

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

December 18, 1984

The Assembly met at 2:00 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ORAL QUESTIONS

Closure of Air Canada Offices

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I will direct this question to the Minister of Finance, in the absence of the Premier, and this deals with the matters of Air Canada reservation closures. And I have checked yesterday's *Hansard* in which the Premier indicated that Air Canada plans to open, in his words, two new ticket offices in Regina and Saskatoon, and that this would mean a number of new jobs for Saskatchewan, offsetting much of the loss from the closure of the reservations offices.

And I ask: will the minister, on behalf of his government, now confirm that the so-called new ticket offices are, in fact, relocations of existing ticket offices in Regina and Saskatoon, and that these locations will add only one new position in each of the cities of Regina and Saskatoon?

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not totally familiar with the whole transaction with regards to this. It's been handled by the Premier and the Deputy Premier and . . . Oh yes, perhaps the Minister of Transportation who has been involved in it perhaps could answer the question more quickly than I could, =Mr. Speaker I'll give it to the Minister of Transportation.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Speaker, as the Premier had stated yesterday, there is a meeting being arranged early in the new year between the Deputy Premier, Air Canada representing their interests, Deputy Premier, and other government officials from the Government of Saskatchewan to express our concern with Air Canada's announcement.

I can only reaffirm yesterday what the Premier had stated, that we were notified at 8:30 Friday morning of the announcement by Air Canada. There was no prior consultation, and we were very disappointed to find that out.

In that meeting coming up in the new year, we will be discussing these other issues.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Are you able to advise whether or not there will, in fact, be two new restaurants? There was one in each of the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I will . . . Two new restaurants. I will read what the Premier told us yesterday:

. . . and they advised me that they will be building two new restaurants and lounges, Maple Leaf lounges . . .

Well, I know about Maple Leaf lounges . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed, I've been in a Maple Leaf lounge, and outside of Toronto I have never seen more than one employee in any of them.

The question I'm directing to the Minister of Transportation is this: are you telling us that there will be two new restaurants, one in Saskatoon and one in Regina? Thus there will be two restaurants in the terminal at Saskatoon, and two restaurants in the terminal at Regina. Is that what you're telling us?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Speaker, I believe what we were stating to the hon. member

opposite yesterday, Air Canada had stated to us that there would be two Maple Leaf lounges, restaurant-type lounges, opened in the province of Saskatchewan. Along with that they were looking at introducing the 767 aircraft, two more direct routes connecting Regina and Saskatoon to the East.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister will be familiar with Maple Leaf lounges, and I will instance the one at Winnipeg. Has he ever consumed or seen anyone else consume in the Maple Leaf lounge at Winnipeg anything more substantial by way of food than peanuts?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we should make light of this. The Premier yesterday stated that we were not pleased with the announcement by Air Canada in cutting this staff in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that is the issue that we should stick to. The issue isn't whether it's one person working in a special lounge or anything else.

Mr. Speaker, this government's concern is with the loss of jobs, and that's why the meeting is going to take place to see what corrective measures or actions can take place because of this.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue, Mr. Minister, is not just the Air Canada moves but the continuing and ongoing inability of this government to be factual in this House.

Mr. Premier, you arrived just in time. Mr. Premier, I have a question dealing with yesterday's announcement by yourself that Air Canada would be laying off people, and there would only be 12 jobs lost. I question how you come to that figure.

The people we talked to this morning put that total much higher: 17 full-time passenger agents in Regina, management and unions — 17 full-time passenger agents in Regina; 7 part-time passenger agents at both reservation offices in the airport in Regina; two management positions; three management positions in Saskatoon; 20 full-time passenger agents in Saskatoon; four part-time passenger agents in Saskatoon — for a total of 53.

Offset that . . . against that are two small Maple Leaf lounges which will at the most employ one full-time person each.

How, out of that, Mr. Premier, did you get a net loss of 12 jobs?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Air Canada will have to advise my hon. friend how they arrive at 12. I mean at the outset I wasn't all that happy with the fact that they just announced it at 8:30 or told me at 8:30 in the morning and then announced it at 10. And then they advised me that they are going to be providing various kinds of additional services as well as aircraft.

And they said the net impact in terms of the loss of jobs is closer to 12 than it was 40 because new jobs would be provided for the employees if they wanted to go to Winnipeg. As well, there would be new opportunities for some people here in both the construction of new facilities, as I understand it, in terms of the construction of airport facilities as well as ticket offices. And they said that it would be a net of 12.

Now they can either confirm that or deny it, or they can show us that it won't be any different. We're going to continue to talk to them to advise them not to do it at all. So it isn't something that I designed or our government encouraged. We would like to think that perhaps that they would reconsider it.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — New question, Mr. Premier. Once again we see the Premier playing

games with numbers, but we're talking about people's lives and an important economic activity in this province. Whether these people are transferred to Winnipeg or relocated or retired, their jobs will be lost in Saskatchewan.

And is the Premier aware that the average income of these employees, we're informed, is in the \$30,000 range, making the total economic loss for this province about 1.3 to \$1.5 million? My question to the Premier is: will you follow the lead of Premier Levesque in going directly to the Prime Minister and obtaining, apparently, a billion dollar agreement on job creation; will you go directly to Prime Minister Mulroney and deal with this important question for Saskatchewan people?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that my hon. friends would know that at any one particular time the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs is negotiating for 50 to 75 different arrangements, or contracts, or items with the federal government, and they amount to millions, hundreds of million of dollars at a time. So we are in constant discussion and negotiation from the Prime Minister's office down on many things, whether it's grain stabilization, whether it's transportation. I mean as recently as today, I believe, that the minister of Transport federally, and he advised me earlier, and with some negotiations announced, for example, that the Carlton line and the Gravelbourg line were going to be in the basic network for the province of Saskatchewan. Now that's worth . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — That's worth an awful lot of money and a lot of jobs and a lot of income and a lot of revenue to rural Saskatchewan. And we are negotiating on these kinds of things on a day-to-day basis. So, yes, we will continue, and we said that the Deputy Premier will be meeting with Air Canada. I've talked with the Minister of Transport. I will be meeting with the Prime Minister certainly here in February. there will be a lot of things on the agenda. A lot of them are extremely important, and we will continue to discuss them to see what kinds of things that we can do, like, for example, encouraging the Minister of Transport to include two major branch lines in the basic network, which is extremely important to the people of Saskatchewan, whether the opposition believes it is or not.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — New question. Is the premier aware that Air Canada averages between 25 and 30,000 calls to each of its 's reservation offices every month? To the end of October the two Air Canada offices had paid out \$33,000 in telephone rentals, and \$6,000 in long distance charges to Sask Tel. My question to the Premier is: do you not see the need to do something in a more immediate way and in a more direct way than simply a vague undertaking to attempt to place this matter on the agenda for what will likely be a very busy Premiers' conference in February? Do you not see the need to do something yourself sooner than that and in a more direct fashion than that?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I've talked to the Minister of Transport personally about it and told him that I didn't like to be surprised, and we've talked to Air Canada, and the Deputy Premier will be talking to Air Canada specifically and say: these are the kinds of things we would like to see you do. Now I'm not going to raise it as a priority item at the first ministers' conference with the Premier Minister. I may consider discussing it with him among several other things that we discuss when we meet personally, but I've talked with the Minister of Transport, the Deputy Premier's going to be talking with Air Canada, and I think that that is direct contact from our administration to the federal government.

And in all respect, with all the things that are being negotiated and talked about at the federal level, I think it's fair that this can be part and parcel of many things that are under review and in discussion, and we're doing that.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — The question to the Premier — it has to do with the question that was

raised by my colleague from Regina Centre, and, Mr. Speaker, in phrasing the question, I would like to quote from the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, referring to an agreement signed between the Prime Minister and Mr. Levesque, and it says, in part:

'The final conclusion of a historic agreement will be signed in the next few days between Mr. Stevens and Mr. Johnson,' Mulroney said, referring to a regional development agreement rumoured to be worth \$1.8 billion.

Now, Mr. Premier, I wonder whether or not, in your busy schedule, you could phone the Prime Minister and tell him of your disappointment with the shut-down of the wildlife centre, the Air Canada positions, positions with the CNR and CBC, and tell him that you would like some of the support that is now being handed out in southern Ontario and Quebec should be coming to western Canada, particularly to Saskatchewan. Can you do that for the people of the province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we have, as I'm sure my hon. friend knows, signed many agreements already, worth millions and millions of dollars, with the federal government. And I don't have them with me, but I'm quite prepared, Mr. Speaker, to take notice of the hon. member's question and bring in a list of agreements we've already signed in agriculture, in science and technology, and so forth.

I'm sure, when we look at the economic activity for the province of Saskatchewan, and the agreements that have been put together with respect to upgraders, and with respect to agriculture and grain stabilization, the removal of tax for farmers on diesel fuel, and so forth — when you start to add those up, the agreements with respect to the province of Saskatchewan and the federal government, in our province, would gladly be traded with the province of Quebec, if they had their choice. Because what's going on here is much more dynamic — and I believe the hon. members know — than either southern Ontario or the province of Quebec.

Electrical Inspection Branch Services

MR. SHILLINGTON: — My question is to the Minister of Labour. In recent weeks you've denied that your department's chronic understaffing of various inspection branches is a threat to public safety, even although a coroner's jury found otherwise with respect to the death of a 65-year-old woman.

I ask the minister about another case. on December 8, the Vereshine family, near Lanigan, lost their home and contents to fire. The Vereshine family lost everything because they apparently had not been inspected and given final approval by the Department of Labour's electrical inspection branch. The family stated they'd asked for the inspection in the summer. By December there had been no inspection. Without inspection there was no insurance. So when the home burned down, the family lost everything. I ask the minister: is that your idea of giving timely service to the public of Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the other day that when we took over the office, that we discovered that there was 27,700 inspections that were behind under your administration. WE have reduced that over the last couple of years by 2,000 — 2,700 to be in actual fact. We are constantly reducing the number of backlog which has been here for the last 20 years, and we will continue to do that. And if you think that we are reducing staff to disrupt the safety of Saskatchewan, then that's absolutely false. I'm not aware of the particular situation. we're not aware of when . . . Or at least I'm not aware of when it was done. Maybe it was done under your administration and was a part of the 27,000. But we are gaining on the backlog, and we will continue to do so.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Supplementary, Mr. Minister, how many electrical inspectors has your department advertised for since January 1, 1984? If you don't know the answer, I do. But I'll ask you what the answer is.

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we are fairly close to the numbers that we feel that we need. We're almost to the 35 that you had under your administration. We've had some retire. We've got the new chief electrical inspector back in place, and there will be further done in the very near future, and we'll be up to the staff limit that we feel that we can cope with the situation.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — New question. Mr. Minister, you first promised this Assembly and the public a full report on your department's actions, and that undertaking was given on December 6th. Twelve days have passed, and no report has been given. May I ask the minister if you will table this report in the next day, or do you intend to do what seems readily apparent, and that's wait till after the session is over before you give your report so it will not have to withstand the light of day?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to advise the member opposite that my investigation is complete. The report is getting repaired right now, and as soon as it's ready I will table it in this House, as I promised before.

And I get somewhat amused, Mr. Speaker, at the total . . . when you talk about the number of inspections and backlogs and that which we have, and which we picked up when you — from your administration. And I would like to talk about the fire one, for example, where we have and will have approximately five more people involved with fire safety than ever has been had in the department before. And we've embarked on a fire safety program which you are all aware of, as well.

And I want to table some letters here today . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Sparky the dog is doing a very good job, and the member opposite who is laughing about it . . . I'd like to suggest to the member opposite that since October we have put on a fire safety program to over 5,600 students in our province to date.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: — Order. order, please. There will be opportunities for ministerial statements later.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Future of Fine Arts Programs

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to address a question to the Premier, and it deals primarily with his apparent inability to really level with people of Saskatchewan.

Back in October, Mr. Premier, you received a letter from a constituent of yours, expressing (and I have a copy of those), expressing a deep concern about the future of the Conservatory of Music, the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, the extension courses which are . . . the word being that many of these fine art programs offered at the campus would indeed be cut.

On October 9th, Mr. Premier, you wrote to this individual saying:

I can assure you that these programs will continue to enhance the university.

And you referred the letter then to the your Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. And just a few days later, out comes his reply. And he says, in fact, in his letter to the same person:

I would like to point out that the department is considering the future of the entire College Avenue campus in conjunction with the university. There are a number of outstanding questions to be answered including the rationalization of the fine arts facilities between the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan.

And what I ask you, Mr. Premier: were you, in fact, aware when you wrote this letter to your constituent indicating that there would be no cuts, and then at the same time a few days later your minister was writing and indicating that there was going to be cuts, rationalization, and the decrease of the facilities in fine arts? Why don't you level and tell . . . Why don't you consult with your other ministers so that you send out a consistent message to the people of Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that it's fair to say that I didn't advise the constituent — and I don't recall the specific letter — but I didn't advise, according to my hon. friend, the constituent that there would be cuts, nor did the minister, from what he just read, say that there would be cuts. I am sure that the minister can respond in some detail.

But it seems to me that he said it would be reviewed, and at budget time and through the budget process we review virtually every department and every program that we have. And that's normal practice. I believe the previous administration would review programs and policies and budgets and so forth. So I can't recall the exact letter. I'd be glad and will take notice of the letter, so that I can dig it up and look at it, but I'm sure my colleague would be glad to respond in some detail if the hon. members would like.

MR. KOSKIE: — I want to refer the Premier to a further part of his letter where you write to your constituents, and you say, "I have a genuine interest in fine arts. I play the piano." So most of the people in Saskatchewan think you fiddle, and that you're out of tune most of the time. But you do say that, "I assure you that this government is very committed to cultural, fine arts."

Is it not, in fact, what is happening is that their universities are being forced at this time to very seriously considering cutting the fine arts programs on the university campus? Is that not, in fact, the position?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again I don't recall the letter precisely, but I do recall something to the effect that said that I enjoy music, that I play the piano, and as a result have an affection for, and affinity towards, music. My wife is very much involved in drama. Our family has been in the arts for some time — in the sense in terms of interest, genuine interest. So if I expressed that in a letter, I can understand why I might. I will dig up the letter, and I'll review it in some detail.

With respect to what we do with programs — I mean, we always review all of them. We look at our agricultural programs, our forestry programs, our energy, our education, and that's normal practice. If the hon. member is recommending that we don't review how we spend taxpayers' money, then I guess that's a new suggestion coming from the opposition.

We review how the taxpayers' money is spent annually. The Minister of Finance even goes out into the community and asks people: how would you like your money spent? How would you like to see taxes raised? How would you like to see various kinds of programs rearranged? What could we do in terms of providing a good sound fiscal package for the people of Saskatchewan? We do that, and we review each of them, and we come in with a budget. So that's normal practice in our province. It's not moral in other places. I don't think that the NDP in Manitoba

even go through that exercise, Mr. Speaker. They are in an awful lot of trouble because perhaps they don't talk to people that way. We open it up, ask people to contribute to the various kinds of things that we are doing and say: where would you like to review this, that, or whatever? We'll continue to do that. It seems to be a popular thing for the Minister of Finance to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KOSKIE: — One further supplemental. Mr. Premier, do you not agree that it would be fairer and more reasonable to the public that when you reply to a concern of a constituent or any resident of Saskatchewan, that you know what you're talking about and that you, indeed, consult with your minister who is responsible for that department to determine, rather than have you state that you will support and short few days later, your minister putting out a different story saying there will be cut-backs. Isn't that a fairer approach to the people of Saskatchewan? Consistently, you have been floating these statements of you are going to do so much. And here, again, is another case of misleading the public.

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I will look up both letters, and I will bring them back into question period, and I will . . . and obviously the hon. member can table them both if he likes. And I will continue to say that I appreciate the arts, and at the same time I appreciate the review of every single, solitary department that we have here as we go through the budgetary process.

With respect to delivering on programs, Mr. Speaker, delivering on programs, this administration has delivered more programs in the last two years than the previous administration delivered in 10. The kinds of things that we have done in terms of tax breaks, in terms of programs for farmers, in terms of all kinds of programs, people ask for those, and they were delivered. And that's one of the things that they appreciate today. So if he wants me to list the things that we promised, and the things that we delivered, Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to take notice of that. And I'll spend the next three days in here telling people what we've delivered to the people of Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Polyethylene Pipe Plant in Saskatoon

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to announce a major development in our province's economic scene.

This morning I took part in a news conference in Saskatoon. The purpose of that conference was to announce a new polyethylene pipe plant in that city by Du Pont Canada Limited.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McLAREN: — The president of Du Pont Canada, Mr. Ted Newall, was on hand to announce that they plan to invest about \$1.7 million in equipment and fixtures.

The most exciting part of the story is that initially the plant will provide 20 new jobs. Mr. Speaker, these are new jobs, and they are jobs for Saskatchewan people. The plant will be in operation next spring. It will be operated for Du Pont by Wiik Hoeglund Ltd. This is only the third pipe plant in Canada for Du Pont. I think this also is of significance for it represents a major breakthrough for Saskatchewan.

One of the major purchasers of pipe from the Saskatoon plant will be the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. SPC will be buying pipe for its rural natural gas program. And I don't think I need to remind my colleagues of the enormous success of this program and its impact on the family farm.

Besides the pipe for the gas program the Du Pont facility will be manufacturing large-diameter pipe which is widely used by industry and municipalities. For anyone who has, from time to time, experienced supply and delivery programs from a far-off manufacturing plant, we, in Saskatchewan, are fortunate to have this facility in our backyard.

This announcement today is a classic case of using Saskatchewan dollars in our rural natural gas program to help bring a new manufacturing plant to Saskatchewan to help put our Saskatchewan people to work. That's what I call good business.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the government on getting a plant in Saskatoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — And it's particularly well located in Saskatoon where the unemployment rate, as the minister will know, the Minister of Labour will know, is 13 per cent, which I believe is the highest of any city in western Canada. and, accordingly, even as small a number of jobs as 20 jobs will make some difference. It hardly makes up for the very long list of jobs that have been lost all across the province. And I won't talk about all of them, but there were 42 at Dad's Cookies, and 45 lay-offs at Molson's, the 55 lay-offs at Molson's, 23 at CSP Foods.

But what I want to say is this, Mr. Speaker: we're happy to have a polypropylene plant in the . . . polyethylene plant in the province. We've had a polypropylene plant, a plant that produces plastic pipe, down at Weyburn for a number of years. And that has proved to be a good industry for Weyburn.

And the method in which the minister obtained the plant, by promising to, in effect, I suspect, direct business from the Saskatchewan Power Corporation to the plant, is a thoroughly appropriate way to get industry. It is showing how you can use a Crown corporation spending program as a basis for industrial development.

We have an outstanding example of that with Sask Tel, which, when it embarked upon a fibre optics program, at the very outset I may say, got a fibre optics plant in Saskatoon which now employs some hundreds of people, and all the fibre optics virtually came from that plant. I would have wished that the government would have moved earlier so that all of the polypropylene pipe might have come from the plant in Du Pont, but never mind — better late than never.

And this indicates what can be done when Crown corporations and the private sector are used in a constructive way to be a basis for industrial development. As I say, when Sask Tel did it with fibre optics, we got more than 100 jobs, and I can only hope that your initiative will grow and mature so that this plant might have 100 jobs. I doubt whether it'll happen, but 20 is better than none, and I congratulate the minister for such an effort as he made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 26 — An Act respecting Securities in Saskatchewan

HON. MRS. DUNCAN: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, an Act respecting Securities in Saskatchewan.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 27 — An Act to amend the Statute Law to permit Guest Passengers to recover Damages for Injuries from Owners and Drivers of Vehicles

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, an Act to amend the Statute Law to permit Guest Passengers to recover Damages for Injuries from owners and Drivers of Vehicles.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 28 — A Bill to provide for Equality of Status of Married Persons and to repeal The Married Persons' Property Act

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to provide for Equality of Married Persons and to repeal The Married Persons' Property Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 29 — An Act respecting the Consequential Amendments resulting from the enactment of The Equality of Status of Married Persons Act

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, an Act respecting the Consequential Amendments resulting from the enactment of The Equality of Status of Married Persons Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 30 — An Act to amend The Occupational Health and Safety Act

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the minister won't give leadership in his department I will, and I therefore move first reading of a Bill to amend The Occupational Health and Safety Act.

MR. SPEAKER: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

MR. SHILLINGTON: — With leave, later this day.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: — Leave has not been granted. Next sitting.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Apology to Mr. Speaker

MR. SVEINSON: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to apologize to the Chair for taking the debate on what I perceived as an unfair ruling outside the Chamber and into the press. And I would suggest that I would request those comments to be retracted from the newspapers in which they were printed, and I apologize to the House for taking the debate beyond this Chamber.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POINT OF PRIVILEGE

MR. SVEINSON: — Also, I rise on a point of very grave personal privilege, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the House and suggest to them that this personal privilege was a threat levelled against my family by a member of this House, one member from Biggar, yesterday immediately after the House closed. We did have a witness to the threat in the member from Regina Centre. And I fell, while the members opposite think this is funny, I don't mind threats against me personally by any member in the House. I suppose it's somewhat of a macho game in the Assembly. But, Mr. Speaker, I take very grave exception to a threat levelled against my family by another member of this House, and I would ask that member from Biggar to speak to that threat and indicate exactly what he meant.

MR. BAKER: — Mr. Speaker, I did not threaten any member of his family, and the member knows full well that I didn't, and I would like an apology right now.

MR. SPEAKER: — The member from Regina North West, has moved a point of privilege. Under Rule 6(2) it says: "Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Speaker shall have the right to waive notice." It sounds to me that it's a fairly serious matter, and I waive notice and give the member the right to proceed on his point of privilege.

MR. SVEINSON: — Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to outline what happened. The member from Biggar did cross this House. I was still sitting in my seat collecting my goods from yesterday's debate, and he asked me where I was going with the debate in a very, I would think, offensive manner. Subsequent to that he asked me if I was worried about my family, and I take that as a threat.

We've had enough situations in this House in the last several months where threats against people have not been raised and dealt with immediately. The member for Regina Centre was sitting here listening to the recourse. I reacted somewhat directly and somewhat in a manner that I suppose was less than cognizant, but certainly reacted to the situation.

I would also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I certainly indicated to my family and set up my own defences in the event that something were to happen. I also spoke with the authorities. I've spoken to the Regina City Police.

And I don't take this as a threat that's just in the macho return in this legislature. I take it as a very direct threat against my family by a member of this House who indicated that because of my direction in this House there was reason to threaten me through some other means. And I ask him for an apology from this House and a guarantee that he will not be actively involved in any actions or any threat against my family.

MR. BAKER: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening I went over to chat with the member to see how long he planned on going, which is not uncommon. I'm the whip on this side of the House, and I presume he is on that side of the House.

And he indicated to me that we may go till Christmas. And I said, "Bill, it's Christmas. Why don't you think of your wife and kids and family?" And that's what I said to him . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, that's, in fact, what I did say to the member, and immediately he stood up and bellowed, "You heard the member. The Conservative member is threatening my family." And there was two or three of the folks still in here.

And that's exactly what I did, Mr. Speaker, last evening. And I indicated to him that it was Christmas, and the members maybe like to get out of here. And I'm a family man, Bill, Mr. the

member from north-west. I have five children and a wife at home, and I'm the last member of this legislature, and I believe you know it, that I would threaten anybody.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. there isn't an opportunity to debate back and forth. Each one states his point, and that's as far as it goes. It seems quite a difference of opinion is being expressed here, and interpretations of what is meant is often different when different members raise it.

I would refer member to page as of *Beauschesne's* and paragraph 19(1). It says,

A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

And also from *Beauschesne's*, page 114 and paragraph 322.

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that a statement by a Member respecting himself and particularly within his own knowledge must be accepted, but it is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by a member as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. on rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

I find that there is not enough evidence indicated here to substantiate a case of privilege.

Motions. Why is the member on his feet?

MR. SVEINSON: — I would like to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if, in fact, you would take this ruling and re-examine it, I can certainly call witnesses who were in the House and heard the allegations by the member from Biggar.

(1445)

MR. SPEAKER: — I have made my ruling, and my ruling stands. Order. Order. Order. Order. There is no opportunity here for the member to debate the rulings of the Chair. If you have a point of order on a different matter, I'll take that point of order. the member for Regina North West.

POINT OF ORDER

MR. SVEINSON: — . . . (inaudible) . . . matter, Mr. Speaker, that I don't believe is as grave as the matter we just discussed. And the matter revolves around last night's debate and how this House was closed. And after the vote on the amendment last night I did call time. And under the rules, 28(3), it explicitly indicates that,

In all cases, Mr. Speaker shall inform the Assembly that the reply of the mover of the original motion closes the debate.

I think if you look at the record, Mr. Speaker, there was no such discussion between the votes. I called time immediately after the vote was read on the amendment, and expected that a ruling would come from you that would allow that motion to be voted on today. It was after 10 o'clock, and any member in the House can rise or, in fact, from his chair and call time at any time. And I did that, Mr. Speaker. And I would ask for a ruling at this time.

HON. MR. McLEOD: — Mr. Speaker, if I may speak to the point of order raised by the member

from Regina North West. I believe the incident that the member refers to last night, and my recollection of the case was . . . And the case, Mr. Speaker, was that question had been called on the motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: — No.

HON. MR. McLEOD: — Question had been called. I can clearly remember myself; I know the member from Rosthern called question; I, myself, called question; and my seatmate, the Minister of Finance, called question. Question had been called. I believe — at least my understanding of it, is that the only way that can be changed or that the vote could be stopped would be for a member to rise who has not spoken on that motion.

MR. KATZMAN: — Mr. Speaker, on the point of order raised by the member from Regina, question was called by myself before he called the time.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, on the issue that we're debating here, whether or not the House was adjourned under the proper circumstances, my clear recollection was that, after the vote on the amendment, there was not call from the Chair for resumption of debate on the main motion, which should have logically followed. And at the time, members of our side questioned whether or not resumption of the debate should have been held on the main motion. We had colleagues in our caucus who had speeches ready to go — one in particular — who could have stood in their place, on the resumption of the debate on the main motion. And the opportunity wasn't given. And I would just like to have this matter cleared up, as well.

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, speaking to that point of order, if we are to follow the logic of the opposition House Leader, once question is called, if they had free speakers to stand up, that free speaker, at any time can stand up while question is called, before the vote, and the Chair must recognize that speaker, an independent speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — There were a number of things happened last night, and if I missed in that call, then the opportunity was there last night for a point of order immediately. The point being raised by the member for Regina North West under 28(3) does not really apply to this type of circumstance. The speaker has the opportunity to rise, and then I would notify the House that he was about to close debate. But there's no command that the person who opens the debate has a requirement to close. He may close.

On the other point, whether or not one of the members on this side called question or not also does not have an impact on my decision. I was on my feet at the time, and perhaps in the commotion I did not ask if anybody else was wanting to speak in the debate. And if that were the case, then members on either side had the right to call a point of order at that point. But it's very difficult now to backtrack after the vote has been taken.

AN HON. MEMBER: — You instructed me to sit down, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — Yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: — At that time.

MR. SPEAKER: — But there is no opportunity now for me to withdraw the vote on a Bill, or to open the House again for last night to sit all night, or to adjourn the House last night. So that case has come and gone. And if something like this arises in the future, and the members feel that there is something being missed, I would ask that they immediately call on a point of order so that we can deal with it at the time in question.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Sixth Report Of The Standing Committee On Communication

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

That the Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on Communication be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

Return No. 1

MR. LINGENFELTER moved, seconded by Mr. Engel, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 1 showing:

Regarding the Department of Social Services, the name of and annual salary paid to the Deputy Minister of Social Services.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 1 showing.

HON. MR. McLEOD: — Mr. Speaker, I would just say that the information for return no. 1 is available, and I will be tabling it here today.

Motion agreed to.

Return No. 2

MR. LINGENFELTER moved, seconded by Mr. Blakeney, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 2 showing:

Whether R.C. Livingston is employed by the province of Saskatchewan, and if so: (1) the department, Crown corporation, agency or board of the Government of Saskatchewan in which he is employed; (2) the date his employment commenced; and (3) the title of his position.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 2 showing.

Motion agreed to.

Return No. 3

MR. LINGENFELTER moved, seconded by Mr. Koskie, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 3 showing:

Whether J.C. Harrington is employed by the province of Saskatchewan, and if so: (1) the department, Crown corporation, agency or board of the Government of Saskatchewan in which he is employed; (2) the date his employment commenced; and (3) the title of his position.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 3 showing.

Motion agreed to.

Return No. 4

MR. LINGENFELTER moved, seconded by Mr. Lusney, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 4 showing:

Whether Jim Peterson is employed by the province of Saskatchewan, and if so: (1) the department, Crown corporation, agency or board of the Government of Saskatchewan in which he is employed; (2) the date his employment commenced; and (3) the title of his position.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 4 showing.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hardy that Bill No. 10 — **An Act to amend the Environmental Management and Protection Act** be now read a second time.

(1500)

MR. YEW: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, that we have, a bit of research assistance that I was able to get with respect to the contents of the proposed amendment indicates to me that drafting errors were made initially, and that primarily this is a housekeeping type of measurement, or measures being undertaken by the Department of Environment.

I have, my colleagues and people throughout the northern administration district as well as other environmental groups and organizations, have a few concerns with respect to the policy of the Department of Environment and its administration.

There have been numerous inquiries and demonstrations made with respect to various type of policy decisions implemented by this department. I refer to the spraying of herbicides, of toxic chemicals in the northern administration district, huge sewage effluent being discharged in major waterways in this province. I have in front of me the paper, a copy of the *Star-Phoenix* dated November 29th, '84 whereby the city of Saskatoon, I want to quote one paragraph here. The city of Saskatoon, it states, pardon me:

... that the city of Saskatoon acted illegally in dumping raw sewage, estimated to be at least 11.3 million litres, into the South Saskatchewan river on Wednesday, according to the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment.

I would just mention to the minister and his department that many environmental concerns exist throughout this province, those pertaining to the water quality of numerous communities and centres, and including the top half of this province. Major developments occur whereby there is

scarcely any consultation carried out with local leaders, civic leaders, municipal leaders, band councils, and people directly being affected by those developments. I would urge that caution, and urge the minister to take note of that very important matter.

People in this province have to have involvement, and there has to be full consultation in terms of major developments, industrial, whatever developments that transpire in this province.

Other than that, noting that this is merely a housekeeping amendment to the Bill, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker (pardon me), I have no opposition in the amendment itself, and I will vote to have it go ahead.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Embury that Bill No. 13 — **An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act** be now read a second time.

MR. YEW: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. again we have here an amendment to The Northern Municipalities Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The research and review that we have had indicates that it is simply a housekeeping amendment. it is nothing significant by way of implementing any new policies on behalf of the Conservative government. merely they are correcting typographical mistakes that were made in the Act earlier this year.

The Bill does nothing at all to address the northern communities and the needs for improved arrangements and policy with respect to issues that have been brought to our attention by the Saskatchewan Association of Northern Local governments. That association represents 21 northern communities, 21 local government councils, and they have expressed concern — an issue with respect to this government — in terms of boundaries, jurisdiction, the role of their responsibility and authority. And the communities that I'm referring to have been wondering about this government's attitude towards the definition of their role, and a definition of their jurisdiction, and a definition of their authority. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had nothing concrete presented to us by this government.

The other concern is that of revenue sharing. To this point in time there have been no concrete measures introduced in this legislature to assist the northern local government councils by way of creating an independent economic base, some independency by way of local control, local autonomy in the northern administration district. And again, I say that this government has shown no great interest to advocate on behalf of local governments throughout the northern administration district.

But getting back to the point that this amendment is merely a housekeeping type of measure undertaking to correct mistakes that were made in the drafting of the Act initially, I shall not be opposing the motion, but rather going ahead with it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Embury that Bill No. 15 — **An Act to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority Act** be now read a second time.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, as members will know, the members on this side of the House, and I suspect the members on the other side of the House as well, very much approve of

the project of the Wakamow Valley Authority. The involvement of the city of Moose Jaw with surrounding municipalities is something which we very much agree with. We look forward to the river valley in Moose Jaw becoming an even more delightful beauty spot than it now is, as developments take place.

We are aware of the fact that the city of Moose Jaw and the rural Municipality of Baidon are already part of the authority. And as we understand it, the thrust of this Bill is to permit the Rural Municipality of Moose Jaw also to become a member of the Wakamow Valley Authority, and that is a desirable development. And accordingly, subject to the comments which we earlier made with respect to Wascana Centre Authority about the reduction in funding that took place last year, to which we took objection and which objection we record again, leaving that aside, everything in this Bill we agree with, and we'll be supporting the Bill.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Embury that Bill No. 14 — **An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 1983** be now read a second time.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Mr. Speaker, in our view this Bill will not do any damage and we will not be opposing this Bill.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Pickering that Bill No. 20 — **An Act to amend The Critical Wildlife Habitat Protection Act** be now read a second time.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have take the opportunity, and my colleague from Athabasca has taken an opportunity with this Bill, to check it out with one of the main groups, at any rate, who are dealing with this issue and have been waiting with a great deal of interest for the government to come forward with a new wildlife Act.

And I don't believe this is it. I think the point has to be made here that all this does is basically allow individuals or municipalities to go on to a wildlife habitat to be able to take off gravel or to move fence lines and that sort of thing.

In checking it out with a number of people, environmentalists, and the wildlife federation, I must say to the minister that there was some concern about the lack of consultation even in moving with this part of the Bill.

And I raise this only by way of announcing to the minister that I hope, and I would advise him that in future he would meet with all of the environmental people involved and the wildlife federation to make sure that when we're moving in these areas of critical wildlife habitat that we don't go off on a tangent and start moving land around or making changes to the wildlife Act without consulting with the groups who are very concerned about saving farmyards, or saving roadsides, or the quarter sections of wildlife habitat that we have in the province.

So, with those provisions attached to our support of the Bill, we will not be making, or voting against the Bill.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Embury that Bill No. 23 — **An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984** be now read a second time.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Yes, once again, we've had an opportunity to examine the Bill. The Bill is, in our view, correcting previous mistakes. We'll always give them the opportunity to do that, Mr. Speaker. So we'll not be opposing it.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

(1515)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Garner that Bill No. 21 — **An Act to amend The Snowmobile Act** be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Garner that Bill No. 22 — **An Act to amend The Vehicles Act, 1983** be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Garner that Bill No. 9 — **An Act respecting the Transportation of Dangerous Goods in Saskatchewan** be now read a second time.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I would, with leave of the Assembly, move that we adjourn this debate. My colleague, the member from Pelly, who is not in the Assembly at this time, is working on the Bill, and we would like to leave it for today on the order paper and therefore beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 8 — **An Act to amend The Legal Profession Act** be now read a second time.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — I want to just address a few words on this matter. It's, I think, something that is of interest to lawyers when you have legislation introduced which is retroactive. It is an odd provision, making what is, in some ways, a penal statute retroactive. It is even odder when the request comes from the Law Society of Saskatchewan. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I will . . . My colleague from Quill Lakes will be making comments at length. I want to say that I have . . . He will be make some brief, concise comments I'm informed by a stage whisper. I want to say that I have some concerns about this Bill. If the Act was not properly drafted in the first place, we have come to expect that from this government, and we, as we have been doing all afternoon, have been correcting mistakes. But I do have some concerns about the Bill.

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My colleague has fairly precisely and concisely stated our concern. Basically what is happening here is that this government brought in an amendment last year to amend The Legal Profession Act, and they amended section 79. And they indicate to us at this time that it was the intention at that time of the law society, in requesting that amendment, was to extend the limitation period from six months to a year. And that's what the amendment did.

But to the utter amazement of the Minister of Justice, and apparently the legal society, the amendment that was placed in The Legal Profession Act went beyond that they had intended to do and, in fact, limited the law society from proceeding with disciplinary proceedings against lawyers unless they also were proceeded with within the one-year limitations.

The concern that we have here is, first of all, they brought in an amendment last year. And the Minister of Justice, it is incumbent upon him to know what the amendments are. The Minister of Justice cannot stand in this legislature and now say, well, the legal professions wanted this. He has to go through the legislation and it's incumbent upon him to know what he is doing when he is amending. That's the first error.

But then to go beyond the other provisions of the Bill, which requests on behalf of the Minister of Justice here that this error be not only changed, but what they are saying is that there should be retroactivity. They want to go retroactive now, to extend the period of time for taking disciplinary action against any members of the law society. And what they're doing is to move it back to June the 1st of 1984.

Now this from a government which says it is fighting to protect the interests of individuals — the scorn that they were always heaping if we ever came forward with any retroactive legislation. And certainly I think also it's a bad precedent to have the legal society, who are always guarding against any oppression of retroactivity, now coming forward and requesting retroactivity to amend an error which I place solely at the feet of the Minister of Justice.

And certainly we really wanted the Minister of Justice to be here, but he seems to have dodged out of the . . . He has ducked like a number of them do whenever we get into a contentious issue.

And certainly our concern is with the capacity of the Minister of Justice to bring in legislation to meet the conditions which are being requested by, in this instance, the legal profession. I have some specific questions as we go into the Bill, clause by clause. Certainly I think all members should be aware here that what we are doing is not something to laugh at, Mr. Member from Kinistino.

What we're doing here is saying that if the legal profession has, in fact, not taken discipline actions within the time limits of the legislation which was drafted by the Minister of Justice on their recommendation . . . That's what he . . . That's what it's saying. They're going to say now, well we'll expand that period of time and go back and, in fact, take action.

Retroactivity is a very, very serious matter, and to be brought forward by the Minister of Justice and the legal fraternity of this province makes it even more serious. And we are concerned with it. And members opposite don't think it's very serious. The House Leader, he smirks at this here.

I think if members of the back benches of the government knew the magnitude of the consequences, they wouldn't be supporting the government in this particular Bill. It's bad. It's bad from the standpoint that the error, indeed, if the error was made, was made by the justice minister.

And now to rectify what he is doing, in fact, is extending retroactivity, and to the legal profession above all. We will be asking questions in it. And certainly we view it with concern, and accordingly we will indicate our position.

MR. SCHMIDT: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't believe what I'm hearing from the members of the opposition.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Well, I don't really frankly care if you do or not. It's retroactivity, and retroactivity isn't good.

MR. SCHMIDT: — Well, some hon. members opposite don't really care what we think on this side. But I would submit that by the numbers in this Chamber, that question's already been settled.

Now what I want to point out is that I don't believe what I'm hearing, in that the opposition is opposing this Bill be retroactive. They are suggesting that any unscrupulous lawyer who may have stepped out of line with respect to the rules of the law society in the past year by some quirk of this legislation should escape discipline. I don't believe that a party, the opposition party which is composed of 37.5 per cent lawyers, should suggest that an unscrupulous lawyer should escape discipline.

Well, I also don't like retroactive legislation. But when it applies to lawyers who may have broken the law, that is another matter. And, therefore, it is only logical that this error be corrected. And it doesn't really matter who's at fault, there are lawyers on all sides of this House. The fact is that the error needs to be corrected.

The lawyers in the NDP, the lawyers in the NDP are arguing about a principle that they don't seem to understand. The principle is not retroactivity. The principle is justice and fairness. And I don't think that any lawyer who's been unscrupulous, or broken the rules of a law society to the detriment of the public, should escape prosecution or discipline by this quirk, and for that reason I will support the change.

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Yes, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I am. In absence of the Minister of Justice, and perhaps it's best that I make this statement, in the absence of the Minister of Justice, I think the debate that one often hears in this, one often hears in this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this:

I always harken back to what I believe to be a very significant and important statistic in our country. Many try to compare the country of Canada to that of the Japanese, and you obviously can't compare one to the other, but in the area of the legal profession I think it's a worthy comparison.

Canada has 1,500, 1,500 times more lawyers per capita than does the country of Japan. There are more lawyers in the city of Toronto alone than all of the country of Japan. And I question maybe sometimes whether or not we get too often carried away in dotting the i's and crossing the t's in the legal profession, Mr. Speaker, and I suspect that we devote not a great deal more time to this particular type of amendment.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to direct a few words to this amendment, and I want to narrow the focus of my remarks. This is quasi-penal legislation, and our objection is to retroactive penal or quasi-penal legislation; very common to have retroactive legislation in the financial field, and we all know that. And it's fairly common to have it in other fields.

And we have a string of Bills before us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, providing for retroactivity; the snowmobile Act and a group of the others. We didn't raise any objection to that because those are different kinds of retroactivity. But anyone would be enormously upset if anyone said that someone created a crime retroactively. And I suspect that would be in opposition to the Charter of Rights. In fact, the charter specifically says that any sentence for a criminal offence cannot be retroactive, and that is set out in the charter, the idea that the parliament cannot create an offence and make it retroactive.

What we're doing there is, we are saying that things which would not have been, if a lawyer did a certain thing on October 1, 1984 . . . 1983, and by 1984 he could not have been examined under the matter, and it could not have been the subject of disciplinary action. We are saying it now can be. We are saying that the time has passed for action, and we are going to make it retroactive.

(1530)

I understand that it is perhaps unfortunate that it's lawyers involved, because if anyone should be scrupulous in serving the public, it should be lawyers. And if one is trying to make a case for against whom retroactive penal legislation ought to be applied, perhaps if you're going to pick anyone, perhaps lawyers are as appropriate a target as any.

But it is our view that this type of legislation, creating where someone was immune from prosecution in November, and we in December pass an Act which makes him subject to prosecution, that is bad legislation. And what we are doing here is saying where he's immune from examination which may have led to very serious consequences for him in November, we are creating legislation in December which makes him subject to it. And that's dangerous. That's dangerous because the citizen really has a right to know when he can no longer be prosecuted for crimes.

We understand the circumstances. we are of the view that they are largely the creation of the Minister of Justice. He should not get himself in that situation. And when he gets himself in that situation, he should think very carefully before he takes the step of providing legislation which provides retroactive quasi-penal consequences.

I share some of the views of the member for Melville that we don't like to see anybody get through the net who might otherwise have been caught. But that's true with respect to the whole range of the criminal Code. There are limitations for a great number of offences. And when the time is gone, you can't prosecute him because we have decided that that is in the public interest.

We decided last year that one year was the right figure. We are now deciding that it wasn't the right one, and we're going to make it retroactive. And that I think is a dangerous precedent. We are disturbed about it. We understand the circumstances, but we say that the Minister of Justice has got to account first for his error, and second for the extraordinary measure which he has chose to correct his error. I am not aware of any other legislation that was quasi-penal or penal in consequences which was made retroactive by this legislature in its history. I may be wrong, but I'm unaware of any. And we rarely, if ever, do that and ought not to start. And we are disturbed by this legislation.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 41

Muller	Schoenhals	Rybchuk
Birkbeck	Currie	Caswell
McLeod	Klein	Hampton
Andrew	Martens	Gerich
Taylor	Maxwell	Boutin
Duncan	Young	Schmidt
Katzman	Folk	Meagher
Pickering	Muirhead	Glauser
Hardy	Petersen	Sauder
McLaren	Bacon	Zazelenchuk
Garner	Parker	Sutor
Smith (Swift Current)	Smith (Moose Jaw South)	Weiman
Baker	Hopfner	Morin
Hepworth	Myers	

Bill read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 12 — **An Act to amend The Land Titles Act** be now read a second time.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Speaker, we see that this will do no serious damages and, accordingly, we will be allowing it to go.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Bernston that Bill No. 16 — **An Act respecting Court Officials** be now read a second time.

MR. KOSKIE: — ... (inaudible) ... comments, and when the Minister of Finance is taking it through a committee of the whole, I will want to ask a few specific questions.

The major concern that we have, Mr. Minister, which I'll allude to, is in respect to the provision providing the power of the minister or his designate to do the appointment of a large number of officials relative to the judicial system. We are wondering whether or not, indeed, that should be under the public service rather than by the minister. And that's the primary concern, and there's a few others. Other than that, we're prepared to proceed with it.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Berntson that Bill No. 17 — **An Act respecting the Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of The Court Officials Act, 1984** be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Berntson that Bill No. 24 — **An Act to amend the Statute Law** be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to, Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 1 – An Act respecting the Security of Farm Land in Saskatchewan

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Is the minister ready to introduce his officials?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right, my immediate right, I have Jack Drew, deputy minister of Saskatchewan Agriculture; behind him, Doug Maley, director of economics branch for the Department of Agriculture; to his left, Terrence Scott, manager of economics research in the economics branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture; to my immediate left, Ron Hewitt, crown solicitor, Department of Justice; and to his left, Doug Moen, Crown solicitor, Department of Justice.

Clause 1

MR. ENGEL: — Before we get into some of the details of the Bill, I wonder if you could take some time and clarify some of the remarks you made when you introduced the Bill. You suggested that there were thousands of farmers facing foreclosure, and I was wondering if your staff had a breakdown of that. Would you say that the bulk of the farmers are facing foreclosure on their land or are they in direct straits for other reasons?

(1545)

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, my view of the world out there would be, and all of the statistics we have I think are at best, estimates, or perhaps numbers that have been extrapolated from various statistical analyses, some of them, in fact, now one year old.

My view of the world out there would be this: that I think probably something in the order of 90 to 95 per cent of farmers, by far and away the vast majority, may be hurting in that they're not making a great deal of money out there, but at the same time they do not have their backs up against the wall. They will, for the most part, continue to plant their crops, raise their cows, put on fertilizer and chemicals as they always have.

However, there is a group and that number in Saskatchewan might be 4 per cent, who are carrying a very high debt load — some would suggest something in the range of half a million dollars — and who, because of these debts largely accumulated over the last decade, but at the same time recognizing that they are very productive farmers, could find themselves in some financial difficulty and, in fact, could be facing foreclosure.

As well, there is a group out there that could number perhaps as large as 500 over this next year who may be very immediately threatened with, or could have been very immediately threatened with foreclosure proceedings.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't want to take the time of the House to read your comments back to you, but have you changed your mind since you originally introduced the Bill?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, no.

MR. ENGEL: — You led this House to believe that thousands are on the threshold of foreclosure. Could you elaborate on what I was basically asking? What categories are these people in? Are they facing foreclosures on land? Are they facing foreclosures on livestock? Are they facing foreclosures on equipment? Or are there threats on their farm operation because of supplies they purchased? What areas of trouble do you see these people, and the word you used was thousands? If you dispute it, I'll take time to find the quotation.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, you know, the definition of trouble varies with the person out there. For those numbers which are very easy to find, if you like, either in the newspapers or through the provincial mediation board, you can attach some very hard numbers in so far as how many farmers are likely to be served with notices, in that there has been a requirement to give notice to the provincial mediation board. However, for some out there, their definition of trouble is not that they've gone through that hoop, or been put through that hoop by a lender, or that they're a bankruptcy statistic in the newspaper. For some, the definition of trouble out there is that for the first time in their lives, they've been denied additional operating funds. For others, their definition of trouble is that their operating note is way higher than they would like to see it. For others, their definition of trouble is they've had to sell off a quarter or a half, or maybe one of the two combines on the farm for those that have that, to try and reduce their debt and improve their debt to equity position. And for others, their definition of trouble is that, for the first time ever in the history of their farming career, they've had to dip into their savings account to run the farm in the manner they would like to run it.

So when you get into asking me how many thousands of farmers fit into various categories, you have to be very specific. I could give you a number is so far as how many are statistics relative to the provincial mediation board, if you like. That would be one number. Another number might be how many bankruptcies occurred in the last nine months. but the definition varies.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, you must have had something in mind when you decided in your throne speech to indicate that you're going to move on measures that were going to stabilize . . . Not even stabilize. You went stronger than that. you said in your throne speech that you were going to maintain viable family farm units, and you indicate to me now from your seat that that was a good speech, and a lot of people, including the Regina Chamber of Commerce and different people, read into that, and advertised and put the feeling out in the country that this was going to be a session when we'd really grapple wit and take a hold of the problem where there are serious financial crises facing farmers, and you were going to deal with that problem.

Then you came along and opened up this session, introduced Bill 1. We're down to 30-some Bills, or more, before the House today, and we still haven't got anything before the House that is going to deal with the problem that's facing farmers, be they viable or otherwise, and I have trouble trying to comprehend, and you might even want to make a comment on that if your care. I don't mind. But I have problems trying to determine and sort out from expectation the reality of what this government is going to do for farmers, and I'm going to take some time today to determine, and to see if you will come clean and come honestly before this Assembly. And you have your staff there, and you have somebody there that can give us some numbers and present an honest picture — not some words, not some fancy words. Tell us how many farmers are in serious trouble.

Now you'll say 4 per cent. That's 2,400. There's 2,400 in there that you say are an insignificant number. How many people are in trouble? Can we take that you looked at the study that the credit corporation did? Are you going to use those numbers? Is that a thorough figure?

Has your department looked beyond those numbers and have you some other source of information, or did you just decide to come up with here's a way of introducing a Bill that isn't going to cost us a cent? It's not going to cost us a dime, and we're going to come out here looking like the saviours of the farmers of Saskatchewan. Is this what you're trying to tell us? Because in your speech, you said there are thousands of farmers that are in serious trouble.

I asked you a straightforward question: is this trouble they are facing trouble that they can't meet their land commitments, or are there other commitments that they can't meet that they're having problems with? State what the facts are.

You're the Minister of Agriculture. You should have a hold and a grip on how serious this problem is and what kind of trouble you're trying to cope with and trying to deal with, with this piece of legislation. Let's be precise and get some accurate information here.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, I thank the hon. member for his question, Mr. Chairman, and, as I pointed out before, one can use various definitions. Some are statistical reports. For example, to be very specific, the number 11,000 relates very closely to the fact that the Farm Credit Corporation pointed out that one out of every six farmers in Saskatchewan are in severe financial trouble. so that would be one number.

To use another number, one could say that those who have had notices of intention to foreclose served on the mediation board, the provincial mediation board, would be another number. And, for example, that number from April 1st to November 30th of this year is 271, up substantively as I understand it from years previous.

MR. ENGEL: — You don't intend to define where those 11,000 fit. Are they all in trouble, or just

because they are in arrears on land payments, or are there other problems that they're facing?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the debate that we've had in this House for the past couple of weeks indicates the various reasons why some are in trouble — high debt for one. Some may argue it's a symptom. Some might argue it's a cause of their problems.

But, of course, other things that enter into the equation most recently in this province have been weather, low commodity prices over the past few years, international monetary policy, a number of factors, in some cases accumulation of a number of factors — you know, as I've tried to point on more than one occasion. And you opposite consistently try to come up with the simplistic answer. You always want to take a complex and serious issue and package it up in a little sweet package and say, here is the problem. And similarly you want to make the solution look like, here is the solution.

But this kind of simplicity is not dealing with reality, and the sooner you get your head around the fact that there is no single one root cause of the problem in Saskatchewan today, as there is no one single cause of the problem in Manitoba or Ontario or Alberta, or in many states in the U.S.A., or in many countries of the EEC (European Economic Community), you will then have a good understanding of the problem.

And for you that will mean that a problem well stated is a problem half solved. And I'd wish you'd catch up to that point.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, I see you want to be here for a long time. You like to bounce it back and make it as though it's my problem. Well, I wish it were. I wouldn't have come up with a simplistic solution.

You accuse us of simplistic answers and simplistic solutions. You came up with a Bill . . . If you don't call this a simplistic answer, Mr. Minister, I wonder what simplistic is. you couldn't get anything simpler than saying that the farmer only has a land problem. He has no other problems. The only problem is that the viable farmer can't make his land payments. That's what you're saying, is a simplistic solution.

I asked you a simple question, Mr. Minister, and you're talking around it. you're trying to make it look as though I'm looking for a simplistic answer. All I'm looking for is a little breakdown of where, a division of the numbers, of who these people are that are in trouble. Do farmers just own land? Are they just behind on their land payments, or are there other problems out there?

Stand up and tell us if there are or aren't, or aren't you a capable Minister of Agriculture? If you want to get into a slinging a few little arrows, mister, you're an awful big target. You're an awful big target.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, no, this is not a simple question. I have never ever tried to suggest that it was a simple question. I will point out again: high land prices during the halcyon days of the '70s and early '80s, high interest rates during those same days, market conditions, international monetary policies, low commodity prices, weather — have all contributed to the problem that we are facing today in Saskatchewan.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, you took the liberty of directing the attention of this House, you took the liberty of directing the attention of this House back to the time when your colleagues were in office the first time in Saskatchewan — the only other time, I might say. You took the liberty of drawing a parallel and saying, this is what they did in those days; this is what we're going to do today.

But I want to tell you that when I looked at that, they were a little smarter than you were because they didn't take a simplistic approach. they didn't say that the only problem facing

farmers is they can't meet their land payments. They didn't stand up and have the Premier of the day stand up like the little flag-waver does today and say, don't make your land payments. Save your money and spread it around. pay your other bills, because you're not going to have to pay a land payment.

That's a simplistic solution. That's the solution of a government that hasn't got their priorities straight on right. They have all their priorities based on the fact that, we're going to help our big friends. We're going to help those that are capable of absorbing our good wishes and our goodwill and our Christmas spirit. We're going to help the banks and the oil companies.

Mr. Minister, I'm just asking you to tell this House, and I'm going to stay on this question until you decide to answer it. I'm going to ask you to tell this House if there are people that have problems making payments other than land payments.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I am certain there are. I think that there are farmers out there who are having trouble meeting the payment of their fertilizer bill, for example, at the local fertilizer dealer's place, the fuel dealer, that whole farm service sector. When the farmer is in jeopardy, they're in jeopardy, and I would suggest that they're having a difficult time making some of those payments as well.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, you're finally starting to come around. Sask Wheat Pool indicated that this summer at one time they were as much as \$60 million outstanding at their farm service account. I'm aware of that. What other people, what other areas are farmers having trouble with? So they have problems meeting their payments to the service sector. What other areas have they got problems meeting their payments in?

(1600)

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I suspect that for some farmers out there, they are virtually having a difficult time making just about any payment that they're faced with today.

MR. ENGEL: — For a Minister of Agriculture having good staff around him, I see five people there that could give you some adequate answers. What kind of numbers? What kind of numbers are we looking at? How many farmers are behind on machinery payments?

If you're afraid to use that number, have you any indication or any survey? Have you looked at the farm situation out there and the number of farmers you've had, and try and determine how many farmers are having problems meeting some equipment payments?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — As it relates to machinery payments specifically, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, we have no specific numbers.

MR. ENGEL: — Have you talked to the Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan implement dealers association and tried to get a number from them?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — No. I've met with, as have some of my colleagues, with the Saskatchewan-Manitoba Implement Dealers Association, though.

MR. ENGEL: — Have these people indicated about what kind of a problem is out there, and what percentage of the farmers are having some difficulties?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, they expressed the concern, in the case of the implement dealers, which is the point you raise, that a number of jobs and the livelihood of many people that they employ are in jeopardy because of decreased sales and decreased activity generally. I think if one — and I'm going a little bit from memory here — but if one traced it back to the

main-line companies, for example, they indicated, believe it or not, that in fact their arrears rate or their bad accounts had risen every, very, very marginally.

One might argue, of course, that the worst is yet to come, and that in fact may have been related to me even six or eight weeks ago, and fall payments may have been due since then. But certainly, as I recall the conversation with at least one of the main-liners, at least a representative of that company, the bad accounts were up extremely marginally. I think they were talking like 1.2 per cent, in that area.

But I wouldn't want to suggest for a moment that the individual implement dealer in your town and in my town isn't hurting, because simply farmers have not had a great deal of cash. They tend to look to the future and, knowing that they're not going to have a lot of dollars in their pocket, tend to contract on their spending habits and make do with the equipment they have. And of course, that's impacted on those businesses and that of course is a big concern to us.

And of course that's part of the reason why the Bill is designed the way it is: because we don't want to snuff out the livelihoods and the jobs of those people working in the implement dealer sector. Because, as you will know, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, they represent something in the order of 5,500 jobs. And I would think that you would agree that that's a very important small business in Saskatchewan.

MR. ENGEL: — The other question that I'd ask parallel to that, that you didn't touch on: did you survey the finance companies representing the main-line equipment dealers like J. I. Case financing, International's financing, John Deere financing, and Massey-Ferguson's, and so on? Did you get a survey from them to determine what kind of arrears farmers are in?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — No. The only numbers I had, and I'm working from memory, is the one I gave you, and I can't even recall which company that was. I was in correspondence with virtually every one as part of our consultation out there, and, in fact, others at the officials' level have been doing some work as well. But I don't recall any hard stats coming from the implement dealer sector specifically itself.

MR. ENGEL: — The bottom line, I suppose, to all this questioning, Mr. Minister, is that farmers are having trouble meeting their power bills. I know of three farmers in my area that got registered letters that their power was going to be cut off this week. That's a pretty rough time to cut some power off. They're having problems meeting their daily living expenses. They're behind on their equipment payments. They're behind on their land payments because — must be severely, seriously behind in their land payments — because you're bringing in the legislation dealing just with land.

The question is, Mr. Minister: did you not, in your wisdom and in discussing with your staff and surveys you had with the Saskatchewan-Manitoba Implement Dealers Association and the various groups you met around the country, didn't you get a message other than saying a debt moratorium on land? Wasn't there something else that they offered, that they said? Surely you can do something to get in there and bridge the gap trying to salvage this.

Some people say . . . You're saying 4 or 6 per cent is all it is right now. Numbers that have been drawn to my attention are much, much larger than that, Mr. Minister, approaching the 20's in serious condition. If that land is repossessed and that land hits the market and reduces the value of land another 15 or 20 per cent, there'll be another 10 per cent in that same position, and so on. This thing starts snowballing, Mr. Minister.

Don't you feel, or didn't you consider any other measure, thinking that surely there's something a Saskatchewan provincial government can do with a minister that is in tune with the problems that are out there, like you're trying to tell us? Isn't there something you could have done on behalf of these many, many people? When you have that kind of money for tax write-offs and

tax advantages and rebates for all these other people, haven't you got a dollar for the farmer? Is there nothing you could do?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, yes. When we met, and as did the Premier on some occasions, and as did the Minister of Finance meet. And I can't recall the names of and/or the numbers of all the farm groups and those married to the farming industry in Saskatchewan, that we met with.

But you're quite right. We did hear a number of things. Among those things were, for example, the crop insurance program. It needs to be more meaningful for the individual producer, those who put in the inputs. The current system tends to reduce everyone to the lowest common denominator, and for those who pretend to be the more aggressive farmers out there in terms of fertilizer and chemicals and continuous cropping, that safety net hasn't always triggered for them as it perhaps should have, or as they would like an insurance program to trigger.

And because we heard that, and because my hon. colleague, the minister in charge of Saskatchewan crop insurance heard that — and I think he's met with something in excess of 7,000 farmers over this past fall — they have moved in conjunction with our federal colleagues to put in place for this next crop year, individualized, 80 per cent crop insurance coverage. They've moved to cover things like winter wheat. And these are, as you will know, I'm sure, extremely positive moves out there, a safety net that's current.

And I would be somewhat critical of your administration when you were in office for not ever addressing that. But it had come to our attention that it was not only a problem in the black soil zones, but it was a problem in even our part of the country, which is traditionally known as the Palliser Triangle, but it hadn't become as meaningful as it could for many farmers out there.

That was one thing we heard. The other things we heard were: number two, is the Western Grains Stabilization Fund. We, as farmers, have a lot of our money in there. And if these aren't tough times, we don't know when they are. We think that that fund should be more meaningful and responsive to farmers. And as you will know, we've had extremely good response from our federal colleagues on that. We've had pay-outs out of that fund totalling something in the order of \$223 million over this past summer and fall.

But, more importantly than that, we've had a commitment by the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Mayer, that he will look with his colleague, the Hon. Mr. Wise, at making even in fact an interim payment so, as you would say, to put some cash on the dash before we get into that very critical spring planting time when farmers face that billion-dollar bill. That was another thing we heard.

The third thing we heard was, get rid of those darn federal taxes off farm fuels. And once again our federal colleagues were able to reciprocate, and that's something that you and I have both called for, for some good long time. And that's going to put several tens of millions of dollars back in the hands of Saskatchewan farmers. In fact, some would put that estimate in Saskatchewan, that estimate of the total rebates, when all is said and done, at \$48 million in this province.

And that compares very handsomely with that farm cost reduction program that your party started and then stopped. And I think, you know, the highest there that a farmer could ever receive was \$300. And, in fact, the average one year for farmers under your program was \$89. Now you tell me what farmer out there really thinks that \$89 is going to go very far to solving his problems.

Among other things that we heard in the consultation with the various groups out there was, as well, you know we should have a greater commitment to research. We heard, as well, that the domestic price for wheat should be examined and, of course, once again our federal colleagues have, in a very short time, have responded in so many areas and so many things that we've called

for, for such a long time. Freezing the seaway rates — all those things put money back in the hands of Saskatchewan farmers.

So to finish my answer to your question, yes, we did hear a number of other proposals and other possibilities: reducing in-put costs, getting more for our commodities.

And, as I've said time and time again during this debate, and during the throne speech debate: don't look for the one simple answer. There is no black magic. But look at all these things together collectively.

I have a lot of faith in farmers out there, and with a little help from this side and, I hope, some support and co-operation from your side, that package will, in fact, enable 60, 70,000 — however many farmers we have in this province — to get through a difficult time.

MR. ENGEL: — I appreciate the minister reminding me about the wonderful things your minister in charge of crop insurance is doing for the farmers and crop insurance.

Mr. Minister, I don't know what you were doing during the years of 1971 and '72 and so on, but I happened to serve on a committee with some of my colleagues that aren't around right now. But John Kowalchuk from Melville, who represented Melville and truly was a good member, was the chairman of that committee.

And, Mr. Minister, do you want to know, when you were just a little schoolboy — it was only a few years ago — but when you were still wet behind the ears, your dad couldn't buy crop insurance. There wasn't any crop insurance available where you farmed. There was no crop insurance available where you were farming. you could even go north-west 40 miles from your farm and get to my place, and I couldn't even buy crop insurance on good land. I'm not trying to indicate that my land's so much better than your dad's, but there was no crop insurance, there was no crop insurance.

And, Mr. Minister, you're trying to tell somebody that was a committee that pressured the federal government to come up with a comprehensive crop insurance program that everybody in Saskatchewan could enrol in, could pay their fair share of premium and get some coverage. You're trying to tell me we didn't deal with crop insurance, when you're monkeying around with the premium. How much did that cost you, that fantastic new program you're coming out with? What is that costing the province of Saskatchewan? What treasury input are you having to improve the farmers' lot with that new program? How much is that costing you?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well as the hon. member will know, the premiums for crop insurance are equally shared by the federal government and the producer, and the province administers it and, in so doing, defray costs in the order of some probably \$8 million or so . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

(1615)

Well, it's administration costs. I'm not sure what the exact number would be. But I guess the point that I would make to you is that, you know, that was over a decade and a half ago that you had your happy little committee, and what were you able to accomplish? Nothing. The difference between your government when you were in power and us is that you pressured and didn't deliver; we lobby and we deliver.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, Mr. Minister, you present before me a nice new little package that as a farmer, if I want to put up the bucks, I can buy some additional premium. That's what I got from your department. I can pay a little extra. I can pay a little extra, and I can get individual coverage. That little extra happens to be about a 30 per cent hike on my premium — on my premium, not on anybody else's. But on my farm, if I'm willing to pay 30 per cent more, I can increase my

coverage a little bit. You're not kicking in any money there. You're not putting in another dollar for that increased coverage.

All I'm saying is, you think you're doing such a wonderful thing for farmers. You know what your minister really says, Mr. Minister? Do you read the headlines? "Wise Tells Farmers to Bite the Bullet." That's what your minister does. The Minister of Agriculture tells farmers to bite the bullet when he's speaking in Toronto. That's what he tells us. get in and bite the bullet. Things are going to be tough and only the fittest and only the tough are going to survive. Well, I'm going to tell you, Mr. Minister, I've got news for you, because you're not going to survive as the Minister of Agriculture. If you think you can come up with a Bill that just locks in a few viable farmers on their farm land and nothing else, and you think that that measure is going to solve all the farm problems in Saskatchewan . . . that's the Bill, Bill 1, that's the Bill that's the saviour to our farms, and if that's the only salvation you can come up with, Mr. Minister, it's very weak. because when you tell farmers that you've improved their crop insurance, that's your solution. They're telling me how big of an improvement it is. They're telling me — the ones that went to the meetings in my riding to listen to these improvements in crop insurance — they're telling me what they came up with. And they said the provincial government didn't put up one thin dime; not an extra dime did they put to protect the farmers of Saskatchewan.

And here you bring up a piece of moratorium legislation that even the legislative report — and let me read into the record what the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce has to say, in volume 10, number 13, December 5th:

The throne speech was perhaps one of the most vague in recent years. The programs, for the most part, have all been talked about before.

Here is your friends, the chamber of commerce, saying the Tories are a total flop. They have no new ideas. they have no new ideas. There was a lot of back patting.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Who wrote that?

MR. ENGEL: — I'm talking about the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce legislative report, volume 10, number 13, December 5th. There was a lot of back patting as well, more than is usual in the throne speech, more than is usual:

The promise of aid to maintain the security of viable family farms contains the key word, "viable." Whatever program is developed, farms that are beyond salvaging, in the opinion of whatever board or commission that will be established, will be allowed to die. Only those operations that have some promise of a future will be helped. The aid could be in the form of . . .

Now here is where the expectation was, even from your friends:

The aid could be in the form of guaranteed operating loans to those farms that meet certain criteria or certain requirements. Those loans will probably carry a much lower interest rate than is current.

That is what the chamber of commerce's prediction was.

I have before me a whole list of articles that we should be looking at. And Paul Martin says, in the *Prince Albert Herald*, "The Farm Land Security Bill is basically a loser."

Who is Paul Martin? In Ottawa . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . This is a Paul Martin that writes for the *Prince Albert Herald*, says, for the Thompson news service, "The Farm Land Security Bill is basically a loser." "Farm income said unlikely to rise." And yet you plan on putting a one-year moratorium on it.

Another report says, "Banks are choked with small businesses," from Winnipeg. "Saskatchewan Wheat Pool plans crisis pay-out to members because the provincial government does nothing." "Pool wants interest rates cut." Productive farmers face losing their land, bankers say." And that's October 30, 1984. "Farm crisis goes beyond foreclosure; Young farmers' debt situation frightening; Bankruptcies mow down more farmers; Farmers want their rates cut sharply; Banks still going ahead with actions against farmers; Many more farmers face money woes; Bankruptcies looming, CFA warns; Bankruptcies a record; Bankruptcies still rising (*Western Producer*); Farm bankruptcies up sharply (Ottawa); Farm failures double in the West; Farm cash shortages serious, government action needed; Farmers in dire straits, national study says; Plight of farmers is dire — survey; Farmer would shoot cattle to beat the bank; The great farm land sell-off underlines desperate plight of western farmers."

Here's one, Mr. Minister, that I don't know if you read or not: "Bank profits in Canada the world's best."

In light of all these headlines — "Bank profits in Canada are the world's best; Farm incomes expected to drop in '85; Province's farm income fell 20 per cent; Farm cash receipts deadline" . . . And, Mr. Minister, I've got two more folders I could go through, and read these to you, and somebody said, "Please do."

Mr. Minister, do you feel that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'll wait, Mr. Chairman, until he decides to listen. Mr. Minister, do you feel that Bill 1 is sufficient to salvage even 10 per cent of the farmers that are in dire straits? Let's start with that number.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, as I've consistently said, one cannot view this single Bill as the quick fix for agriculture's problems, and I don't know how many times I've said that in this legislature in this past two weeks, but you continually slip, at the slip of a hand, from reality right into dream-land. You're always looking for the quick fix . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . He dreams in Technicolor all the time, constantly looking for the quick fix. There is no quick fix.

You view this as part of a package out there. You've been before this House earlier in debate on this Bill, suggesting at one point in time there should be a \$30 per acre pay-out. When I did the arithmetic on that with the help of my colleagues we came up with the answer that that would double the deficit in Saskatchewan, or tripe taxes, because it would be a \$1.5 billion bill. You backed off that one. The next day what were you in here with? An amendment. No \$30 per acre but nowhere, when the Leader of the Opposition enunciated very clearly, as he said, for the record in this House, what NDP agriculture policy was, did he mention the 7 per cent solution. But you research department, the *Leader-Post*, happened to have an article in there about 7 per cent interest rates. So the next day, that's the new agriculture policy for the NDP.

And then the Liberal member, the lone Liberal member in the House, when asked repeatedly to enunciate the Liberal agricultural policy, never laid out one speck of policy. You change on a day-to-day basis, and he doesn't have a policy.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, you talk about . . . And just one little correction. And seeing you asked me a question, I'll have to answer it, Mr. Minister, by way of an introductory remark.

That \$30 an acre payment isn't all bad, Mr. Minister. If you'd take the drought area, you put a \$5,000-a-farmer limit on how much you're giving him on an acreage payment, put a \$5,000-farmer limit on it, and you tell me how many farmers aren't . . . in the drought area, and even take half the farmers in the drought area and multiply it out, and see if you don't come to \$150 million, my dear friend.

If you can't do your numbers better than that, and you think you can get away with deceiving the public . . . Even your own hero, the great chief, the great chief had an acreage payment that worked. It salvaged some farmers in his heyday. Why don't you come up and try a program that's going to work?

Put up \$150 million, and that's the number we gave you from the day we suggested it. The groups I've met with around the province, and it's more than 700 or 7,000 or whatever number you said the minister in charge of hailstones met with. But the people that I met with and the people that have consulted with our party seem to think that the kind of priority you've given the oil companies and that \$150 million would do something.

I can assure you today that if you'd put \$150 million into the hands of the farmers that are severely pressed by the third drought in the Rockglen area, for example, I can assure you that they could pay their power bills. I can assure you that they wouldn't face foreclosure, and that would make them viable farms, and then they would qualify to survive under the Bill.

But today if you take your Bill and apply it, will a farmer in Rockglen that has had his third crop failure in a row survive? Will this Bill say he's a viable farm? Tell us.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Chairman, rather — hon. member, now again we have had a further version of the NDP agriculture policy. What he is saying now to the farmers of Saskatchewan is: all you quarter section farmers out there, we will give you \$30 an acre. That is the new NDP policy: \$5,000, \$30 an acre times 160 acres, \$4,800. This is the new policy. All you one-quarter section farmers living in Rockglen, this is what you can expect.

Deal with reality. There's 50 million acres in Saskatchewan, and virtually every one of those farmers on every one of those acres is not having an easy time. What are the safety nets out there? You go on with this ad hocery on a daily basis: 7 per cent solution, \$30 an acre, \$30 an acre to the quarter section farmer.

The average farmer in Saskatchewan is 1,000 acres. And they look to the kind of safety nets that exist: crop insurance and grain stabilization. And I suspect that crop insurance, before the time is done there, will have paid out far in excess of your \$150 million which you spend over and over and over and over when you know yourself the true number of \$1.5 billion, and, as well, you know that we can probably expect much more than that out of the grain stabilization fund. you've got to quit designing policies on a day-to-day basis and try and look at the long-term and deal with reality. There are no quick fixes out there.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, it might be great, and it might be an easy solution, and it might be comforting for you and your deputy minister and I don't know who else to say that the fixes we recommend are quick fixes, and they're wishful dreams, and they might even be in Technicolor. That might be an easy out for you.

But, Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, we can offer you one suggestion after another. we can give you a suggestion a day. We can give you a suggestion every day, Mr. Minister. If you don't implement them, if you don't implement them, it's not going to fix the problem. It's not going to fix the problem.

You had your assistants and you had three of your stooges from your side to out to a meeting last night or yesterday afternoon. Why don't you ask them what the farmers are saying about Bill 1? They went out and bragged, the NDP aren't supporting our Bill. They went out and bragged about it.

Ask the member for Morse, or ask the member for Kelvington-Wadena, or ask the member that represents a seat that used to be represented in this House by Edgar Kaeding, a man that worked

for his constituents. Ask those three buddies of your what the farmers told them when before we even voted on this Bill when they told them the NDP aren't voting for Bill 1. What did the farmers tell you? What message did they send back? What message did they tell you on that one if you're so smart?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, first of all, your mathematics continues to intrigue me. My understanding of that meeting, and I have it on very good authority because I have it from three MLAs who happen to be farmers and very conscientious farmers that were up at that meeting, and, in fact, there were not 17 people there. There were, in fact, well over 100 — 120, I'm informed, to be exact. And as I understand it further, it was a very good meeting.

(1630)

MR. ENGEL: — That meeting might have been great, and I don't blame you for not wanting to answer the question I asked you. If I were the minister and I'd had that much trouble with the farmers, I wouldn't tell in public or in this House where it's recorded what the farmers are saying either. I don't blame you for not saying that, and I suppose there's some time for a minister's privilege not to answer some questions.

But, Mr. Minister, I haven't found a soul . . . I don't know of a farmer, I don't know of a banker, I don't know of a businessman across Saskatchewan I don't know of anybody except a few of you sitting here that think Bill 1 is a panacea for those problems facing agriculture. I don't know of anybody. And put that in your pipe and hew it.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, as it turns out as I get more and more details of the meeting from my colleagues I've got a feeling the 17 people you're talking about went to an NDP meeting where only 17 people would show up.

The fact of the matter is — and I challenge you to prove different — the fact of the matter is, the hall was full and they had to get extra chairs to accommodate everyone.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, Mr. Minister, I understand from that great meeting of your boys out there that they really didn't appreciate Bill 1. And further to that, if you'd have been there to answer to the beef stabilization Bill, you'd have got the kind of earful and the kind of message you deserve, because the farmers weren't too happy about their 7 and \$8 cheques. When you rob \$50 from their beef stabilization cheque and used it to pay out a drought relief program, that kind of jiggy-pokery . . . You talk about us jiggering the numbers when we're offering you some solutions.

Mr. Minister, the farmers can see through this government. They can see where the \$150 million are going. You can use all kinds of numbers and can believe the member from Morse when he tells you the hundreds of people that showed up because you paid their way to get to the meeting. But I can assure you that the meetings where we go and pay our own way, the meetings we go to, we get the true facts from the farmers. And the farmers that were at that meeting, that phoned us this morning, told us where it's really at. And I don't blame you for looking for a diversion. I don't blame you for looking for a diversion, because I wouldn't admit either, if I would have to pilot a Bill like this through this legislature that does absolutely nothing for farmers. I might as well sit down, Mr. Chairman, because he's not listening anyhow. Are you ready to listen? Okay.

I would look for a diversion too, if I were the minister and had this as the panacea for farm problems. This is where your throne speech says, this is what's going to solve. Well, I'm going to tell the minister that not all groups, not all groups are applauding, not all groups are applauding what you're up to.

Farm leaders say that the Saskatchewan government's move to bring in a temporary halt to foreclosure on farm land doesn't solve farm problems. What's needed . . .

Stephenson from Sask Wheat Pool said:

What's needed are programs that will give farmers short-term help to plant their crops in the spring of '85, and longer-term help to get them over the next four or five years.

A roll-back of interest rates. Gordon Carswell, canola grower, said he would like legislation to offer more to farmers who are just keeping abreast of things. Access to operating credit Ron Simpson, president of Palliser Wheat Growers Association even came on condemning you, and he said his group was quite surprised and rather disappointed. We don't feel it addresses the problem. Both Simpson and Neil Jahnke, president of Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, said the legislation will only postpone the inevitable. It must work towards long-term solutions, and suggested agribonds as one example. The vice-president of the Canadian agricultural movement said a more long-term solution would be parity pricing.

Mr. Minister, you haven't done any of these things. You haven't listened to any of the farm leaders. Who told you that this kind of a Bill would do a job for farmers? Who gave you that kind of advice?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, our advice came from a number of sources. And I daresay, and I would ask, in fact, the hon. member if in fact he's met with, for example, the numbers of organizations that I, the Minister of Finance, my colleague, the minister in charge of crop insurance, the Premier, and other members of the agriculture caucus have met with over, not only the past couple of months specifically, but over the past year. And we can include not only the farms and the farm organizations themselves, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and all the groups that you mentioned as well — the implement dealers' association, the independent chemical and fertilizer dealers' association, the UGG (United Grain Growers), the wheat pool, Cargill. We have virtually met with and consulted with and gleaned ideas from virtually every player in agriculture in Saskatchewan, and as a result of those consultations have lobbied the federal government for some of the moves that have in fact come about, and in fact that we hope to see in the future, in terms of Agribonds, removal of capital gains tax, and section 31 of the Income Tax Act.

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, Mr. Minister, that all of us here in the House agree that there's a very, very substantial problem in the farming community. I think we can start with that premise, that there's a major problem in the farming community. And what I want to ask you — and I know my colleague from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg asked somewhat the same question — but what I want to ask you specifically, to start at a beginning point, is whether you, as the Minister of Agriculture, commissioned an analysis of the magnitude of the problem in Saskatchewan? In other words, whether you yourself, your department, commissioned an in-depth study of the magnitude of the problem with Saskatchewan farmers.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I think, as you pointed out, and quite correctly, in your opening statement, the problem facing Saskatchewan farmers is well stated. And in fact, although you might want to pursue a course of further analysis, I would argue that that would be a case of paralysis by analysis. This government prefers to act rather than to sit on our hands. And while I'm on my feet, because I did not answer fully the hon. member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg's question when he asked about the meeting and the questions on beef stabilization at that meeting, as it turns out, there was one question on beef stabilization, and the individual wanted to know how to get out of it.

MR. KOSKIE: — I take it from your answer, Mr. Minister, that when I asked you whether you

had in fact commissioned a survey of the magnitude of the problem, you are saying to this House, no, I did not, as the Minister of Agriculture, through your department, commission to determine before you acted, the magnitude of the problem, but rather that you have done on the reports from other institutions.

If you haven't indeed commissioned a report yourself, certainly what you have done, I assume is to have accumulated some of the surveys of the problems by various organizations under which you have, in fact, proceeded to act on behalf of the farmers. And so what I would ask you: would it be possible for you to table before this legislature the reports of the analysis of the problem confronting agriculture on which you based your action on?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, in terms of surveys, I suppose in the broadest sense of the word there's several meetings that I, the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the minister in charge of crop insurance, the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Energy, my Legislative Secretary, the chairman of the agriculture caucus, and I could go on and on — all the consultations with the individuals and groups that they've had, I suppose would be a form of a survey.

But we don't have that compiled into any report form if you like. I suppose I could table for you, although I would suspect you've already got a copy, the very exhaustive Farm Credit Corporation survey. I think, quite honestly, Mr. Chairman, the time has long since passed for further surveys. We view this as a time for action, and act we have done.

MR. KOSKIE: — The minister indicated that he would be prepared, or at least he has access to the detailed analysis of the Farm Credit Corporation. I would appreciate knowing for sure whether you would indeed be prepared to file the report done by the Farm Credit Corporation, apparently partly on which you based the need for action. Would the minister indeed file that?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, I don't have a copy with me, but we can certainly undertake to provide you with one of those reports.

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I take that to mean in the reasonable, foreseeable future, not down the line after the next election.

You alluded also to consultation in respect to determining not only the magnitude of the problem, but also a discussion of what action you should be taking to help alleviate the problems in the farming community. What you have done, after some of that consultation which you alluded to, what you have come up with is Bill No. 1. What I would like to ask you: can you indicate to the House here today the list of organizations which you met with which, in fact, recommended proceeding with the single action of Bill No. 1? Can you give us a list of those which supported you and requested that you go the route that you are going?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Chairman, hon. member — and if I could have a page please — when I say I will undertake to give a copy of a report, not only am I a man of my word, I'm a man of action, and I might say fast action. So it is with great pleasure that I do in fact table a copy of the 1984 farm survey done by the Farm Credit Corporation. And in so far as what I heard from the various groups and what each recommended, as I said earlier, no, I don't have that in a report form. But I would reiterate to you again that no group, as far as I can recall — in fact I think I could probably go so far as to say even no individual — came out with the simplistic answer that you're looking for. Nobody suggest there was a magic answer. Nobody suggested there was a quick fix. But you in the opposition continuously look for that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, the quick fix. You can't deal with reality.

As I explained to your colleague, the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, just earlier, we had recommendations for many things: crop insurance, grain stabilization, deferral taxes on farm fuels, agribonds, chemicals, fertilizer. And the list goes on and on and on, but there was no one

simple answer.

Public thinking out there, in fact, hasn't crystallized. As I've said as well in this House before, some of the groups I've met with said, do nothing. Those people got themselves in trouble. Let the chips fall where they may.

You and some of your extreme buddies, the NFU, proposed — and I suppose they are probably the only group that proposed — full blown debt moratorium legislation. What we have tried to do, and what we will continue to do in this House, is put together packages that take us on that course, that common sense middle-ground course. And I would understand that you who deal in radicalism and extremism would have difficulty with that. And certainly some of the farm organizations out there took an equally extreme view in saying, do nothing. We will pursue the common sense middle ground.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, I would like to indicate that you are unable to provide any supporting organizations for the actions that you have taken, otherwise you would be coming forward with them. The action which you are taking is insufficient, is not the action that was requested by the farming community. Obviously, what the farming community has been requesting of this government is financial assistance, subsidizing down interest rates on the loans in which they have, putting some cash into the hands of the farmers. That is the consistent story out in Saskatchewan, that farmers need cash, not a moratorium, which really in essence, if you look at the provisions of the Bill, really will in fact facilitate foreclosure if you don't come within the definition of your Act of being viable.

(1645)

But I want to ask the minister: why is not the government being consistent? When the house owners apparently got into trouble, and there's no doubt there was concern out in Saskatchewan, what you did is to implement a mortgage rebate. And what you did to the home owners at that time is to write down the mortgage rate, and that was of assistance, and I give you marks for providing that assistance. But here today, we have one of the essential, most important part of our economic viability in very serious financial trouble.

How can you stand in this House and now deny the farmers who are in trouble similar assistance of subsidizing down the interest rates? How can you come to that conclusion when you already have set the precedent and it was a workable solution? Why will you not attend to the major problem of alleviating the problem by putting some cash in the hands of the farmers?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, the hon. member's remarks as part of the enunciation of agricultural policy continue to intrigue me. As he says, that they do not believe in a moratorium and yet their agricultural policy, as enunciated by the Leader of the Opposition, as I understood it and as is recorded in *Hansard*, clearly called for a full-blown debt moratorium legislation.

The hon. member raises the question in relation to the fact of the mortgage interest rebate program which I think all members of the House, and in fact all people of Saskatchewan agree, is a very good program wherein we provided a safety net at 13.25 per cent. But as well, of course, members opposite should . . . Or if they do not know I will tell them — farm mortgages today are running around 11.75 per cent.

But see, once again you fail to analyse the problem properly. It's not so much the mortgages that they're getting into today and tomorrow that are causing the problem. As I clearly tried to point out and as that survey points out — and I would hope that you would read it; in fact, I would have expected that you would have read it before now — points out it's that group of farmers out there that have been farming eight or nine or 10 years, who got hooked on the interest rates of the halcyon days of the '70s and early '80s and the high land prices, and now they're burdened with debt as a result of that. And it's very unfortunate that 8 per cent programs weren't put in

place in those days. we have put them in place. You did nothing. you did nothing. You did not put one dollar up for the farmers of Saskatchewan to reduce their interest rates through programs like the farm purchase program — not one cent.

The hon. member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, in fact, when this kind of legislation was being debated in this same House in 1971, in August of that year, what was his answer to the cash on the dash? He said, "Wait until we roll the big guns out." The big gun was the land bank. And what a fiasco. What a fiasco. And that was your definition of the "big gun" to save farmers from burdensome debt and the wheat glut in the '70s. Your agriculture . . . You didn't have an agriculture policy.

I would suggest to all members of this House, all member of this House, that if there had been an 8 per cent interest . . . I would suggest to the members of this House if there had been an 8 per cent interest rate program in place in the halcyon days of the '70s, that we wouldn't have as many farmers in trouble today in Saskatchewan as we have. I would suggest that, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KOSKIE: — I'd like to ask the minister to settle down a little. We've got a very, very serious problem here, and his ranting gets us nowhere. I'd like to ask him whether he thinks it is consistent that this government have a subsidized interest rate for the continuation of the purchasing of land, when many farmers in Saskatchewan today, who have a unit of land, you deny subsidizing any interest rate. Are you consistent?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we are very consistent. We are very consistent in our policies. Number one, for the beginning and young farmer we have 8 per cent money available for farm land mortgages. We have 8 per cent money available through the Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan for livestock and irrigation. We have, in fact, a purchase program, a time purchase program available through our Crown lands division, wherein young farmers wanting to buy the leases that they're on . . . You know, the leases that you wouldn't sell them because you said, we, as the government, the NDP government, we as the state know better than the land leaseholder. You shall not but this land. We know better than you.

Well, we've given them the opportunity to buy that land, and we've given them the opportunity to buy it at 15 per cent down with 10 per cent money. So in terms of helping farmers out with their interest rate programs, we have been consistent to a T and it's . . . And you know what? And what I hear out in the country is it's just an absolute tragedy that when you were in office you didn't do something about interest rates.

And I could quote the members of this House. I could quote the members of this House when some of these charter members, if you like, of the Progressive Conservative Party in this legislature raised that question with your ministers when you were government. And I could quote to you what answer Mr. MacMurchy gave them, who was a minister of agriculture some time ago. He said, clearly interest rates are a federal responsibility.

Well, I'll tell you what. This Progressive Conservative government in Saskatchewan has a clear track record on helping farmers with their interest rate burden. We have made-in-Saskatchewan interest rates at 8 per cent, and we have shown the way. others have followed, and I am happy to report that my federal colleague, as well, has taken initiatives to reduce interest rates through Farm Credit Corporation — welcome news for farmers in Saskatchewan.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, I want to repeat the question. If you indicate that you, and brag about a program of subsidizing interest rate for purchasing of land, why is it not the proper course of action to subsidize interest rates of those farmers who are in financial difficulty? Why will you not, in fact, open the treasury to assist them, similar to what you did with the home owners when interest rates were high? Why will you not, in fact, provide some financial assistance to those people who got trapped in the high interest rates?

Obviously you know, out in the farming community, that the farm credit rate prior to 1975 — people were getting interest rates that were subsidized. They were at 5 or 6 per cent. Other farmers had to buy or did buy at higher interest rates. And with the low cost of value for their produce, increasing cost of their inputs, they are in a financial jam.

I ask you again: why will you not provide some financial assistance to those people that are in financial problems?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, we are attempting to deal with their problems in a realistic fashion. There you go again drifting off into dream-land . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I will answer the question.

And let's back up a little bit. How many dollars worth of debt is there in Saskatchewan? How many dollars worth of debt are there in Saskatchewan? Five billion . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yeah. And there you want to go, doubling the size of the deficit again, tripling our tax load. You're looking for the simplistic answer again. You're looking for the simplistic answer again.

The reality of the matter out there in Saskatchewan is that we have a number of farmers with burdensome debts, and we will deal with them in a logical, responsive, and responsible fashion. And our interest rate policies in this province are second to none.

MR. KOSKIE: — I'd like to ask the minister, at a time when the farming community is having great financial difficulty, why he would change the policy under the beef stabilization program at a stage of a crisis in agriculture that will deny the farmers about \$11 million in benefits.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Minister. If you're not aware, I'll make you aware that all of those people who signed that contract . . . Unilaterally changed the terms of that and cut out \$11 million at a time when farmers need more revenue.

I want to ask you why it's consistent. Why is it consistent that you start slashing away at the beef stabilization program at the very time that the farmers are in trouble?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, although we may be straying slightly from Bill 1, I certainly am happy to have an opportunity to address the issue that the hon. member has raised.

As it relates to beef stabilization and program changes there, we, once again, have a lawyer in the opposition trying to suggest to the beef insurance board, which is made up of very responsible farmers — not lawyers, farmers very responsible farmers — farmers that were put there by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the NFU, the Saskatchewan Stock Growers, and I could go on and on and on. And if you think that you know the beef industry better than they do, I would question that very, very, very much.

Those board members who have the best interests of the beef industry at heart in this province have made some very, very responsible and good changes to that program. For example, one of their first moves was to get rid of the 50-feeder option that was put in place by the NDP. In fact, it was not even put in place by the board that helped draw up the plan in the first place. The minister of the day overrode the wishes of the committee formulating the program. True or false? That's quite true, Mr. Speaker.

But more than that, Mr. Speaker, to show you the kind of conviction that these very much common sense people . . . And you couldn't find 10 farmers in the opposition benches because they don't exist. But we've got 12 or 13 or 14 farmers sitting around that beef stabilization board, and 20 on these benches, and they came to the unanimous conclusion — the unanimous conclusion — that changes should be made, and they made them.

And, Mr. Chairman, if anybody doubts the commitment of this government to livestock, the haven't looked at the record. Because it is this government that's brought about positive changes in terms of the feeder-finish option in the beef stabilization program. They've given them more options to sell their cattle. We've put in place the prairie livestock drought program, \$48 per head. Ag Credit Corporation Saskatchewan for the first time ever — for the first time ever — you can finance a feedlot through Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan but you couldn't through farmstart. you couldn't through farmstart. No. The beef industry didn't exist as far as that government that when they were in government here were concerned, the NDP Party.

The Livestock Investment Tax Credit — two years ago in this province you couldn't get a tax credit for investing in agriculture. You could get one for investing in cinemas and MURBS, but no agriculture, and once again this province led the way in the country.

And I could go on, Mr. Chairman, but I won't. I think the point I would like to make is, we listen to the people we appoint on boards. They made a unanimous and responsible recommendation, and implement we have done.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister whether he can inform me how many foreclosures have taken place over the last year in the farming sector. What would that number be?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The number I could give to you is the one that I gave to your colleague from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. The number of notices of intention to foreclose served on the provincial mediation board from April 1 to November 30th of this year were 271.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could inform me: how many were on land, how many of livestock, and how many on farm machinery, and how much was on grain in the bins?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, those are all on land.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Minister, can you indicate to us how many were on machinery and how many were on livestock?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, that data is not collected.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well, Mr. Minister, when you're looking at the problem in Saskatchewan, are you telling us that you didn't find out and didn't check into the number of foreclosures that were taking place on machinery and livestock before you brought this Bill in? Are you saying that the number of seizures, the number of seizures that were taking place in the province on livestock and machinery, that you didn't check that number?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, those, I think, what you are referring to are seizures, and there is no statistical collection mechanism for those numbers.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well, Mr. Minister, did you check with the banks or the lending institutions or, in fact, with your department or with the courts to find out how many seizures had taken place in those areas?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, that data is just not simply kept or tabulated at the court level and, I suppose, if it was something that we could have obtained easily and readily, we would have. I give you that in all sincerity.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — I find the minister's statements to be almost unbelievable, but then coming from that minister maybe one shouldn't. But, Mr. Minister, you will certainly know how many seizures your own department has instigated on livestock and machinery, and I would like

that number. And I would prefer if you didn't beat around the bush and say that that number isn't available. and when you official is writing it down right now, I would prefer if you didn't tell him not to give it to you because I would very much like to know how many seizures you yourself as minister have instigated in the past year.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I could undertake to provide you with that number, but I will say this: number one, it would be very few; and secondly, I will tell you that we have in-house had a moratorium on seizures on Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan for some several months now.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Well, I would like that number and I'm sure that one of your officials would have that number available, and we'll wait until you give it to us.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I don't have it here. These officials do not have that number. We could undertake to provide it to you as soon as we can, and I can't even give you a time on that one, but we'd undertake to provide it. I don't think it'll be quite as quick as I provided that report for the hon. member from Quill Lakes, but we'll try.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Chairman, I see it's near 5 o'clock. We'll give the minister two hours to get the number, and we'll check back at 7 o'clock. It's near 5 o'clock.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Being 5 o'clock, I now leave the chair till 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.