately.

(1630)

And this Bill does not, does not approach, does not address that problem. It just prolongs the day when those farmers out there who will not make the payment and who will be supposedly protected by this Act, it just delays the day of reckoning. And that day will soon be here, Mr. Speaker.

And then what's this government going to do, because they're going to be going downhill into a 1986 election campaign. How will they defend themselves?

AN HON. MEMBER: — They'll promise.

MR. SVEINSON: — They'll make promises. You're right. The member from Shaunavon suggests promises. Well we don't need more promises. They need cash — cash on the barrel head.

And you can do it in a fully equitable manner. The mortgage interest reduction plan for home owners saved the homes of a lot of families in Saskatchewan. A program like that for farmers could save a lot of farmers, and could save the homes of a lot of farmers in Saskatchewan, and protect the homes of those families and those children who live on the those farms in Saskatchewan.

All it takes, Mr. Speaker, is the political will of this government to trim a little of the fat and dig a little into their pockets, into the coffers of the treasury. And there are methods — I could get into them here, but they don't really relate to Bill 1 — but there are certainly some methods and some areas where the fat could be trimmed.

The Premier, who suggested in earlier debates that he's going to go to the wall for farmers, is supported by an Executive Council whose incomes exceed \$7 million. I suggest to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that he could cut that in half and not suffer a great loss.

His argument was that the former government spent the same kinds of dollars in the same area. Well I would challenge the Premier to suggest that part of his election campaign in 1982 was to reduce the impact of government on the people of Saskatchewan. I haven't seen that happen. And that follows through every minister's office. I suggest to the Premier of Saskatchewan he could eliminate possibly four ministers.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Five.

MR. SVEINSON: — The member from Shaunavon says five. I would suggest four, and this government would function every bit as well as it does today, but certainly with an expense load a lot less than they presently carry.

And we can go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker, in areas where this government could make cuts and expenditures that wouldn't necessarily affect the everyday happenings of this government, but would allow them to at least offset some of the difficulties suffered by those people out in the communities that depend on farming for a livelihood. And an honourable livelihood that is, Mr. Speaker — a livelihood that we should protect as legislators, a livelihood that is being threatened presently by several factors that are totally outside the control of the farmer himself. In fact, very few factors are within his control.

Interest rates. He certainly doesn't set the rates. He just agrees to the terms initially. The Minister of Agriculture shakes his head. he suggests that interest rates aren't the problem. Well I suggest to him that he should maybe undertake to travel out into the farming communities on occasion and speak to a few farmers who are having difficulty with debt loads that have grown faster than their ability to pay, as a result of the continually rising load that has been placed, thereby increasing interest rates which they have absolutely no control over.

This government demonstrated its will in 1982 to pass along the message to banks that if the people can't afford to pay, the government will support those people who can't afford to pay and will pay their rates down to a reasonable . . . and at the time 13 and a quarter per cent was reasonable.

So basically the same argument can be used today for the farmers. A lot of them are the same people. They're suffering the plight of high interest rates and low yields. And they've got a government, Mr. Speaker, that is unwilling . . . It's almost unconscionable that they would be unwilling to address the problem with any more than this Bill 1 that offers absolutely no one a solution.

But as was mentioned in debate, that they're moving toward a solution, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that they are not moving toward a solution and that, as I mentioned earlier, it's the result of the cerebral bankruptcy of people like the Minister of Agriculture, who hasn't demonstrated any leadership through his ministry to the people of Saskatchewan who are suffering the plights of high interest rates and low yields and too much rain and too little rain and bills that they can't pay.

This minister sits back behind his Toronto-Dominion Bank calendar and laughs. And I find that unacceptable. That is certainly not a solution. That is certainly not a solution.

And, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that this government come forth with some amendments relating to, number one, interest rates on farm mortgages. And if they're unable to do that, they draw into the annals of one of their mentors, the late Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker, and put some cash on the table, and maybe do so in consort with their current mentor in Ottawa, the Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney, and make an acreage payment, something that farmers can realize is at least half-heartedly addressing a problem that is more serious today than it was in 1971.

In 1971 the farmers wasn't faced with the high interest rates he is today. So the perils out there have been . . . A new dimension has found its way onto the farm. And I don't see that this government has any solution for the farmers. They don't. They are bankrupt of any solutions. And this is your mid term. If you'll agree to table an amendment, dealing with interest rates, we'll go home for Christmas.

I don't see any great reaction from members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Or again, let's deal with past solutions. They drew this out of the legislation that was tabled in 1971 by the NDP. They couldn't even copy it — renamed it a little — couldn't even copy it. had they copied it there may have been at least some teeth in the Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order please! I would caution the member that we're getting into the area of tedious repetition. you have repeated that phrase about five times, that I've heard it. I would ask

the member if he has something new, to make that contribution instead.

MR. SVEINSON: — I certainly have, Mr. Speaker. I have a great deal that I haven't covered in this debate. But I would just like to make the point, and make it very emphatically, that there are only two or three areas that are necessarily a solution, an immediate solution, to the farming problem that farmers are suffering in this province. And while I've mentioned interest rates, I suppose I could rename them something else. But they are certainly at the top of the list relative to the problem.

And I've mentioned drought, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I could deal with drought in several other contexts, and I will. And I certainly will. And I agree, maybe I've mentioned drought too often, but that's part of the problem. And cash receipts, low cash receipts on the farm, Mr. Speaker, are the result of those two problems and others.

These people are unwilling, and I've mentioned this many times in the debate, they're unwilling to address the low cash receipts, the low cash flow. You cannot pay your bills if you don't have cash flow, Mr. Speaker. And if this government refuses to address the problem with some cash and amend that legislation to put some teeth or put some cash or put some benefit into that Bill, I'm not certain why we're here, Mr. Speaker. They would like to have railroaded it through the House, but that wasn't available to them.

We have a serious problem in Saskatchewan, and it relates to the biggest part of our provincial economy, so it deserves some debate. And cash receipts just aren't up to snuff. Your Premier talks about snooze. Well, let's put some snuff into this Bill. It's not there, and the government knows it's not there. They're defending their position with a high deficit. They created the deficit, Mr. Speaker, on the backs of the Saskatchewan taxpayers.

And their solutions for the deficit are not more defined than their solutions for the farmer. In fact, they're blaming the deficit as part of — they're suggesting it's part of the problem. That's why they can't deal with the problem. They don't have any money and they don't have any friends. They're indicating their friends in Ottawa have completely abandoned them.

Well they should march to Ottawa and demand some help. Lord knows, they are of the same political faith, supposedly. And there is no help forthcoming, Mr. Speaker.

The cash receipts the farmers are dealing with today, who are under the morass of debt — and that's who I believe this Bill is aimed at. It's not aimed at the wealthy farmers from Shaunavon or from Beechy or from Weyburn. It's what's aimed at those people who cannot make their payments, who don't have their house in order as a result of things completely beyond their control, Mr. Speaker — high payments on loans that may not only relate to farm mortgages, but could relate to the combine.

And a lot of those loans were made not only on the equity that the equipment offered, but also the equity the land offered. And that land no longer offers the same equity as it did three or four years ago. So interest rates have eaten into the value of land, as well.

You've got to have buyers out there to maintain a market. The buyers have dried up. Have these people offered any solutions? No, they haven't. They haven't even offered any hope. This Bill outlines nothing except delay. Delay. Well, that's not the solution. The banks are refining their credit policies so that a young farmer that could get in for 25 per cent last summer now has to put up 35 per cent in order to buy a parcel of land.

So the problems are working their way deeper and deeper into our farming communities. And what it means, Mr. Speaker, in the long run, is fewer farms, bigger farms, because it simply translates into the fact that small farmers can't survive.

And that's what this government's telling them — they can't survive. Delay it for a year. Maybe we'll have had an election and be back in power. Maybe we can alleviate all these difficulties because we'll have another three years to do it.

(1645)

Well, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that's not the case. The solutions have to be found now and immediately. And the whole base of the economy in this province is being eroded because of a lack of action of this government and their confreres in Ottawa.

And, believe me, it's serious, Mr. Speaker. It's not a laughing matter. And solutions have got to be found in this House that at least improve the attitude toward the farming community so that we can create an atmosphere out there where the young farmers want to get into the farming business. And this government's just telling them that we don't need that attitude: just don't make your payments; that'll make it all go away. Well, that's not necessarily the way it's going to work. unless we get bountiful harvests and increased produce prices, that just won't work, Mr. Speaker.

And the government refuses to act. They refuse to recognize the problem and the magnitude of the problem. And I suggest to the farmers of Saskatchewan that they redress this government for their lack of initiatives in the farming sector and their lack of initiatives to deal with the problems that are outlined very, very distinctly and can be outlined by every farmer in the province.

Those who have their land and machinery paid for are in a different position. They can still expand. But that young farmer that wants to get off on his own, he isn't any longer in a position because part of his attitude has gone. You've got to approach it with some optimism. How can you do that when this government of the province is unwilling to table anything that would address optimism in any light? It's virtually paralysed in relation to its policies that would alleviate the problem.

And this paralysis extends deep into our farming community and will set the direction for generations in this province. The time for action is now. The former government chose not to act. Their actions were buy up the farm land.

AN HON. MEMBER: — We had good income then.

MR. SVEINSON: — The member says they had good income then. Well, that's the goal of every farmer. But sometimes there's things beyond his control which don't allow that. And I don't doubt that the NDP claim that they can make it rain in June, and they could probably pick the day. And it's funny it's not in legislation because almost everything else is. And they have failed to demonstrate the argument. They want to go home. The NDP want to go home. they're tired. We're tired . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I can't interfere with the member from Regina Centre — is it? — while he's speaking.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's get to the meat of where we have to go in order to put some wheels back on agriculture in this province. We have to get that direction from the benches opposite. They have to show the political will that there's a solution to this problem. If they can demonstrate that will I'm sure the opposition parties aren't going to question their direction. We'll vote for it. Just put something in the Bill.

This is our Christmas session or our fall session. We're supposed to meet in order to address the problems of this province. This Bill doesn't do that, Mr. Speaker. It creates its own problems. It piles problems on problems, and it does so for a long, long course of time. The banks have a long memory. And while members opposite have indicated we don't need the banks, I suggest to them that maybe we don't need the banks, but it's certainly nice when we can utilize them on a co-operative basis. They have certainly, over the course of a long period, had to develop a new

attitude toward farming in this province. There was a day when their attitude wasn't really that supportive.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm suggesting that the members opposite, if they can't finance the programs necessary, maybe talk to their banking friends in New York and outline the problem our farmers are facing in this province, and put some money into the problem instead of just words on a paper Bill that mean nothing, virtually nothing. They know that. So the farmers in Saskatchewan are left with absolutely no help as a result of this government action.

We've outlined numerous methods where they could address the problem aggressively or passively. Certainly an acreage payment would be an aggressive method of addressing the problem.

AN HON. MEMBER: — How about 7 per cent interest?

MR. SVEINSON: — Seven per cent interest would certainly be an aggressive method of addressing the problem. But 10 per cent or 11 per cent or some goodwill to at least help these farmers renegotiate their high mortgages with some cash would also be an immediate and aggressive method of approaching the problem, Mr. Speaker.

Now, if they want to be passive, they can pass legislation like we've got on the books today. I'm sure they can dig up old NDP legislation, again and again and again, that's no better than the Act they have on the Table at present relating to the problem that has been, well, certainly identified in all sectors.

Talk to the new-car people in the province, the used-car people in the province. sales are down. When the farmers are suffering we all suffer. But we also have to maintain a base, Mr. Speaker, that we can live with, that will assure the family farm's existence in this province will be protected for a long, long time. And Bill No. 1 does nothing to address that definition.

They outlined in their throne speech that they would redefine the family farm. Well, what they've done is they've redefined it as a group of debtors who in order to survive shouldn't make their payments — conclusively not a very up-right solution to a definite problem.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go back a moment to what I believe could offer a solution in the short term and protection in the long term, Mr. Speaker, that this government is very familiar with. And it relates to how you pay your debt and how much profit the banks should, in fact, accrue along with that payment. And I believe this government has demonstrated through their mortgage interest reduction plan, and they've certainly over the course of the last two years beat their chests over that legislation, so that the donations they've made to the banks on behalf of the home owners of Saskatchewan, I believe, could be duplicated, Mr. Speaker, could be duplicated on behalf of the farmers.

And if that were done the whole attitude, I'm sure, in the farming community and also our business community would take an abrupt change. They could see that there was some will to deal with specific problems. I don't think we can necessarily legislate nature. I think this government to my right, as a government, believed they could. They believed they could. So I think there's some areas within the structure of difficulties we're discussing that we have no control over even as legislators.

AN HON. MEMBER: — They can understand this.

MR. SVEINSON: — You understand that, do you, Mr. Minister? Well, that's great. But you can legislate, Mr. Speaker. You can legislate the level of payments that are made to the banks on behalf of their debtors with specific definitions, and farming certainly could be one inclusive definition. And they could call it the farm mortgage interest reduction program.

Mr. Speaker, I know that that suggestion isn't taken seriously by this government, but I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the farmers of Saskatchewan would relate to it very favourable. And while the cash flow that's paid into the banks flows out of the province on behalf of those farmers, it still addresses a very short term . . . and it may be a short-term problem, but it does put some cash on the table. And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there wouldn't be more than half the mortgages out — and maybe less than a half — that would be in excess of 14 per cent.

But those do create great difficulties. I think that that's a singular problem. It would certainly enable the farming community to accept on their behalf some political will demonstrated by this government.

It's near 5 o'clock, Mr. Speaker. I beg to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: — The member has asked for leave to adjourn debate. Is leave granted?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: — Being 5 o'clock, this House now stands adjourned until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.